15TH INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC RELATIONS RESEARCH CONFERENCE

Using Theory for Strategic Practice Through Global Engagement and Conflict Research

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RESEARCH CONFERENCE ADVISORY BOARD

TABLE OF CONTENTS

surrounding the various facets of the crisis including crisis management undertaken by the national and local Japanese governments and the effect on the individuals living in the disaster area.

Suzel Figueiredo, University of Sao Paulo, DATABERJE (Brazil)

The object of this research involves a study of the organizational values of 100 largest business groups that operate in Brazil. The theoretical corpus that sets up this analysis is based on the theories of organizational communication and on the theory of values from philosophy. The analysis of data available shows differences between Brazilian and North American values, even comparing similar organizations. Another important finding is the fact that mission, vision and values have little relation to the organizations core business and a great connection with the management.

Is Ghost Blogging Like Speechwriting? A Survey of Practitioners About the Ethics of Ghost Blogging   137
Jackson-Sharpe Award
Tiffany Derville Gallicano, University of Oregon, **Kevin Brett**, Brett Communications, and **Toby Hopp**, University of Oregon

Ghost blogging refers to the practice of writing blog posts on behalf of someone else who is stated as the author. Despite the fact that the concept of ghost blogging has encouraged a host of ethical debates among professionals, researchers have not yet explored the issue through empirical research. Accordingly, this study sought to examine the extent to which agreement exists about the professional acceptability of various ghost blogging practices.

Corporate Reputation: Is Fortune a Factor?   161
University of Miami School of Communication Top Student Paper Award
Kristi S. Gilmore, Syracuse University

One of the most accepted measurements of corporate reputation is Fortune magazine's annual "Worlds Most Admired Companies" (MAC) list. Yet, some researchers have questioned the measurement tool's validity because of its reliance on financially-driven dimensions and its focus on a single stakeholder group. The purpose of this study is to evaluate the dimensions people perceive as important in determining a company's reputation, how those perceptions vary within a stakeholder group, and whether they correspond to the dimensions used by Fortune to determine which companies are the most admired.

Courtier to the Academy: Edward L. Bernays' Publishing in Academic Journals 1928-1947   176
Kirk Hallahan, Colorado State University

This paper uses textual analysis to critically analyze Bernays' writings in public affairs and scholarly journals between 1928 and 1945-46 (the end of World War II). The paper puts these writings in the historical context of Bernays' professional work as well as the development of these three social science disciplines. The discussion is organized into three broad areas: theorizing about public opinion, theorizing about propaganda and communications, and theorizing about attitude polls. This paper provides a potentially insightful historical perspective on the importance of theory in public relations and its

linkage to strategic practice.

Shared Values: An Examination of the Codes of Ethics of Mass Media-related Associations
Julie K. Henderson, University of Wisconsin Oshkosh

Journalism, advertising, public relations and marketing all have a role in supporting a free and responsible press in the United States and, beyond that, each has a profound influence on society in general. Yet the four industries are often seen to be adversaries, or at least at cross-purposes. In this research, the goal is to examine if the values held by these four media-related industries, as represented by their codes of ethics, do vary. This research fills a gap because previous studies have been limited to outside the United States, to one profession (such as news) or to a singular topic (moonlighting).

Who Should Tell What Story: An Interplay of Spokesperson Type and Storytelling Style of the Organizational Human Voice in the Social Media Context
Seoyeon Hong and **Bokyung Kim**, University of Missouri, Columbia

It is crucial to understand the public perceptions dialogue within the social media may produce. However, relatively less attention has been paid to who should deliver such dialogue (i.e., the type of spokesperson) and how he or she describes a message (i.e., the dialogic styles). Guided by this, the primary aim of this study is to examine the effects of various spokespersons as the face of an organization and different types of storytelling on participants' perceived message credibility (H1); evaluation of the degree of conversational voice used (H2); and perceptions of organization-public relationship outcomes (H3).

Consumer Responses to Apology via Social Media: Gauging Involvement in Relation to Emotion and Corporate Responsibility
Erika Johnson and **Nathan Allen**, University of Missouri

Extant literature on crisis communication exhibits a gap in terms of emotional venting from the public and expressions of crisis responsibility attribution via social media (i.e. Facebook). Scholarship also demonstrates that there is limited understanding of how publics perceive or attribute crises through social media, due to a focus on print media. However, Waters, Tindall, and Morton (2010) demonstrate that social media has become an integral part of media relations and communication for organizations. Thus this study will fill a gap in the literature, as it will examine responses to apology released through social media.

Exploring the Linkages between Users' Gratification, Sense of Community, and Relationship Outcomes on Twitter
Ji Young Kim and **Linda C. Hon**, University of Florida

This study aims to explore 1) how and why individuals use Twitter, 2) what perceived benefits stakeholders have from organizations' Twitter use, and 3) how the perception affects subsequent relationship quality with and loyalty to the organization. Motivations to

use Twitter and its effectiveness have not been extensively empirically tested. Grounded in uses and gratifications theory, this perspective has been developed in an attempt to describe users' motivation to use media. In particular, the needs for social interaction and identification are related to the concept of sense of community determined by the extent to which people feel that they belong to a large collective entity.

'Just Use the Right Buzz Words': Social Media Strategies of Top Global PR Agencies 292
Sarabdeep Kochhar, **Christopher Wilson**, and **Weiting Tao**, University of Florida

The present literature positions global PR agencies as experts in the strategic use of social media to achieve client goals. However, the literature has not yet explored the ways in which global PR agencies actually use social media in client campaigns. The purpose of this paper is threefold: First, to investigate how global PR agencies define social media; second, to look at the specialized social media services global PR agencies offer to their clients; and third, to look at the best social media campaigns of these agencies to understand how effectively they put their claimed expertise into practice.

Levels of Evaluation in Public Relations Campaigns 311
Alexander V. Laskin, Quinnipiac University, and **David Rockland**, Global Research and Ketchum Pleon Change

This study advances the research in the field of measurement and evaluation by proposing a model of measuring and evaluating public relations campaigns. The model called, Levels of Evaluation, was initially developed in the agency settings; however, it can be successfully applied in corporate, non-profit or government setting as well. The model takes into account what public relations professionals produce as their outputs, the message and its dissemination, the effects on the target audiences, the influence the activities have on business results, and, finally, the overall effect it has on the organization and its place in the industry.

Perceived Professional Standards and Roles of Public Relations in China: Through 324
the Lens of Chinese Public Relations Practitioners
Chunxiao Li, Chengdu Overseas Media Service (China), **Fritz Cropp**, University of Missouri-Columbia, **Will Sims**, and **Yan Jin**, Virginia Commonwealth University

Although different areas of PR practice have been examined in the past several years (e.g., relationship management, reputation management, government affairs, consumer relations; corporate social responsibility, crisis communication, etc.), the main approaches have primarily relied on case studies and qualitative research. Noticing this lack of sufficient quantitative research to provide a bigger picture of PR practice in China, Li, Cropp and Jin (2010) called for more quantitative research to identify the role public relations plays in the contextual trend of the globalization of public relations practice. This paper responds to that call with an examination of Chinese practitioners.

Principles for the Use of Return on Investment [ROI]; Benefit-Cost Ratio [BCR]; and 337
Cost-Effectiveness Analysis [CEA] Financial Metrics in a Public Relations/

Communication (PR/C) Department
Fraser Likely, Likely Communication Strategies (Ontario)

An organization's financial performance has three drivers: increase in revenues; decrease in costs or expenditures; and cost avoidance associated through decrease in risk. Public relations has long sought to demonstrate how its work contributes to these three drivers. While the PR/Communication ROI discussion goes back thirty or forty years, it has accelerated greatly in the last decade. On the other hand, there has been little discussion on the use of two other financial metrics: benefit-cost ratio (BCR); and Cost-Effectiveness. The purpose of this paper is to propose a set of principles for the use of ROI, BCR and Cost-Effectiveness, both as concepts and as metrical calculations.

Internal Communication in the Macau Gaming Industry: Effects of Internal Market Orientation on Organizational Performance
Ernest Franklin Martin, Jr., City University of Macau/Virginia Commonwealth University, and **Wai Ming To**, City University of Macau

Internal Market Orientation (IMO) represents the adaptation of market orientation to the context of employer-employee communication. IMO, if developed, may increase the effectiveness of a market-oriented company's response to external market conditions because it allows the company's management to better align external market objectives with internal capabilities. This study examines the effect of IMO on organizational performance among the Macau casino operating companies, including employee job satisfaction, perceived customer satisfaction and relative competitive position. Moreover, external measures, such as positive media reputation measures and position change in market share, support the perceptions.

How Millennials are Interacting with Organizations on Facebook: A Survey of Their Uses and Organization-Public Relationships on Facebook
Tina McCorkindale, Appalachian State University, **Marcia Watson DiStaso**, Pennsylvania State University, and **Hilary Fussel Sisco**, Quinnipiac University

Because the Millennial generation is one of the most powerful publics in terms of purchasing power and influence, and due to their pervasive use of Facebook, investigating how they interact with organizations on Facebook is important to the field of public relations. Based upon a prior qualitative study conducted by McCorkindale and DiStaso (2011), this study employed focus groups and surveys to understand how adult Millennials engage with organizations, what motivates these relationships and what their reasons are for maintaining or terminating the relationships. Current trends are examined and best practices for this important population are identified.

Understanding Public Engagement on Corporate Social Network Sites: Antecedents, Motivations, and Relational Outcomes
Red Raider Public Relations Research Award
Rita Linjuan Men, Southern Methodist University, and **Wanhsiu Sunny Tsai**, University of Miami

In response to the numerous hypes and speculations regarding the effectiveness of SNSs as a public relations tool, recent studies have begun to investigate how companies engage with their publics using SNSs. Important theoretical considerations regarding the antecedents and consequences of publics' interactions with organizations on SNSs have not been addressed. Public-organization interactions on social media in general, and the sundry factors that drive publics' engagement with corporate communicators on SNSs in particular, have not been adequately explored. To bridge the research gap, this study aims to explore SNS users' motivations in visiting, following, consuming, and contributing to corporate SNS pages.

Using the Heuristic Systematic Model to Investigate a Possible Emerging Trend: How Public Relations Spokesperson Gender and Ethnicity Effect Audience Perceptions of Spokesperson, Organization and Message Credibility
International ABERJE Award
Sufyan Mohammed-Baksh, University of Scranton

400

Previous research has focused on the kinds of products, messages, pricing, language, etc. preferred by Hispanics from a marketing and advertising perspective. Few studies within the public relations field have assessed source credibility from an ethnic and gender perspective specific to the Hispanic population. This study attempts to bridge some of the gaps and possibly initiate debate and research in the area of credibility in public relations dealing with an interaction of source ethnicity and gender. This study focused on discovering the effect of source ethnicity and gender, under different news conditions (crisis and benign news), on audience perceptions of credibility of a spokesperson, the organization and the message.

Facebook Generation and the Corporate Communications
Paulo Nassar, **Suzel Figueiredo**, **Mateus Furlanetto**, and **Carolina Soares**, University of Sao Paulo & ABERJE (Brazil)

424

This paper presents a completed research developed to understand the way the Brazilian Facebook Generation evaluates Corporate Communications practices. Using quantitative methodology, graduation students from three Brazilian cities, were questioned about their behavior and use of internet: subjects they are interested in; websites and publications they rely on for information; social networking they are part of. Also the research aim is to understand how and if this generation is interacting with companies online. If they follow companies' webpages/ profiles in social networking; if they praise or criticize companies online; which brands they admire the most and why; and how do they search for information about brands and products.

Do As I Say or Do As I Do?: An Analysis of Dialogic Communication Web Site Strategies of Top Fee-Producing Public Relations Agencies
Prisca Ngondo and **John G. Wirtz**, Texas Tech University

431

The degree to which public relations agencies use their Web sites to engage in dialogic

communication remains underexplored. Therefore, the current paper presents a content analysis of a group of 102 Web sites of major U.S.-based public relations agencies and a critique of how principles of dialogic communication are evident in these Web sites. We analyzed the Web sites of the top 50 agencies in terms of revenue according to the O'Dwyer's ranking of top billing firms, as well as 52 smaller agencies (i.e., 100-151) appearing on the same list.

Networked Publics and Crisis: The Occupy Wall Street Movement, and a Changing Crisis Landscape
Maria Oliveira, PRIME Research

This study aims to explore the role of and interaction between Twitter and traditional media outlets in disseminating information during a situation that has the potential to become a crisis. Using "Occupy Wall Street" as a case study, this project will investigate the progression of the relationship between Twitter's and The New York Times' coverage during the initial formation and growth of this major social movement, and, ultimately, how a better understanding of this interaction can be applied to crisis management and response.

Expectation Management: Mission Impossible?
Laura Olkkonen, **Kristiina Tolvanen**, and **Vilma Luoma-aho**, University of Jyväskylä (Finland)

The expectations stakeholders have toward an organization play a great role in their satisfaction, as expectations guide publics' assessments and perceptions, leading eventually to behavioral responses. This paper suggests that while expectation management is challenging, it should be made a priority for PR in the current working environment where fast responding is needed, all issues are potentially viral, and organizational control is diminishing. The paper presents a preliminary model of expectations management for public relations.

An Examination of How Fortune 500 Companies and Philanthropy 200 Nonprofits Cultivate Relationships Using Facebook
Julie O'Neil, Texas Christian University

Although public relations practitioners and researchers tout the potential of social media to build and maintain relationships between organizations and publics, little has been investigated empirically about the online relationship process. This study contributes to relationship theoretical developments through its explication of how Fortune 500 companies and nonprofit organizations from among Philanthropy 200 use Facebook to cultivate relationships. To better understand how organizations cultivate online relationships, a content analysis was conducted of a random sample of the Facebook pages and posts of Fortune 500 companies (n =75) and Philanthropy 200 nonprofits (n=75).

Employee Reactions to Crisis Events: Effect of Attributions of Responsibility and Severity on Employee Strain Responses

Kristin M. Pace, Michigan State University, **Isabel C. Botero**, and **Tom Fediuk**, Aarhus University (Denmark)

The study of crisis in public relations has focused primarily on understanding the effects of crisis events on the perceptions of external stakeholders and how post-crisis communication efforts can affect the reputation of an organization. Given that employees are the lifeblood of the organization, it is important to understand how employees react to different types of crises, yet there is a limited understanding about how crisis events impact employees. Thus, in this paper we will explore how different types of crisis can affect employee behavior inside of the organization.

Dueling Definitions of Uncertain Risk: Modeling Strategic "Risk Communication" by Clashing Advocacy Coalitions as Messages Mix and Mash Via Traditional/New/Social Media Venues 506
Patricia Paystrup, Southern Utah University

The ConocoPhilips "There's Power in Cooperation" advocacy spot jostles against the catchy tune of the animated YouTube viral-hit "My Water's on Fire Tonight (The Fracking Song)" and YouTube videos of folks literally lighting their tap water on fire in the hyper-mediated battle of conflicting "risk" messages about "hydro-fracking"—the petroleum industry's "revolutionary" technology for tapping vast shale deposits to produce oil and natural gas. This paper presents the "Dueling Definitions of Uncertain Risk Model," conceptualizing the forces at play in the very political public processes of assessing, characterizing—and then communicating about and advocating for—the public policies that will regulate proposed new "risky" technologies.

Where Relationships Rule: An Investigation of Symmetrical Communication in Evangelical Churches 522
Andrea Phillips, Texas Tech University

Given that much of Christian ideology encourages relationship, inclusion, concern for others, and the participation of each member in the life of the church body, Christian churches would seem to be ideally suited to employ and benefit from symmetrical communication strategies for relationship building. Churches, however, are notoriously plagued by relational problems. In order to understand how and why church leaders employ symmetrical and asymmetrical communication with internal publics primarily, as well as the outcomes of those choices, the researcher interviewed ten pastors at three large evangelical churches in a pilot study and 15 pastors at five additional large evangelical churches in the current study.

Playing to Publics: The Role of the Media and Public Relations in Negotiating Public Policy 547
Kenneth D. Plowman, **Susan B. Walton**, and **Alex Curry**, Brigham Young University

This study continues groundwork laid by Plowman and Walton in 2007 when they examined the effect of the media, public relations, and local governments on a negotiation

to build the Real Salt Lake Soccer Stadium in Salt Lake County, Utah. This case study involved the issue of building the stadium so interviews were conducted with print and broadcast media involved as well as city and county governments and public relations personnel of Real Salt Lake. A qualitative content analysis was also conducted of news reports at the time. This study then, examined the public relations strategies and media responses to those strategies in the aftermath of this controversy.

What's Important? An Exploratory Study of the Factors Investor Relations Professionals Use to Measure Success
Matthew W. Ragas, DePaul University, **Matthew D. Brusch**, National Investor Relations Institute, and **Alexander V. Laskin**, Quinnipiac University

Within the U.S. markets alone, publicly-held firms collectively allocate tens of millions of dollars each year to the investor relations (IR) function, yet little comprehensive research has been conducted into how IR professionals determine the effectiveness of this sizeable investment. In an effort to contribute to the body of knowledge on program evaluation and measurement, this exploratory study conducted in conjunction with the National Investor Relations Institute (NIRI) surveyed U.S. IR professionals on this topic. With a total of 384 respondents, this is one of the first and largest studies of its kind.

Using International Corporate Communication Theory for the Strategic Practice of Merger Communication. - Why the Globally Oriented DaimlerChrysler Deal had to End up in a Conflict Because of Communication Issues Never Taken into Account
Koichi Yamamura International Strategic Communication Award
Holger Sievert, MHMK University for Media and Communication (Germany), and **Robert Craig**, University of Cambridge (United Kingdom)

This paper will use some current theories of international corporate communication (ICC) as a systematic means of both investigating the communicational causes of intra-corporate conflict and suggesting possible solutions. It will consider the case of the DaimlerChrysler deal. It has two complementary aims: first, to argue that differences in business communication culture between Germany and the US in general; and second, to suggest how a theoretical examination of corporate failure might enable firms more successfully to recognize and target potential areas of conflict and misunderstanding in international corporate communications.

Non-profit Organizations, Values, and the Crisis of Legitimacy
Randy Taylor, **Lynn M. Zoch**, and **John Brummette**, Radford University

Using grounded theory and semi-structured long interviews with 11 non-profit managers, this study examined the espoused values of a small group of local, regional, national and international non-profit organizations and determined how they convey their values and legitimacy to the communities and stakeholders they serve. Findings revealed a total of 14 values that participants feel as though their organizations convey to the public and the majority of participants did not view communicating their values as a top priority because they felt as though their organization's values were apparent.

Are You a Pradvertiser?
Kristiina Tolvanen, **Laura Olkkonen**, and **Vilma Luoma-aho**, University of Jyväskylä (Finland)

630

By presenting a recent study on the expectations of 10 largest advertisers in Finland, the paper sheds light on what advertisers expect from media today and whether the new media environment has changed their expectations. The paper approaches the neglected area of the advertiser-media relationship as well as expectations related to this relationship. This traditionally outside the boundaries of PR-topic has suddenly become interesting to public relations scholars, as the findings point out that advertisers expect things from the media that have thus far fallen in the category of public relations.

Are Green Companies more Dialogic? Exploring the Relationship between Corporate Environmental Responsibility and Website Communication
Peter Debreceny Corporate Communication Award
Nur Uysal, University of Oklahoma

647

Being a major part of corporate social responsibility (Social Investment Forum, 2010), corporate environmental policies receive close scrutiny by both public and private entities. Yet we have a limited understanding of how corporations communicate their environmental policies to their publics via their corporate Web sites. Within the framework of dialogic and relationship theories from the public relations literature, this study examines whether a firm's prior environmental practices has an impact on the dialogic relationship practiced on its website. Specifically, this study seeks to answer whether green firms are more apt to integrate dialogic principles on their web communication.

Expectancy Violations Theory Meets the Global Public Relations Cycle
Michelle T. Violanti, University of Tennessee

665

Expectancy violations theory helps to explain what happens in interpersonal communication situations when a person expects one message or behavior and experiences something else. It is not a large leap to go from looking at deceptive interpersonal interactions to what happens when people believe the organizations in which they have placed their trust and loyalty distribute what are considered unethical, less than transparent, or deceptive messages as part of their public relations efforts. The purpose of this paper is to examine how two global organizations and one national organization (Apple, RIMM and Blackberry, and Netflix) have built or destroyed their relationships with consumers in the wake of potential crisis situations.

Public Relations and Community: A Reconstructed Theory Revisited (Once Again)
Marina Vujnovic, Monmouth University, and **Dean Kruckeberg**, University of North Carolina at Charlotte

674

The authors of this research recommend the consideration and application of the "organic theory" of public relations and its accompanying model of practice that recognizes the

complexity of contemporary global society and that attempts to deal with this complexity from a perspective that appreciates the increasing interdependence of the world, the shifts in power and social relationships both among and within countries throughout the world and how public relations theory and practice must contribute to the global welfare in all relationships and community-building of corporations, governments and civil society organizations.

Desperately Seeking Susan – and Santana, Sohna, or Seiichi: Are U.S. Universities Adequately Preparing Public Relations Graduates to Practice Globally?
Robert Wakefield, Brigham Young University

This study peruses available literature to compile qualifications that may be best suited for practitioners in the global world of public relations, and compares those qualifications with recommendations from the 2006 Report of the Commission on Public Relations Education as well as the recent PRSA white paper on the Public Relations Practitioner of the Future. This study will then collect data from a dozen universities on the courses and content they are using to prepare their students to work in the field, assessing those data against the normative framework for global practice suggested in this literature review.

Analyzing BP's Twitter Response to the Deep Water Horizon Accident Using Coombs SCCT
Institute for Public Relations Top Three Papers of Practical Significance Award
Laura R. Walton, **Skye C. Cooley**, and **John Nicholson**, Mississippi State University

A content analysis was used to examine BP's corporate crisis communication messages via Twitter over the 5-month period of the Deep Water Horizon accident and oil spill using Coombs' Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) model. Currently there is no research exploring how the model performs within a social media context. Each tweet (and linked content) was coded using the ten crisis communication strategies from the three response clusters in Coombs model. Through the analysis it was determined that another response category was needed.

Out of the Frying Pan, Into the Fire: The High Cost of Covering Up Low Deeds
Susan B. Walton and **Robert I. Wakefield**, Brigham Young University

In this paper, the authors analyze a number of situations in which organizations and individuals did—or did not—choose a prompt and proactive response in the face of scandals. The authors examine whether early confession and public engagement changes outcomes for such companies, versus the outcomes for entities embroiled in similar scandals who sought to cover up those scandals. The authors examine several variables: promptness and sincerity of the response; intensity of public response to and public "memory" of the scandal or problem; media coverage of the problem, both in term of intensity and duration; long-term reputations; and long-term profitability.

Advertising Value Equivalence – PR's Illegitimate Offspring
Tom Watson, Bournemouth University (United Kingdom)

Sources indicate that AVE was an established practice by mid-century, although it did not surface in professional or quasi-academic literature till the late 1960s. AVE was further operationalized by the emergence of computer based analysis in the mid-1960s. From that decade onwards, its use became widespread, as indicated by industry coverage of awards and case studies and by award case studies. Latterly, AVE has been directly challenged by the Barcelona Declaration's Principle 5. This paper investigates the evolution of AVE, which has long been damned as illegitimate, and postulates whether it arose from clippings agencies, advertising planning practices or from other influences on public relations.

Toward a Better Understanding of Stewardship in Nonprofit Public Relations
Brooke Weberling, **Geah Pressgrove**, and **Erik Collins**, University of South Carolina

Building on the limited existing stewardship literature, this paper offers precise definitions and descriptions of the strategies and tactics involved in the four dimensions of stewardship in an attempt to make the concept more accessible for public relations scholars interested in nonprofit research and measurement, for practitioners working to effectively enhance public trust and communication, and for educators training the next generation of nonprofit leaders. Finally, the paper offers recommendations for how to effectively incorporate stewardship communication strategies as part of a program to develop relationships with various stakeholder publics (beyond potential funders) and addresses the implications of stewardship in today's technology-driven environment.

Global Corporate Citizenship and Social Responsibility: Insights from the C-suite
Candace White, University of Tennessee

The current study is a secondary analysis of research commissioned by the non-profit organization Business for Diplomatic Action (BDA) as part of its Listening Project. During its eight years of operation, BDA conducted research and created and implemented programs credited with building new bridges of understanding and respect among countries and cultures. Data reported in the current study are based on 48 qualitative interviews with C-level business leaders (34) as well as thought leaders (14) in the area of globalization and international strategic communication, conducted by Zogby International for BDA.

Outcomes of Communication Audits
Louis C. Williams, The Lou Williams Companies, Inc., and **David M. Dozier**, San Diego State University

Communication audits are studies of the communication philosophy, concepts, structures, flow and practice within an organization, in order to improve communication and organizational effectiveness (Emmanuel, 1985). How do communication audit consultants define a "successful" communication audit? How do they define an audit as a "failure?" Do men and women consultants differ in how they define success or failure? Do consultants with more professional experience define success or failure differently than less experienced consultants? Do definitions of success or failure differ by the percentage

of the consultant's business is dedicated to communication audits? This research seeks to answer these questions.

Social media have had a huge impact on public relations practice by shifting the power away from organisations to social media users and promoting two-way communication. Existing literature focuses largely on the influence of the Internet upon crisis management and crisis communication but has only recently begun to explore the impact of social media and, in particular, the 140-character Twitter messaging service. This study explores the role and value of Twitter as a crisis communications tactic through the qualitative analysis of two recent high-profile European mass transport crisis case studies.

The Great East Japan Earthquake on March 11, 2011, has not only broken the global supply chain, but also turned the Japanese public relations industry upside down. The public relations department of Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO), once deemed as one of the most successful corporate public relations in Japan, is being criticized for failing to provide accurate information on failed nuclear power plants in a timely manner. In the current study the authors hope to share how the public relations industry in Japan is trying to re-define itself.

Crisis management is a test of the quality and character of leadership as much as it is a test of skill. Some studies have suggested the importance of leadership in managing crisis situations and offered tips to avoid crisis leadership mistakes, but few studies have explored a comprehensive framework about excellent leadership in crisis management. Meng, Berger, and Gower (2009) developed an excellent leadership model, which this study will test through an examination of the performance of British Petroleum (BP) executives in 2010 oil spill.

The idea of communication professionals as consultants and enablers of communication has been expounded by a number of researchers. This is usually linked to the 'consulting

role' as one of multiple roles enacted by communication professionals. Nevertheless, the specific dimensions and practices of internal communication consulting and its various objectives, forms and specifications have not been researched until now. This paper provides an initial step to close this gap by developing a theoretical framework based on research in business consulting and on existing public relations role models.

Military PAOs and the Media: Conflicting Systems of Ethics

Shannon A. Bowen
Syracuse University

Michael Parkinson
Texas Tech University

Kenneth Plowman
Brigham Young University

Robert Pritchard
John Schmeltzer
University of Oklahoma

Mark Swiatek
USAFA

Abstract

Both the military and the media have strong programs for training their practitioners in ethics and both have a justifiable pride in their ethical conduct. However each profession treats its ethical obligations regarding information differently. The military ethical obligation focuses on protecting useful information and denying access to information to any potential enemy. The media ethical obligation focuses on acquiring information and distributing it to the widest possible audience.

This paper explores the reasons why ethical obligations regarding how information is handled create conflict between the media and the military. The objective of this discussion is to identify areas of compromise or cooperation; or to decide if and when that conflict is ethically appropriate. By way of answering the question, the authors explore each side's assumptions about ethical communication, the exchange of information, and the ethical principles underlying their occupational roles. Finally, the paper presents recommendations for how a special practitioner, the public affairs officer (PAO), may act as the arbiter between the military and the media, balancing each side's competing interests.

The authors include a military ethics educator, a media ethics educator, a journalist, and former public affairs officers from the Air Force, Army and Navy. In this paper they first present the media's perspective on the public's right to know and its reaction to withholding information. They then describe the military's perspective on the public's right to know and explain why, within the military ethical framework, it may be necessary to deny information to a journalist. The paper then describes the extent of ethics training for both military and media practitioners so that the reader may understand the depth of commitment each profession has to its standards of appropriate conduct. Finally, the authors present recommendations that focus on the unique role of the PAO and how that officer may help resolve some conflicts between the media and the military.

Introduction to the Problem - A Media Perspective on the Public's Right to Know

In 2009, Thomas Ricks, a former Pulitzer Prize winning reporter for the Wall Street Journal and the Washington Post, posted a two-paragraph entry on his blog The Best Defense under the headline "The Same Old Public Affairs Crap."

> Central Command, the U.S. military headquarters for operations in the Middle East and Afghanistan, released its report on civilian casualties in Afghanistan's Farah Province at 4:52 on Friday afternoon -- and in the summer. That is typical of military public affairs -- in fact, I once heard an Army PA officer boast about [how] good they were at using late Friday to disclose embarrassing information. Among other things, the late hour makes it difficult for reporters to find outside experts who have read the report and can comment on it.
>
> Stunts like these are not cute. They undermine the credibility of the military and increase public suspicion of its statements. If General Petraeus is serious about improving strategic communications in his command, he'll tell his subordinates to stop throwing the bad news out the back door late on Fridays. (Ricks, 2009, n.p.)

For Ricks the episode was just another of the internecine battles journalists covering the military have with public affairs officers to obtain accurate and timely information. In the parlance of journalists covering the federal government, however, it was operation status quo – better known as the "Friday afternoon dump" when most people who would normally be asked to comment on a given topic have left for the weekend and when the public is least likely to pay attention.

Ricks comments are grounded in the public's right to know – a principal laid out in the American Society of Newspaper Editors Canons of Journalism that gained legal status with the passage of the federal Freedom of Information Act in 1966.

Adopted in 1922, the ASNE canons served as the first journalists' code of ethics. Those canons were subsequently adopted in 1926 by the forerunner to the Society for Professional Journalists. In 1973, SPJ revised the canons to more directly fit the role of the journalist. The opening statement of that code has remained unchanged since that writing—Journalists should "seek the truth and report it." It goes on to say "Journalists should be honest, fair and courageous in gathering, reporting and interpreting information." Journalists are reminded later in the code that they "should be free of obligation to any interest other than the public's right to know."

Exacerbating this commitment to the public's right to know is the belief among most journalists that they have a social or legal obligation, as the "fourth estate" to provide the public with all information needed to make decisions. Thomas Carlyle in *On Heroes and Hero Worship* (1840) said "...there are "three estates in Parliament; but in the Reporters Gallery yonder, there sat a Fourth Estate more important far than they all." This statement, through many years and multiple interpretations, began a conviction among many journalists that they have an ethical obligation to provide voters all information that may help them evaluate our government, including the military. Simply put, the media's ethical obligation is to gather and to make public all information.

Military public affairs officers operate in a more nuanced arena. For many commanders in the wake of Vietnam War, the media was viewed at best as an impediment to their mission and at worst as an enemy. Public affairs' mission was to keep the dogs away. According to

Kenneth Payne (2005), in the wake of the end of the "Cold War' the media increasingly are being viewed as an "instrument of war" rather than just a conduit through which bad news flows.

> The media, in the modern era, are indisputably an instrument of war. This is because winning modern wars is as much dependent on carrying domestic
> and international public opinion as it is on defeating the enemy on the battlefield. And it remains true regardless of the aspirations of many journalists to give an impartial and balanced assessment of conflict.

> The experience of the US military in the post-Cold War world demonstrates that victory on the battlefield is seldom as simple as defeating the enemy by force of arms. From Somalia and Haiti through Kosovo and Afghanistan, success has been defined in political, rather than military, terms.

He goes on to suggest (p. 81) that their role is to "control the media and shaping their output." Payne is not just a casual commenter on the mission of the military commander and by extension the military public affairs officer. His 2005 paper is now included in the reading lists at the military colleges for the U.S. Army, Air Force and the U.S. Homeland Security Department.

Increasingly many journalists are now encountering a profession in which the public affairs officers have a story that they want to sell to the American public as opposed to the story that the journalists want to tell.

The military's new mission to tell <u>their</u> story rather than <u>the</u> story is now exacerbating the conflict that existed before the end of the Cold War when the media was considered an enemy. Reporters are trained to be impartial observers, to be objective, to get the truth and to test the accuracy of the information from all sources to avoid inadvertent error. The struggle increases once journalists become embedded with a military unit. This became evident during Operation Iraqi Freedom when more than 700 journalists were embedded with Allied units. In many cases journalists, because of contracts they signed to not report certain events, just were reporting stories the military wanted told.

Reporters now must decide if the story that the military is telling is accurate or propaganda. And once imbedded they then lack the ability to test the accuracy of the information they have gathered from all sources – including the enemy.

If, as Payne says that the media are seen as a "instrument of war" then the issue of propaganda looms large for the journalists and – by extension – for public affairs officers.

Introduction to the Problem - A Military Perspective on the Public's Right to Know

Despite what journalists may think about how ethically the military handles the release of information, the majority of the American Public Believes the military is the most trustworthy and ethical of our government entities (Leal, 2005).

As an example of the military's approach to the ethics of information sharing, we describe the strategic plan of Task Force 134 at Camp Victory in Iraq in 2008 (Strategic Plan, 2008). That plan included the term "transparency" as one of its operating goals. Public Affairs Officers, under that plan, tried to be as transparent as possible while complying with operational security, the Geneva Convention for the treatment of detainees and their own rules of engagement or status of forces agreement with the Government of Iraq.

In a sense they operated within competing strictures. Their interpretation of the public's right to know was based on an interpretation of the First Amendment to the U.S Constitution,

which says "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances." (Bill of Rights, 1789). The key phrase here is *freedom of speech,* or *of the press.* The general concept traces back to 1689 with England's Bill of Rights. In Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948, from the United Nations states that: "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression… and to receive and impart information and ideas through any media regardless of frontiers. *"*However, the publics' right to know is not necessarily enabling freedom of speech, at times the media may suppress information (Sanders, 2003). Also, the publics' right to know might not limit the right to privacy. This is a *gray area* when the military and the media are involved because publication of future military operations in Iraq and the privacy of detainees threatened the safety and lives of both the coalition forces and Iraqi detainees. For example, some of the rules of engagement for detainees included no video or still pictures were to be taken by the media that revealed the faces or identity of those detainees. Such identification imperiled the lives of detainees whose allegiances to various factions in Iraq, as in Sunni or Shia, were under observation by their particular opposing factions. The Geneva Convention also mandates certain humane treatment of detainees. Although these requirements generally apply to a uniformed enemy and not to civilian forces, the coalition forces still complied with those requirements as much as possible. Since Task Force 134 was the successor unit to those units working with detainees during the Abu Ghraib scandal of mistreatment of prisoners, there was high media and international human rights interest in how these detainees were being treated in 2008. The International Red Cross, because it agreed to comply with the Geneva Convention was allowed full access to the detainees. However, the Human Rights Commission from the United Nations was not allowed access because it did not agree to the requirements of the Geneva Convention. This situation led to periodic criticism of Task Force 134 for not being open or transparent, and each time its personnel explained the delicate balance they were required to follow that involved requirements from the sources mentioned above, and its own mission statement.

That relationship could be compared to norms between public relations and the media. Public relations ethics requires service to the media and other key stakeholders or publics, but at the same time public relations is an advocate for the organizations they represent. So, there is always, as with military public affairs, a *Catch 22,* where public relations can be a mediator and serves both the organizations it represents as well as the media. From the media side, its ethical principles call for it to be a *watch dog* of government -- to serve the public as an unbiased third party and provide information to the public for adequate discussion and decision-making in the public arena. That is the market place of ideas if you will about issues in general society.

Public affairs at Task Force 134 through its higher headquarters also approved credentials for all media to visit its detainee facilities and provided armed escort for Pan Arab, Iraqi and western media. This was done for the safety and security of the media at that time. For the Pan Arab, and Iraqi media, there was often no transportation of their own available to them to visit our facilities. Also, this security situation allowed for public affairs officers to review materials of the media to ensure compliance with the detainee rules of engagement.

A number of the media relied on local Iraqi personnel or *stringers* to gather their news. One private video crew from Los Angeles was hired by National Public Radio to do an in-depth story of the internment of Iraqi citizens for terrorist activities. Good journalism seeks to present

balanced stories from a variety of perspectives. The video crew, as all the media were, expected to follow those ethical guidelines.

According to the strategic plan for Task Force 134 (2008), its mission was "In accordance with the United Nation's Security Council Resolutions, Task Force 134 detains persons deemed to be Imperative Risks to Iraqi security, assesses and engages internees, and releases those no longer considered a threat…" Strategic communications or public affairs in this case, had three phases of operation , and the relevant goals for each were through the first phase:

> Command messages for this phase are 1) to Iraqi audiences, that Coalition detention operations are fair, transparent and temporary while the Government of Iraq builds the capability to assume this function 2) to US and international audiences, that Coalition detention operations are fully transparent and in conformity with international law and norms…
>
> For the second phase, that: Command messages for this phase are 1) to Iraqi audiences, that a) detainees were able to exercise their constitutional right to vote during provincial elections and b) Coalition detention operations are fair, transparent and temporary while the Government of Iraq builds the capability to assume this function 2) to US and international audiences, that the Government of Iraq is increasingly capable of conducting detention operations with Coalition assistance
>
> For the third: Command messages for this phase are 1) to Iraqi audiences, that Coalition detention operations are decreasing as quickly as Government of Iraq capabilities come on line 2) to US and international audiences, that the Government of Iraq will soon be fully capable of conducting detention operations with minimal Coalition advisory capability 3) to the Government of Iraq that Task Force 134 seeks to advise and assist the sovereign Government of Iraq in conducting transparent corrections operations in accordance with internationally accepted norms ...

Note then, the emphasis was on compliance with United Nations resolutions, the fair, transparent and temporary nature of the military operation to both international and Iraqi audiences while turning over operations as soon as possible to the Government of Iraq. Military public affairs in Iraq, and in much of public relations, worked to develop a mutually beneficial relationship to satisfy its key publics whether foreign or domestic, and worked with the media to accomplish that task.

Resolving or Compounding the Problem -- Military Training in Ethics

In order to explain how military officers in the United States are trained in ethics we have chosen to focus on one model -- ethics training at the United States Air Force Academy. This model is similar to that used at the sister academies (U.S. Military Academy, U.S. Naval Academy and U.S. Coast Guard Academy) and may best be understood in the context of the gap between the military and the rest of society.

The job of at the military academies is to take typical young citizens and make them military officers. That entails an act of persuasion, some might say coercion or brainwashing, but this is an all-volunteer force, so the cadets who are subject to this persuasion are self-selected.   In the simplest of terms the task of the academies is to persuade cadets to buy into or internalize the military ethos. Each service and its academy will translate that ethos in its own

way, based on the types of missions and operations it carries out, but a review of the core values of each service, reveals some common themes:

     Army – loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage
     Navy and USMC– honor, courage, commitment
     Air Force – integrity, service before self, excellence in all we do
     Coast Guard – honor, respect, devotion to duty

So these words and the clusters of meanings around them give some idea of the military ethos. It's not an all-inclusive list; there are other virtues that should be explored. But these concepts provide a good summary of the objectives of military ethical training.   The academies' attempts to persuade young people to buy into this military ethos, includes having them embody these values. That's the task of the military academies. Now we will explore how those ethical values are taught.

At USAFA the curriculum specifies development of cadets in terms of the head, heart, and hand. They have three mission elements: the Dean of Faculty (academics), the Cadet Wing (military training), and the Athletic Department. The Dean of Faculty and Athletic Director closely parallel their counterparts in civilian universities, if one were to assume all students in a civilian university were also athletes. The Cadet Wing is unique to a military academy. The Cadet Wing is responsible for the daily operation of the wing, military training (including basic training), honor education, and, through the Center for Character and Leadership Development, a focused effort on the education and training that develops leaders with a strong moral fiber.

It seems appropriate to think of the Dean of Faculty as serving the head, the Athletic Director as serving the hand or the body and the Cadet Wing as the bridge between the two and serving as the locus of practical application, the heart. So when it comes to persuading cadets to internalize the military ethos and to embody the targeted values, the three elements work together by providing the academic background (DF), the practical application (CW) and, as Gen MacArthur put it, "the fields of friendly strife" (AD) where we sow "the seeds that on other days and other fields will bear the fruits of victory." It's an integrated approach whose goal is developing leaders of character. This goal cannot be reached in a classroom, on an athletic field or through military training; it takes all three of those areas and more.   The entire function of the service academies is ethical training.

As part of this "persuasion" cadets are given an opportunity to practice what they learn, to lead each other, follow each other, train each other, work together as a team, and most importantly, to fail. In fact, one of the unique features of the military academies is that each will deliberately push its students to his or her own personal limit; not as a sadistic training exercise, but rather, in the hopes that each future officer will learn what his or her limits are, and work to improve. That in itself is an important ethical lesson.

And that goes to the crux of how military academies teach ethics: to help their students internalize targeted values, they put what they learn in the classroom, in military training and on the athletic field into practice in their daily lives. We have the benefit of creating the experiences they live. Think of the way civilian institutions offer courses featuring experiential learning or service learning. In the academies' model, the experiences they create emulate a military environment; a military culture deliberately geared toward shaping character and developing cadets into what they should become. And that environment is often enhanced, making it more military than the "real" military, so their students get to practice their adaptation intensively. Cadets often describe graduating and joining the "real" Air Force is something of a relief.

Four years at a service academy can make for a pretty intense experience. When one compares the time spent at service academies to that at ROTC and other commissioning sources, there's a substantial difference. Cadets change over the course of their time at the academy, and if the academy has done its job properly, it's a positive change overall. But… you can also imagine the effect on a young person after they've gone through their time at an academy, and even during that time, you can imagine how the outside world will slowly seem different to them. Of course, they're the ones that change; the world is always just the world. Cadets often report how they feel more focused and centered and disciplined than their peers back home, maybe even than their family members. This is a common experience for many military members, not just cadets.

What is being described here is the emergence of the gap between the military and the society it serves. Thomas Ricks described this phenomenon in "The Widening Gap between the Military and Society" (1997). In the article he describes following a group of newly minted Marines back home after basic training. They experienced the same feeling of dislocation, a dissonance of having feelings of both familiar and alien attach to the same people or places. And just as Ricks described for the Marines, when this sense begins to form for the cadets, it's real and tangible, because even when they go home on leave – especially then – the academy expects them to adhere to its values, and there may be penalties for those who don't. The academy's imposition into their personal lives extends deeper and broader even as they leave the academy itself.

While the entire academy experience is designed to internalize ethical values, there are specific courses in ethics both in the academic curriculum and in the Cadet Wing training. One such core ethics class includes several writing assignments. The first assignment in one such course requires the cadets to read George F. Will's Forrestal Lecture, delivered to Naval Academy midshipmen in January of 2001. Then they write an essay titled "Why I'm Here," (here being USAFA), by responding to two prompts: first, whether Mr. Will is on track with his assessment of America, and second, whether they believe they'll acquire moral superiority over the rest of society as a cadet.

For those unfamiliar with George Will's writing and politics, he has a considered, conservative point of view; more Buckleyesque than our current talk-radio types. In the lecture, he rails against individualism and materialism in American society, and his message to the midshipmen can be summed up by the following excerpt:

> ... as American society becomes more individualistic, more self-absorbed, more whiney, in a sense, more of a crybaby nation, as I am bound to say on occasion, it becomes doubly important that the gap between the military and society remain substantial (Will, 2011)

That idea of a gap between the military and its society is an ancient one; Will didn't invent it. Those familiar with Plato's *Republic* may recall the important role Guardians played in the life of the ideal city; so important that the Guardians were to be selected to serve based on merit and ability, and then, having established that first cohort of the best men – and women – in the city, the best of the best were to be bred, their offspring solidifying the Guardian class, from which the city's rulers would ultimately be chosen (so in a very short span of *The Republic* you have the seeds of feminism, classism and eugenics, as well as this early argument for creation of the civilian-military gap). Will is pro-gap, obviously, and closely tracks Socrates' argument when he tells the midshipmen that, while it may be unwelcome to say so in today's climate of inclusiveness and political correctness, "some Americans are morally superior to others and,

frankly, that is why you're here."   Will believes the gap is good and cadets should acquire moral superiority over their peers in society by virtue of their service.

Thomas Ricks takes the opposite view; warning that today's military is becoming increasingly insular and alienated from society.

Comparing cadet responses to this assignment from the 2002-2004 academic years to the current term they have remained consistent. Of more than 300 students, their responses to the prompts have remained consistent – 90% agree with Will that society is on the wrong track; and they are nearly evenly split on whether or not they see themselves as moral exemplars. There are certainly different ways to interpret these non-scientific results but there are a few observations we might find useful to our discussion.

First, a gap exists and that is not an accident; part of culture building at the academies involves getting across to cadets and new recruits that they will be held to a higher standard than they would have been in civilian society. They are deliberately set apart. The academies deliberately point to those we serve and say, "don't be that." And it's working, at least in the opinions of Americans. Gallup's Honesty and Ethics List for various professions consistently rank military officers in the top 3 of some two-dozen professions listed. Nurses have been ranked first for several years; newspaper and TV journalists are consistently ranked lower.

Second, you might think results like these would indicate that military professionals find themselves to be morally superior to civilians, yet the cadets are ambivalent with an almost 50-50 split. There definitely are those in the military who equate high professional standards with moral superiority, but many military professionals recognize that they fundamentally reflect society's values, both good and bad.

And this goes to the third observation: individuals don't come to the military as a *tabula rasa* or blank slate that needs to be "filled in" with doctrine and the military ethos. They are moral beings, fully formed, when they join. That's why the word persuasion was used to describe the academies' mission. Cadets' shared view of society and divided view of themselves points back to that basic task of the military academies, and any military accession point for that matter, to take increasingly diverse recruits from every conceivable background and ask them: "how far will you buy into this?" "How much of this can you make your own?"

Fourth and finally, an observation about the military and the media: to help illustrate the task of military training in ethics, we have used columnists, polls and stories from media. In the ethics courses at USAFA they use a blog that links mostly to media pieces on the web that cover the military, ethics, various defense policies, and current public debates over moral questions. Simply put, the academies rely on the media every day to help do their job, to motivate cadets to think now about the challenges they will face as military officers. The relationship between the media and the military is inescapable even at the professional level. Also, we should not forget about the media's power: to inform individuals and help them shape their view of the world. That's a personal relationship, and whether it is a cadet taking a break from writing a term paper at 3 am to catch the latest news online, or a soldier in Afghanistan looking at the same story at the same time to stay in touch with what's going on at home, the personal relationship with media impacts and shapes our professional relations. When a military academy asks a cadet: "how far will you buy into this?" or "how much of this can you make your own?" One cannot help but wonder, how much of their answer will rely on what they've learned from the media?

Resolving or Compounding the Problem -- Media Training in Ethics

The average media practitioner has far less academic training in either ethics or philosophy than does a military academy graduate. One possible reason for this disparity is the limitations imposed by accreditation standards. The Accrediting Council for Education in Journalism and Mass Communications sets the standards for training for media professionals in the United States. Those standards include a required curriculum that contains only limited training in ethics and law. ACEJMC standards dictate that most of an accredited program in media be devoted to liberal arts and language training. After other requirements are met, the average accredited program in journalism or media only includes one or two courses in law and ethics (ACEJMC, 2003). Further, the majority of lessons in those courses focus on the laws of libel, slander and First Amendment issues. In large part because of these accrediting standards, the average media practitioner has had very little exposure to philosophical principles associated with ethics. In their professional coursework, they have however been exposed to the conventional wisdom of many journalism professors who believe the First Amendment gives them a right to access information (Parkinson & Parkinson, 2006).

Here we focus on analysis of that component of media ethics education that applies specifically to the military public affairs officer. For the most part, media professionals, including both journalists and public relations practitioners receive similar training in ethics. This section of the paper explores how many public relations students and professionals, including future PAOs, are trained in ethics. It is also relevant to explore how much of their time of study is devoted to dealing with potential conflicts with other professionals such as journalists, the legal profession, or the military. PAOs may have degrees in public relations, but does that education prepare them to face the ethical conflicts that inevitably arise between the military and journalists?

The answer to these questions is complex. Ethical education is usually sparse or completely lacking in public relations. Research (Bowen, et al, 2006) on ethics in public relations shows that ethical education, either in college or as continuing education or employer training, is extremely low. That study included a sample of 1,827 public relations professionals around the world. A full 30.4% of the international sample of those working n public relations said they had never studied ethics, either academically or on the job. Another 40.3% of that sample said they had only a few lectures or readings on ethics. Combined, that is a 70.7% of public relations professionals who had little or no ethics training. Only 7.7% of respondents had many readings on ethics, 17.9% had an ethics course, and 3.7% had studied ethics in more than one course.

These findings (Bowen, et al, 2006) show that the 70.7% of public relations professionals who had little or no ethics training are a majority of the field, and thus may become a PAO and must deal with the ethical issues involved in many conflicting ethical demands. The data showed that the 29.3% reporting higher study of ethics were likely to have a graduate or advanced degree.

Other studies have found inadequate attention to ethics in public relations education. For example, Pratt and Rentner (1989) reported a lack of teaching about ethical behavior in all of the major public relations texts. Although codes of ethics do exist in the texts, based on public relations professional societies, codes of ethics alone are not enough to guide the ethical understanding and development of future PAOs. Scholars argue that codes of ethics are too weak, vague, or lack the applicability they would need to be helpful in ethical analyses (Sims & Brinkman, 2003) or lack usefulness due to their contradictory or voluntary nature (Parkinson,

2001) or unenforceable standards (Wright, 1993). A recent study (Stacks, DiStaso, Botan, 2007) of the standards in public relations education argued that ethics was one of the top three concerns for the field, concluding: "particularly ethics training as public relations practitioners and managers continue to fill more and more important strategic roles" (p. 12).

Researchers also find inadequate attention to ethics as reported by public relations professionals (Wright & Turk, 2007). In their daily practice, many professionals do not consider the ethics of their activities, or if they do it is in a superficial manner (Pratt, 1991). Wright's study showed that although age is positively related to moral development, the higher forms of moral development are under-represented among public relations professionals (Wright, 1985). These studies show that moral education or on the job ethics training is all too infrequent. Other studies have found that public relations professionals rely on a basic enlightened self-interest approach to ethics that fails to offer any real analysis or insight into complex problems, thus failing to suffice as an ethical guideline for the field (Martinson, 1994).

Public relations is not the only major that should be considered when examining the ethical training of PAOs. Many schools do not have a separate major in public relations but rely on journalism or mass communication degrees with a sequence, track, or specialization in public relations. Therefore, journalism and mass communication programs also train both future journalists and future PAOs, both at the graduate and undergraduate levels. Of those programs around the country, research (Plaisance, 2009) shows us that about 30% of them have a combined law and ethics course. A survey by Moore (1994) found that those combined law and ethics courses resulted in ethics being given 10% or less of the course time. Combining law and ethics into one course is not, then, an effective solution to train future public relations officers and PAOs. Combined law and ethics courses do not have an adequate time or amount of instruction necessary to confront and analyze the complex moral dilemmas that arise in a field with a plethora of ethical questions and divided loyalties. On the other side of that equation, journalists usually study a modicum of ethics that amounts to objective reporting and freedom of the press, also leaving them with a deficit of complex moral deliberation ability (Plaisance, 2009). Both sides of this relationship – PAOs and journalists – can benefit from not only moral education but also from the reflexivity that comes from understanding the values and ethical position of the other.

The attention in public relations given to ethics is inconsistent (Simmons & Walsh, 2010). Despite the inattention to ethics that the literature referenced above revealed, ethical instruction is argued to be important by many in the field who argue that public relations acts as the facilitator of truth in the marketplace of ideas (Heath, 2001) or as a corporate conscience (Ryan & Martinson, 1983; Bowen, 2008). These higher-level ethical responsibilities necessitate study of ethics, in some manner. Some ethics courses take a case study approach; others base ethical study on professionalism; whereas, more thorough and rigorous approaches delve into the realm of moral philosophy. The most effective format is argued to be based on a philosophical approach in which ethics is studied both normatively and positively (Cooper, 2009). For public relations students (and one can infer, for future PAOs) an approach base in moral philosophy was shown to provide a more critical and autonomous analysis of the industry than one based in professionalism or code of ethics (Erzikova, 2010).

At the undergraduate level, programs can submit for a voluntary accreditation from AEJMC (the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication), PRSA (the Public Relations Society of America), or other international bodies. However, there are not universal accreditation standards, and the requirements for ethics education vary greatly. The

CPRE (Commission on Education in Public Relations) has issued two reports on undergraduate education, offering general guidelines: *The Professional Bond* (2006) and a *Port of Entry* (1999). Although these reports offer guidelines on public relations education, ethics is one requirement among many, and no specific advice about the form or nature of ethics education in public relations is offered.

At the graduate level, a new report by the CPRE, using a survey of public relations educators, found that ethics was the most pressing concern. In response to the ranking statement by public relations educators and professionals: "Knowledge that should be included in a master's degree program in public relations/communication management" at 6.41 agreement on a 1 to 7 scale, followed by social media at 6.3 and crisis management at 6.25 (CPRE, in press, p. 27). Despite the importance of ethics education as rated by those in public relations, as well as the importance it holds due to the often inherently contentious objectives of the PAO and journalist in their necessary relationship, little is being done to advance ethical education of either the journalist or the public relations professional.

The PAO as Ethics Mediator and other Recommendation

The Public Affairs Officer (PAO) is by function and responsibility the mediator in conflicts between the military and the media. As has been stated before, the media believe themselves, indeed are taught in most journalism schools, to be the Fourth Estate, the watch dogs of government and by extension, the military. On the other hand, as you've also heard, the military highly values operational security and will error on the side of caution and withhold release of information to protect its secrets.

In this environment, the PAO serves three principle mediation roles: 1) facilitate access; 2) facilitate release of information; and 3) facilitate education.

Reporters need access in order to tell a story. The military is almost always the keeper of that access and has the ability to grant or deny the media a physical presence. Historically, military commanders have had a tendency to immediately and persistently answer "no" to these requests. This reluctance to grant access negatively impacts the reporter's ability to tell the story, often to the detriment of the command. The PAO is in the right position to help facilitate access to events, places and people, within reason, thus enabling the reporter to tell a better story and allowing society to make better, informed decisions. From a command perspective, the impact of a PAO who is able to successfully advocate for open access for the reporter is often a much more positive portrayal of the command and/or situation than would otherwise be the case.

The demand for information can often be a sticking point between the two entities, particularly in times of crisis. Reporters want the information now, they want it fast and they want it accurately. The PAO typically has to go through a labyrinth and multiple layers in order to get the information. Even then, sometimes answers won't be known for weeks or months (i.e., the final accident investigation report). To overcome these obstacles, the PAO has to do all in his/her power to know where the information resides within the staff and build those relationships that enable the PAO to quickly get the information to the reporter that helps them tell the story. The PAO also has to know inside and out the legalities of the release of information and often must make the case that releasing the information is in the best interests of the command and national security. At the same time, the PAO must be able to clearly articulate why gaps and delays in getting information to the reporter exist lest the relationship become more adversarial or fail altogether.

Finally, the PAO must excel at facilitating the education of both the media and the military. Newsrooms used to have a military reporter even in mid-sized towns, particularly those close to a military installation. As bases have closed and newsrooms shrunk the military beat reporter is a luxury that can no longer be afforded. This creates a challenge, because there is little time for a reporter to do a lot of research before arriving on the scene, yet they are required to make sense out of something that's very, very complicated. So the PAO must take the time to not only provide information, but to educate the reporter and help them understand not only the answers, but also the context of the answers and often the culture of the organization.

On the other hand, the PAO must educate the commander and his/her staff on the role of the media and the requirements contained in the Department of Defense Principles of Information to release timely and accurate information. S/he must be an ethical advocate for the media, helping the commander and the command understand the need to embrace transparency and the advantages of doing so.

As in the civilian world, the application of ethics to the practice of Public Affairs is critical to successfully fulfilling the PAO's duties and responsibilities, especially as mediator. The DoD Principles of Information provide an excellent framework for the ethical conduct of all military Public Affairs activities.

> It is Department of Defense policy to make available timely and accurate information so that the public, the Congress, and the news media may assess and understand the facts about national security and defense strategy. Requests for information from organizations and private citizens shall be answered quickly. In carrying out that DoD policy, the following principles of information shall apply:
>
> Information shall be made fully and readily available, consistent with statutory requirements, unless its release is precluded by national security constraints or valid statutory mandates or exceptions. The Freedom of Information Act will be supported in both letter and spirit.
>
> A free flow of general and military information shall be made available, without censorship or propaganda, to the men and women of the Armed Forces and their dependents.
>
> Information will not be classified or otherwise withheld to protect the Government from criticism or embarrassment.
>
> "Information shall be withheld when disclosure would adversely affect national security, threaten the safety or privacy of U.S. Government personnel or their families, violate the privacy of the citizens of the United States, or be contrary to law.
>
> The Department of Defense's obligation to provide the public with information on DoD major programs may require detailed Public Affairs (PA) planning and coordination in the Department of Defense and with the other Government Agencies. Such activity is to expedite the flow of information to the public; propaganda has no place in DoD public affairs programs (Department of Defense, 2008)

Note the provisions that information be "fully and readily available, consistent with statutory requirements, unless its release is precluded by national security constraints or valid statutory mandates or exceptions" and that information "will not be classified or otherwise withheld to protect the Government from criticism or embarrassment." The DoD Principles make it clear that transparency should be the rule rather than the exception (Department of Defense, 2008)

Besides the DoD Principles of Information, the PAO also has the ethical framework of the Public Relations Society of America's Code of Ethics to help steer a course through the shoal waters of mediation. The four general ethical principles underlying public relations practice are: 1.) Act in the public interest; 2.) use honesty as your guide; 3.) ensure accuracy and truth; and 4.) deal fairly with the public. Among the more specific principles defining how public relations is practiced are "maintaining the integrity of communication channels" (ensuring transparency with all audiences, from employees to publics) and not damaging the reputation of others by sticking with the facts and avoiding gossip.

The ultimate hallmark of the public relations professional is Accreditation in Public Relations (APR). This voluntary certification program, administered by the Universal Accreditation Board, a consortium of nine leading industry organizations, identifies those who have demonstrated broad knowledge, experience and professional judgment. The APR designation signifies a high professional level of experience and competence and tests detailed knowledge, skills and abilities in 10 areas, including ethics and law.

In May of 2010, a new credentialing effort called Accreditation in Public Relations + Military Communication (APR+M), was created that provides public affairs and communication certification for military, contractor and Department of Defense public communication professionals. This program is a joint effort between the Universal Accreditation Board (UAB), Joint Public Affairs Support Element (JPASE), and the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA). An APR+M Advisory Council established by the UAB oversees and manages the new program, while the UAB grants APR +M.

The APR+M is awarded to candidates who master the APR KSAs plus joint public affairs relevant topics. This includes demonstrated knowledge of Article 19, United Nations Charter, Law of Armed Conflict, including Rules of Engagement, and the 1913 Gillette Amendment and other acts that govern military public affairs operations, such as the UCMJ and Goldwater-Nichols. APR+M signifies someone who meets all the qualifications of Accreditation in Public Relations (APR), PLUS a rigorous course of study surrounding military public affairs in joint operations.

The PAO as mediator can be a thankless job, but it is perhaps more important today than at any time in our military history. It is a job that demands the courage to staunchly defend the First Amendment, DoD Principles of Information and the ethical practice of public relations to a senior officer, while defending equally as vigorously the protection of national security and personnel privacy to a person who buys ink by the barrel and paper by the ton or who has the keys to the transmitter.

It is a job that requires not just excellence in implementing the skill sets of good communication and superior judgment, but an unflinching, uncompromising commitment to the truth. More than anything, it requires the enduring trust of the commander and his/her staff. For without that trust, the PAO can have no credibility with either his/her colleagues or the media. Trust is also the central component to the PAO's successful, satisfactory relationships inside and outside the organization. The key to gaining that trust is consistent, ethical actions on the part of the PAO.

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Incidental Crisis Management:
Strategies and Tactics for Success

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Abstract

Any organization's crisis can easily expand to others within a given industry as well as to related stakeholder groups. Organizations that become caught up in these crises may need to engage in a type of incidental crisis management. They have by chance or circumstance been connected to the crisis of another person or organization. For these organizations, the crisis can still be as real and significant for them as the primary organization in crisis. However, they are not usually responsible for the original crisis, and may not have the power to successfully resolve or repair the conditions that led to the crisis itself. This paper presents practical guidelines for deciding when and how to become engaged in the crises experienced by others.

Scholars and practitioners in public relations are keenly aware of the need to prepare organizations for the inevitability of a crisis. The variety and range of organizations embroiled in a crisis of one type or another is extensive. Textbooks, case studies and advice, both theory-based and practical, exist for a variety of industries and crisis types (e.g., Ulmer, Sellnow, & Seeger, 2011; Seeger, Sellnow, & Ulmer, 2008; Sellnow & Littlefield, 2005; Alsop, 2004; Millar & Heath, 2004; Hearit, 2006; Gilpin & Murphy, 2008; Coombs, 2007). This study is interested in a particular type of crisis situation. When an organizational crisis is significant enough, it influences other organizations within its industry, and even beyond such boundaries. This paper describes such organizations as those who are "incidental" to the crisis. They are not directly responsible for the crisis, but by chance or effect, they become connected to the crisis.

These organizations may experience minor or significant impacts from the crisis. As a result, they must determine a strategy and response for dealing with these challenges to their own reputation and relationships. For example, the nuclear power plant failures after the earthquake and tsunami in Japan have impacted the nuclear industry worldwide. This paper offers a Strategic Incidental Crisis Participation Model to guide and to study incidental organizational responses to crisis.

Studying the Impact of Crisis on Incidental Organizations

During many organizational crises, there are other organizations that provide the same product or service to their stakeholders. When this occurs, an entire industry can be influenced by the actions or experiences of one of their members. In recent years, industries involved with nuclear power, health care, financial services, food products, retail sales, and others have had a member of their industry tainted by a crisis. Tieying, Sengul, and Lester (2008) suggest that there is a "spillover of negative impacts" behind these crises to others in their industries (452).

We do know that there are many variables that impact the outcome and responses to crisis. Coombs (1998) focuses on the study of situation as a condition for evaluation of crisis responses. The development of a Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) uses issues of responsibility for the crisis, the crisis history, and prior relationship level; to identify when and what post-crisis response is needed (Coombs, 2009). This theory concerns the immediate organization in crisis but could be elaborated to provide guidance for incidental organizational crises as well.

The recent case of contaminated peanuts illustrates the interrelationship of organizations and the impacts of a crisis on one affecting others. Millner, Veil, and Sellnow (2011), addressing the peanut recall crisis in 2009, advise that when an organization in crisis fails or refuses to address a crisis, others might be forced to step in and respond to the crisis at hand. They explore the use of third parties to respond to a crisis when the responsible party fails to address the crisis effectively. This proxy function can be valuable as a means to protect or preserve an industry, to mitigate harms to audiences, and to potentially contribute to resolving the crisis. For some crises, however, it is not just a potential proxy role, but self-preservation and outside pressures that lead to an expectation of a larger level of participation by additional organizations in the crisis response.

Identifying Response Options for Incidental Organizations in Crisis

The current literature on organizational crises has identified a variety of crisis communication strategies and tactics that are available. These typologies, case studies, and objectives have given the discipline a rich literature for the evaluation and preparation of crisis

responses. However, these works have provided limited applications for the incidental crisis or organization caught in the spillover from the crises of others (Tieying, Sengul, & Lester, 2008).

Image restoration theory has a broad and extensive literature to support its list of potential organizational responses to crisis. These have useful value to the issues in this study because they focus, in part, on the image of organizations that in this case are not directly responsible for the crisis at hand.

There is a wide-range of strategies available to choose from when faced with a crisis. Each of the options is not equal or interchangeable. In many cases, the literature suggests that multiple strategies are being used in the response. They require an attention to details concerning the situation, responsibility, and other factors that help determine the best match between the crisis and response. For an organization that is drawn into a crisis created by others, the selection criteria for crisis communication strategies are different than a more immediately responsible party. Coombs (1998) connects crisis situations to crisis communication strategies by recommending an analytic framework in the form of an accommodative-defensive continuum. The advantage to this approach is to recognize that perceptions of responsibility for a crisis influence the selection of crisis communication strategies. For the incidental organization that has been drawn into the crisis, responsibility is an important variable. In low responsibility situations, strategies such as attacking the accuser, denial and excuses, make greater sense. The situation and responsibility perceptions may not call for responses that involve justification, ingratiation, corrective action, or a full apology (Coombs, 1998).

This challenge for the public relations professional faced with an incidental crisis situation is that existing literature does not directly address the challenges they face. Advice from the literature on crisis communication generally assumes that organizations or individuals have some degree of responsibility or perceived responsibility for the crisis. Benoit and Drew (1997) evaluated the appropriateness of image restoration strategies and found that two strategies were deemed most appropriate, mortification and corrective action. Their study provides good advice for how to respond to an interpersonal situation where responsibility is not in question. Like many other studies and case studies in image restoration the accused has an active role to play in the crisis. As a result, we have a wide variety of crisis communication strategies available for consideration (Benoit, 1995), but limited resources for their application to the incidental organizational crisis situation.

Strategies for Incidental Crisis Communication

When an organization is threatened by the crisis of another, the connections that tie them to the crisis need to be addressed. An effort to detach oneself or differentiate the organization from the one in crisis would provide space for a response to avoid direct blame and responsibility for the crisis. This could help the damaged organization reduce the impact of the other's crisis on themselves. Tieying, Sengul, and Lester (2008) call for a process called "preferential detachment," to reduce the perceived connections between the crisis organization and spillover organizations (466).

There are three areas of crisis response strategies research that will be used to help frame the proposed model of incidental crisis response: dissociation (Hearit, 1995), model and anti-model argument (Sellnow & Brand, 2001; Brand, 2007), and the rhetoric of renewal (Ulmer, Sellnow, & Seeger, 2007). These three research threads, each with strong rhetorical underpinnings, can contribute to modeling a strategy for addressing a crisis that spills over to other organizations.

Dissociation

Hearit (1995) identifies argumentation strategies of dissociation as a means to distance organizations from claims of wrongdoing or responsibility during a crisis. This is a valuable strategy for these crisis responses because this rhetorical practice of distancing the organization from blame during a crisis allows the organization to protect and rehabilitate its image. There are three stances presented by Hearit (1995): denial, differentiation, and explanation.

Of these three stances, denial and differentiation are the most valuable dissociation approaches for incidental crisis communication strategy. The explanation stance usually requires some acknowledgement of wrongdoing but challenges the responsibilities for the actions. Incidental crises organizations are not usually directly involved with responsibility for the wrongdoing yet seek to have its impacts reviewed. The stance of denial is an expected response from the incidental organization because it has been swept up in the crisis by its proximity to the guilty party. This is just the first step in attempting to alter the perception of responsibility the organization is assigned in the crisis.

The dissociational stance of differentiation is appropriate because it may be used "to separate the juxtaposition of the organization with wrongdoing and thus diffuse the degree of guilt and reduce organizational culpability" (Hearit, 1995, 119). By addressing the "appearance" of wrongdoing by an organization with the "true reality" of situation, organizations are hoping that once the pubic understands the situation they will view the organization positively (Hearit, 1994, 119). This the first set of potential incidental crisis responses to consider in creating a model of crisis strategies for incidental crisis cases.

Model and Anti-model Argument

In the process of attempting to define the reality of the crisis situation for the incidental organization, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca explain that when using model and anti-model arguments, the rhetor is suggesting that one "strives to emulate the one or to shun the other" (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969, 368). This form of argument is an effective way to develop supportive claims for the incidental organization and to dissociate itself from the negative anti-model behaviors of the original source of the crisis. Sellnow and Brand (2001) suggest that this is an effective strategy for organizations in industries where a crisis has broad ramification for all members due to their direct interaction with consumers and competitive climates.

In studies of crises faced by Nike and Merrill Lynch, the use of model and anti-model arguments were credited for directing the public's attention towards reforms and future actions, and not past wrongdoing (Sellnow & Brand, 2001; Brand, 2007). This form of argument was identified as an appropriate strategy for lifting an issue to the industry-wide level, and transforming perceptions about the nature of the crisis. For the incidental crisis organization, a rhetorical reply that can effectively separate itself from the source of the crisis yet successfully respond to the issues at hand, the application of a model and anti-model response should be an attractive option.

The Rhetoric of Renewal

A focus on renewal by an organization during a crisis is considered a powerful potential post-crisis response approach that allows an organization to look to the future and to move beyond the crisis responses associated with image restoration and addressing accusations. It is an approach to crisis communication that sees opportunity in the crisis and sees crisis recovery as a

long-term process that is initiated through a leadership-based discourse of renewal (Ulmer, Seeger, & Sellnow, 2007).

Renewal approaches have been successfully applied in cases where organizations have a crisis that presented both obstacles and opportunities. They have risen above the immediate crisis and looked prospectively forward. Corporate crises such as the Tylenol product tampering incident, Malden Mills and Cole Hardwood fires, Odwallla and Schwan's product contaminations, the Oklahoma City and 9/11 attacks, all have demonstrated the benefits of this rhetorical strategy to assign meaning to and to see opportunity in the face of devastating crisis. For the incidental crisis organization, a similar set of tactics is appropriate. A forward-looking approach avoids dwelling on the immediate crisis and places the perspective on the long term and positive opportunities offered by the renewal stance.

Defining a Strategic Incidental Crisis Participation Model

These transformative approaches to crisis communication contribute to a rhetorical strategy for organizations to use when forced to respond to the crisis of others without directly being responsible for the crisis at hand. Rather than settle for guilt by association, the incidental organization has the capacity to sever that association and redefine the perceptions held about the organization and their culpability in the crisis. By offering other ways to model and respond to the crisis at the level of organization and industry, the incidental organization can position itself as a positive source for change and even renewal for itself and others in the industry.

This model is defined as a participatory model, because one of the first choices facing incidental organizations is the choice to engage or to ignore the crises of others. Unlike the organization that is more directly to blame or connected to a crisis, the incidental organization may not be required by media, law, public opinion, or stakeholders to have to respond to another's crisis. They could choose as part of a denial strategy to ignore the crisis. Doing so might draw less attention to themselves and their business.

During the peanut crisis in 2008-2009, third parties were needed to fill in the gaps for the public due to the failure by the Peanut Corporation of America (PCA) to respond to the crisis they created. As the crisis escalated, some companies chose to advertise the fact that their products were not contaminated. Such publicity might be seen as a potential threat to their reputation by drawing more attention to the crisis. But a crisis like the peanut contamination problem or the melamine issue in 2007, forced incidental organizations to response publicly (Martin & Robbins, 2009). Once an organization has committed to going public with the crisis, they are now involved. The next steps determine what their strategic messages might be as they engage others with the issue.

This model recommends that the next strategy should be a matter of dissociating the organization from the source of the crisis. By removing or limiting responsibility for the crisis, the incidental organization is better positioned to define its role and responsibility for the crisis. Depending on the nature of the crisis itself and the industry involved, the dissociation process might need to address differences in the values of the organizations and even the industry. Efforts to disconnect the incidental organization should give it room to focus the crisis away from them and their responses should follow a more positive pathway that takes into account the opportunities this publicity might present.

To help define this distinctive perspective on the incidental organization, the use of a model and anti-model argument strategy could help to clarify and specify where the offending organization has gone wrong and why the incidental organization is different or even superior.

This strategy could help support the entire industry associated with a crisis and marginalize the offending organization's relationship to it.

The image restoration literature often places an emphasis on the value of corrective action as a response to a crisis. For the incidental organization, direct responses to fix the crisis are not their responsibility. Even if the incidental organization could change something in another, they might not want to appear responsible for doing so. But to employ a renewal rhetoric, to change itself to better prepare for and prevent future crises, these could be helpful strategies for containing the crisis to other organizations and limiting the long term spill-over impact they have.

An outline for this *incidental crisis response model* would look like this:

- *Engagement:* the incidental organization must choose to either ignore or to participate in the industry crisis. Perceptions of *responsibility* for the crisis and the potential for doing more harm than good should direct the level of engagement appropriate for the organization.
- *Detachment:* the incidental organization identifies dissociation messages designed to protect the organization and prevent them from assuming blame for the crisis. Stances of *denial and differentiation* are potential options in addition to other dissociation strategies.
- *Model and Anti-Model Arguments:* incidental organizations can enhance dissociation efforts by promoting their own model behaviors to further distance themselves from the crisis and/or direct attention to other organization's failures (anti-models) to define the necessary responses.
- *Renewal Rhetoric:* long-term implications for the crisis are addressed by the incidental organization to further remove them from the source of the crisis and to redirect attention away from negative events. The opportunities created by the crisis can be addressed with this strategy.

Nuclear Power Responses to the Japanese Earthquake and Tsunami

The nuclear accident at the Fukushima nuclear power plan provides an example of how the U.S. nuclear industry needed to respond to the spillover of nuclear power safety concerns. The accident in Japan was too large and dramatic to allow U.S. and other nuclear-powered countries to ignore the incident. A purposeful and strategic response was necessary due to the high visibility and perceived threat people felt in the case of the nuclear power accident.

The Nuclear Energy Institute is the policy organization that represents members of the nuclear technologies industry. Their responses to the accident can serve as a case study in the responses of incidental organizations during a crisis. As a spokesperson lobby for U.S. nuclear power producers, their arguments reflect the incidental strategy needed to participate in the public debate about the nuclear power industry.

This nuclear power lobby organization, as well as all nuclear power producers had no choice but to acknowledge this crisis and respond effectively. They could not choose to avoid or ignore the events in Japan. They could, however, challenge the connections to be made between Japan's experience and the U.S. industry. The first part of the model is to question the appearance that these problems are shared by the entire industry. The NEI on March 30, 2011 argued that the earthquake and tsunami data from Japan cannot be compared to the United States and that the Japanese conditions are unlike any to be found in the United States near nuclear reactors (U.S. Nuclear Industry, 2011). The organization also points out that "there are clear

differences between the Japanese and U.S. approaches to the operation of nuclear energy facilities" (Nuclear Industry Comments..., 2011, p. 1). The NEI also revealed what it considered to be inaccuracies in reporting of data about the nuclear industry in an effort to reply to the appearance of bad information about nuclear power and to clarify the reporting mistakes (NEI criticizes ..., 2011). Many of the early reactions to the crisis were to distance the U.S. industry from the Japanese nuclear plants. Efforts to alter appearances and interpretations of the crisis were made to avoid lumping all nuclear plants into the same group and assuming the same issues or problems.

Along with efforts to use dissociation in their responses, the application of model and anti-model argument was also evident. Application of the model and anti-model strategy in this instance means to make strategic choices about how to compare the participants in the industry. One strategy would be to vilify the faulty Japanese organization and attack the Japanese nuclear industry as an anti-model case of nuclear power production. In this case, however, the focus is on model behavior by the U.S. industry and little comparison was made to the nuclear accident in Japan. This strategy is appropriate at this point since limited data is available to pinpoint specific failures and blame for the accidents. The NEI chooses to model the strengths of the nuclear industry in the U.S. as capable of preventing or avoiding a similar catastrophe.

The focus in this part of their response is three-fold: to reinforce the safety successes ongoing in the nuclear industry, the stringent safety model in national regulations, and the current monitoring of the nuclear industry through the Institute of Nuclear Power Operations. The NEI emphasized the extent of current safety efforts, maintenance and safety record of the industry. In doing so they use their track record as a model of success (NEI Criticizes Shoddy…, 2011). The model of behavior is also reinforced by the reference to the regulatory climate in the U.S. and the effectiveness of the industry to adhere to the rules (U.S. nuclear industry, 2011). Finally, the Institute of Nuclear Power Operations is referenced as a model for regulating and training the nuclear industry to be prepared to operate safely. The model and anti-model approach works well because once the two industries are separated, the U.S. industry is upheld as a safe and productive system and model.

The final strategy for the incidental crisis response is to employ renewal rhetoric. Framing this crisis as an opportunity for the industry to reinforce its safety record and to protect its stakeholders, turns this crisis into a learning opportunity. On March 30, the NEI emphasized that the industry is anxious to learn from this crisis and to apply that knowledge to enhancing safety. They made reference to the lessons learned from Three Mile Island accident and their capacity to adapt as an industry. They announced on July 1, 2011 the creation of a Safety First website to collect information learned from the accident in Japan. A Fukushima Response Steering Committee (July 26, 2011) was also formed to coordinate the nuclear industry's responses to the accident. The creation of a leadership-based focus is a hallmark feature for renewal rhetoric, and this leadership-heavy committee was designed to bring forward a renewal approach to the crisis. An additional indication of change and corrective action without taking responsibility for the initial crisis was seen in the plan to promote a $1 billion emergency plan to store repair equipment and resources for nuclear plants in cases of a dangerous incident (Wingfield, 2011). Elements of a renewal strategy were also evident in the announcement that for the first time in more 30 years, plans to build new nuclear plant were advancing. The new plants would reflect the information learned from the Japanese crisis and could leverage the crisis to insure safer nuclear power plants (Hargreaves, 2012).

Conclusion and Implications for Theory and Practice

The number of organizations that might get drawn into a crisis grows exponentially when you consider the potential for experiencing the crises of others in an industry, by becoming an incidental participant. When this spillover threat to reputation and practices become serious enough, a response strategy is necessary. This paper recommends a four-part set of responses to an incidental crisis situation and recognizes that the decision to engage the crisis of others carries both risk and opportunity.

Once an organization has first chosen whether to ignore or participate in the crisis environment, the next strategy should be to create distance between the crisis organization and the incidental one. Elevation of the organization through model argument, would be a third strategy to extend the distance and responsibility by the incidental organization away from the crisis organization and frame an outward perspective on the crisis. Laying the groundwork for such a prospective look at the organization and industry creates the potential for a final argument strategy, renewal, and a future outlook for a stronger industry.

The nuclear energy industry has faced serious criticism and threats to its reputation as a result of the Japanese nuclear crisis. Despite these challenges, contemporary data suggests that the accident has not crippled the industry as a whole for the future potential of nuclear power. Recent survey data show that despite widespread awareness by the public of the Fukushima accident, 74% of Americans believe that nuclear power plants are safe, and that 64% still favor nuclear power plans as part of our energy strategy (NEI, 23 February 2012). If an effective engagement of a crisis by incidental organizations can be developed, members of an industry need not be as seriously impacted by the crisis of one of their members. Further refinement and application of an incidental crisis communication strategy should prove valuable to many organizations that participate in competitive, integrated, closely related industries where the fate of one member can, for better or worse, impact the rest.

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From @airline to @passenger: Applying Network Analysis to Twitter Use

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Abstract

Social networks provide consumers with the tools to create and distribute feedback about companies and brands. Not only do consumers have a direct line to any company that monitors social media, but their conversations are also often happening in a public space where others are exposed to the exchange. Although brands and companies are frequently mentioned in online posts (MarketTools, 2011; Zhang, Sobel, & Chowdury, 2009), a low percentage of customers are receiving responses to their frustrations (Maritz & Evolve24, 2011).

This study examined how seven domestic and international airlines are engaging with customers on Twitter. Much has been written about the use of Twitter to express frustration with air travel whether it is long delays, cancelled flights, lengthy lines, long hold times on the phone, or lost bags (Snyder, 2011). Social network analysis was used to explore the interaction between tweets from consumers and responses from companies, and these results also provided an indication of the dialogic loop from Kent and Taylor's (1998) dialogic theory of communication and organizational engagement from Bortree and Seltzer (2009). In addition, the nature of user tweets that elicited replies from airlines were also categorized.

Introduction

Twitter users are increasingly important content contributors to the social media universe. Since its founding in early 2006, Twitter has experienced explosive growth. By June 2011, over 200 million tweets were being sent each day (Twitter blog, 2011). Twopcharts (2012) estimates that Twitter will achieve 500 million registered accounts by the end of February 2012. What differentiates Twitter from other social media sites like Facebook is that it is, by default, an open arena for conversation. Most conversations occur publicly, and participants do not even need to be followers of one another to have an exchange if they include the @reply function in their messages. Furthermore, users can share an experience with others through the use of a common hashtag such as #SuperBowl or #GRAMMYs.

Consumers can use social media tools to generate and distribute feedback about companies and brands, and companies can subsequently utilize these tools to respond to that feedback. A study by ROI Research (eMarketer, 2011) found that reasons for discussing brands in social networks include comparing prices (59%), talking about sales (56%), and providing feedback to the company (53%). Further down on the list were expressing disappointment (47%) and connecting with customer service (36%). Jansen, Zhang, Sobel, and Chowdury (2009) analyzed 150,000 tweets and found 19% of tweets mention brands. Of these tweets, 20% included a brand sentiment that was more likely to be positive (50%) than critical (33%).

Twitter is a forum for much brand discussion. The public default of the social network means conversation is often happening in a public space where others are exposed to the exchange, making it even more critical that certain issues receive a response. Although brands and companies are being discussed online, few customers are receiving responses to their frustrations. A 2011 content analysis by Maritz and Evolve24 of almost 1,300 complaints expressed on Twitter found that only 29% of complaints received replies by the companies to whom the complaints were directed. Furthermore, of those who received a reply, 83% cited that they liked or loved that they received a response and almost 75% were very or somewhat satisfied with the response. Such high percentages on these two items indicate the impact a Twitter response can have on customer attitude and satisfaction.

This study examines how major airlines are engaging with customers on Twitter in an effort to build, maintain, or repair relationships with this important public. Much has been written about the use of Twitter to express frustration with air travel (Sydner, 2011). Complaints include long delays, cancelled flights, lengthy lines, long hold times on the phone, or lost bags (Snyder, 2011). Anecdotal fiascos like filmmaker Kevin Smith's tweet that he was removed from a Southwest Airlines flight because of his weight, the "United Breaks Guitars" music viral video sensation, and the YouTube video of military personnel complaining about Delta's baggage fees all draw attention to the need to monitor social media and then respond appropriately. Although a MarketTools study (eMarketer, 2011) found that a low percentage of airline passengers (2%) contact an airline via social media with feedback and complaints, they indicated that many airlines have devoted a great deal of resources to engage with consumers on Twitter. Response rates to airline complaints are similar to those in the Maritz study (2011).

While progressive airlines were quick to embrace social media, others have only recently realized the importance of having a presence in this space. In July 2011, 191 airlines on Twitter were following over 600,000 Twitter users while over 7 million Twitter users were following airlines (SimpliFlying, 2011). That same month, the airlines on Twitter tweeted over 25,000 messages. Among tweets to airlines, most (86%) are related to customer service issues (SimpliFlying, 2011).

SimpliFlying in partnership with Eezeer produces a monthly infographic on how the airlines are using Twitter. In January 2012, 28 airlines were providing 80% of the almost 50,000 airline tweets. Consumers sent almost 250,000 tweets to airlines that month, with 71.5% related to customer service (Eezeer, 2012). Data from the most recent eight monthly reports with respect to the airlines sending or receiving the most tweets are provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Eezeer's Airline Listening and Talking Champions

	Receiving most tweets	**Sending most tweets**
January 2012	Cebu Pacific, Air Asia, Volaris	Air Asia, Delta, American
December 2011	Air Asia, American, EasyJet	Air Asia, Iberia, Delta
November 2011	Delta, Air Asia, Tam Brazilian	Delta, Tam Brazilian, KLM Royal Dutch
October 2011	Delta, Qantas, Southwest	Air Asia, Delta, American
September 2011	Southwest, Air Asia, Delta	Delta, Air Asia, KLM Royal Dutch
August 2011	Delta, Cebu Pacific, JetBlue	Delta, KLM Royal Dutch, British Airways
July 2011	Delta, Air Asia, JetBlue	Delta, KLM Royal Dutch, Air Asia
June 2011	Delta, Southwest, Air Asia	Delta, KLM Royal Dutch, Air Asia

In this study, social network analysis was used to explore the interaction between tweets from consumers to airlines and responses from airlines, and these results should also provide an indication of the dialogic loop from Kent and Taylor's (1998) dialogic theory of communication and organizational engagement from Bortree and Seltzer (2009). In addition, the nature of user tweets that elicited replies from airlines were also categorized.

Literature Review

Social Network Analysis

Social network analysis is an established interdisciplinary field that draws on many disciplines, including communication (Bruns, 2011). Theories that highlight of the structure of social relationships can be traced back to the work of Mark Granovetter (1973; 1983) and Manuel Castells (2000). Network analysis provides a way to understand the structure of the relationships between entities, an approach that has been extended to social network analysis, which is the understanding of relationships on social networking sites (Kelly & Autry, 2011). Online social network analysis allows for the study of human interactions within the context of technological platforms that pervade modern life.

The major research areas related to user interactions within social networking platforms were outlined by Bruns (2011). First, one can explore the nature of online communication and how it compares to the existing offline social structure. The second area of research relates to the patterns of communication in terms of frequency and the number of participants in the conversation. The third question of inquiry is the nature of content exchanged in social networks, such as video, audio, photos, or links. Fourth, one could study how communication in social networks reflects and relates to the wider context of offline news events, as Bruns himself has done in studies of the Christchurch earthquake (2011) and recent Australian elections (2010).

Some studies in this area have examined the structure of the blogosphere and political events or campaigns. Adamic and Glance (2005) and Ackland (2005) both studied the blog

network structure during the U.S. presidential campaigns of 2004. Kelly and Etling (2008) studied clusters of Iranian bloggers prior to the 2009 elections in that country. Other studies of social network analysis have examined topics such as the relationship between corporate CSR blogs and the blogosphere (Fieseler, Fleck, & Meckel, 2010) and the links between YouTube content producers (Paolillo, 2008).

The literature reflects few network studies of Twitter. Earlier studies looked at how people subscribed to one another's tweets (Huberman, Romero, & Wu, 2008; Java et al., 2007). More recent studies, including Honeycutt and Herring (2009) and boyd, Golder, and Lotan (2010), have explored the process of communication on Twitter and the application of @replies and retweets. Honeycutt and Herring (2009) found conversationality of Twitter to be surprisingly high, which they attribute to the use of the @ function. boyd, Golder, and Lotan (2010) found that retweeting practices were as varied as the users' social and informational goals. In both of these studies, the researchers examined Twitter conversations to illustrate how certain conventions are employed to manage communication. These conventions have since been standardized and incorporated into Twitter. Other studies have examined Twitter from an organizational perspective. Lovejoy, Waters, and Saxton (2012) analyzed almost 5,000 tweets from the nation's largest nonprofits and found many are using it as a one-way communications platform. Gilpin (2010) mapped online and social media channels, including Twitter, of Whole Foods to see how they presented organizational image.

Some researchers have approached the study of tweeting patterns not by searching for hashtags but by filtering by geographic areas or a wider range of keyword. Mendoza, Poblete, and Castillo (2010), for example, filtered tweets for analysis using the Santiago timezone and specific keywords related to the 2010 earthquake in Chile. This study looked at the follower/followee relationship of the 20 most active users, but did not map the network structure for all users discussing the earthquake.

Social network analysis has practical applications for customer relationship management. Studying the data visualizations reveals useful information about the connections between users. Smith (2009) advocates for companies to not just look at how many followers a company has, the number of people the company follows, and brand mentions, retweets, and @replies, but also how the people who tweet about a brand are connected, who has influence in this network, and whether there are identifiable clusters of customers. If a company can follow those users with influence who tweet about that company, there is a good chance the user will follow back and then retweet information from that company to their followers.

Dialogic Communication

The dialogic model of communication reflects the public relations emphasis on initiating, encouraging, and maintaining relationships (Ledingham & Bruning, 2000). Dialogue increases the chances that publics and organizations will develop ground rules for communication and better understand one another (Kent & Taylor, 2002). Kent and Taylor (2002) outlined the five features of dialogic communication as mutuality, which is the recognition of the public-organization relationship; propinquity, defined as the spontaneity of the communication; empathy, which is supportiveness by the organization of the public's goals; risk, which is the willingness of the organization to communicate with the public on the public's terms; and commitment by the organization to communicate with publics.

As Kent and Taylor (1998) noted in their discussion of building dialogic relationship online, "dialogue is product rather than process." This statement is an important point for social

media communication as the focus is often on the process allowed by the tool rather than the product of that communication. Dialogic communication also requires an ethical approach that rejects motivations of self-interest and domination.

> Human dialogue does not just happen . . . neither can dialogue be planned,
> pronounced, or willed. Where we find dialogue, we find people who are open to it
> . . . Dialogue is a dimension of communication quality that keeps communicators
> more focused on mutuality and relationship than on self interest, more concerned
> with discovering than disclosing, more interested in access than in domination.
> (Anderson, Cissna, & Arnett, 1994)

Kent and Taylor (2002) suggested three approaches to incorporating dialogue into public relations practice with one of the ways being through mediated dialogic relationships, particularly interactive media. They recommended the use of interactive media because it is most like an interpersonal experience and a place where dialogue can support relationship building. They recommend that online contact information (e.g., Web sites, email addresses) be placed on all materials to direct consumers to online forums and websites built to support dialogue with the company. Because this article was written several years before social media exploded, the functionality of social media sites is not discussed.

In addition to the recommendations listed above, Kent and Taylor (1998) offered five principles for using the Internet for dialogic communication. The first principle is Dialogic Feedback Loops, a function that provides a way for publics to communicate with organizations and for organizations to respond. If used correctly, Twitter is an optimal site for dialogic feedback loops. Kent and Taylor recommend staffing websites with trained staffed members who monitor the messages from publics. Because people are often turning to Twitter to share personal frustrations or satisfaction, Kent and Taylor's concept of Usefulness of Information is less relevant. This principle suggests providing information of general value to all publics. Twitter replies are directed toward a specific user thereby providing value to typically just one person. To some extent, however, the information might be useful to another passenger with a similar issue. The other three principles—Ease of Interface, Conservation of Visitors, and Generation of Return Visits—are better applied to the organization's owned media, such as their website, rather than communication that might occur on a social network.

Dialogic communication has been examined in relation to websites (Kent, Taylor, & White, 2003; Taylor, Kent, & White, 2001; Park & Reber, 2008), blogs (Seltzer & Mitrook, 2007), and social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter (Bortree & Seltzer, 2009; Rybalko & Seltzer, 2010). Bortree and Seltzer (2009) suggested modifications to Kent and Taylor's (1998) framework that are more applicable to a social media environment, but also limited to Facebook profiles of the environmental advocacy and similar groups. New dialogic strategies included links to organization homepage, number of advertisements on a site (a strategy that decreases dialogue), use of applications, ease of donations, a "join now" option, offers of regular information through email, profile sharing, and content sharing (Bortree & Seltzer, 2009). From Kent and Taylor's strategies, they eliminated site map, major links to rest of site, search engine box, short loading time, post of last updated time and date, news forums, bookmark now, and important information available on first page (Bortree & Seltzer, 2009). They also added the strategy of organizational engagement, which they operationalized as an

organization's posts on their own wall that are used as a way to engage members (Bortree & Seltzer, 2009).

Rybalko and Seltzer (2010) eliminated Kent and Taylor's (1998) Ease of Interface features from their study of dialogic Twitter use by Fortune 500 companies. To explore the other features, they made the following adaptations. Usefulness of Information was established by determining whether the company offered a description of the company and information regarding who is managing the profile. Conservation of Return Visits was operationalized as providing a link to the company's website and posting regularly, and Dialogic Loop was coded by noting how many of the company's tweets were either @replies or posed a question to engage their publics. Although Rybalko and Seltzer (2010) included Generation of Return Visits in their analysis, they did not explain how this strategy applied to Twitter.

Organizational motivations will not be explored in this study making it difficult to determine whether dialogue as defined by Anderson, Cissna, and Arnett (1994) has been fully achieved. The data do, however, provide some insight into how well airlines are talking back to customers, which is an operationalization of the dialogic loop used by other studies (e.g., Rybalko & Seltzer, 2010). Without at least having two-way communication, dialogue cannot be realized. The purpose of this study is to explore how well organizations (in this case, airlines) and their publics (airline customers) are engaging on Twitter. This study also examines customer tweets to determine the nature of tweets that received replies from the organization to whom they were directed.

Method

Eight months of data from the Eezeer (2012) reports were used to assemble the list of domestic and international airlines that were examined in this research. Any airline that was listed at least twice in the past eight months as either being a listening or talking "champion" was selected with the exception of Tam Brazilian because of the difficulty of translating the high number of Portuguese tweets. (Other foreign airlines and their customers used primarily English tweets.) The airlines selected for this study included: Air Asia, American Airlines, Cebu Pacific, Delta Air Lines, JetBlue, KLM Royal Dutch Airlines, and Southwest Airlines. It should be noted that three of these airlines were both listening and talking champions (Air Asia, American, and Delta), three were recognized for receiving the most tweets, but not sending (Cebu Pacific, JetBlue, and Southwest), and one was cited for sending the most tweets, but not receiving (KLM Royal Dutch). A maximum of 100 Tweets both to and from each airline were collected during a time period starting around 10 p.m. of the airline headquarters time zone on February 27, 2012, and going backward in time until 100 Tweets were collected. The airline Twitter accounts for data collection were @AmericanAir, @AskAirAsia, @CebuPacific Air, @DeltaAssists, @JetBlue, @KLM, and @SouthwestAir.

Google Spreadsheets and a TAGSExplorer interface developed by Hawksey (2011) were used to analyze the Twitter conversations between users who tweeted @replies to an airline and @replies from the airline. The first step in this process was to get authenticated API access to Twitter results by filling out this application: https://dev.twitter.com/apps/new. In completing this application, the Application Website was set to my blog, the Application Type was set to "browser," the Callback URL was https://spreadsheets.google.com/macros, and the Default Access type was "Read-only." Once the form was filled in and Twitter's terms and conditions were accepted, the summary page provided a Consumer Key and Consumer Secret. The next step was making a copy of Hawksey's TAGS Google Spreadsheet from:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheet/ccc?key=0AqGkLMU9sHmLdFVzSzdXY0RxN211b1k0U ks3Z1hWYUE&hl=en_GB&newcopy. This spreadsheet sits on the Google Cloud and consumes Twitter search terms. From the Google Spreadsheet, I selected Twitter then API Authentication. The first time the selection is made it authorized read/write access to the spreadsheet. The second time allowed me to copy and paste the Consumer Key and Secret and then click Save.

The next step was to set up a script trigger for automatic collection of tweets. From the spreadsheet, I selected Tools and then Script Editor followed by the selection of Run and then Authenticate. While in Script Editor, I selected Triggers and then Current Script's Triggers. I then clicked on Add a New Trigger. Under Run, I chose "collectTweets" and under events, chose "time-driven." For the purposes of this study, the timer was set to an hour timer and the timeframe to every hour. After closing the Script Editor window, I used the Readme/Settings tab on the spreadsheet and inputted a web address that identified me as the user under Who are You, search terms (e.g., to:JetBlue OR from:JetBlue), "default" for the period, 100 for number of results (maximum is 1500), and "continuous" under Continuous/Paged. Then, I clicked the TAGS menu and then Run Now! to collect results into the Archive.

To create the visualization, the spreadsheet must be published to the Web by clicking Publish to the Web under the File dropdown menu. I chose Publish All Sheets (just the Archive sheet can also be selected), made sure "republish when changes are made" was checked, and then clicked on Start Publishing. The spreadsheet URL that was generated here was then pasted at the top of the page at http://hawksey.info/tagsexplorer. Hawksey used NodeXL, a free open-source template for Microsoft Excel to display and analyze the network graph of the relationships. I then clicked on "get sheet names." The default Archive was acceptable so I clicked "go."

An interactive visualization was automatically generated based on the Twitter data. Although it is not reported here, clicking on the various nodes can provide more information about the Twitter conversation between users. The graphing technique explored in this paper treats individual tweeters as vertices and the interaction between two tweeters as an edge. Arrows depict the direction of the interaction. Additional information available on the data visualization that is not reported here included the top hashtags, top tweeters, and top conversationalists. Because this study uses the Twitter API, the reliability of the data is dependent on the ability of the API to generate all relevant tweets in a timely manner and without fail.

Following the visualization, the tweets were examined to determine how many user tweets did not receive responses during the timeframe of collection, how many did receive a response from the airline, the number of conversations that started before data collection but are obviously part of an ongoing conversation because of the use of the @reply by the airline, and the number of promotional tweets by the airline. For conversations that included at least a user tweet and an airline reply, the content of the conversation was categorized using the constant comparative method.

Results

The network structures produced from this research differ from the hashtag network analysis conducted by researchers such as Smith, Hawksey, or Bruns. The hashtag visualization will often show a network of relationships among Twitter users employing a certain hashtag as they share the experience online and communicate with others. In the airline data visualizations, the communication studied is either that directed toward an airline from a customer or that to a

passenger from the airline. Several visualizations run for these different airlines with just the airline hashtag showed few, if any, conversations between Twitter users and are not reported here.

The automatic collection of tweets was set to 100 for each airline. The time of collection started at approximately 10 p.m. on Monday, February 27, 2012, and continued back in time until 100 tweets were collected. Table 2 summarizes the number of unanswered tweets (at least within the time period), conversations (may have included several tweets from the customer and/or the airline), replies by airlines that are part of a conversation (even though the customer's tweet preceded the data collection timeframe), and promotional tweets by the airlines.

Table 2: Summary of tweets and @replies

	Tweets from users without @replies*		Conversations between users and airline		Single tweets that appear part of a conversation		Promotional tweets by airline		Total
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
American	22	43.1	17	33.3	12	23.5	0	0	51
Air Asia	42	57.5	11	15.1	20	27.4	0	0	73
Cebu Pacific	47	66.2	12	16.9	7	9.9	5	7.0	71
Delta	20	38.5	20	38.5	12	23.1	0	0	52
JetBlue	18	33.3	20	37.0	13	24.1	3	5.6	54
KLM Royal Dutch	12	21.8	19	34.5	23	41.8	1	1.8	55
Southwest	71	95.9	1	1.4	0	0	2	2.7	74

*Multiple tweets from the same user are counted once.

Airlines with the most customer engagement included KLM, JetBlue, Delta, and American. Although Air Asia had 31 conversations with customers (counting partial conversations), they still had 47 tweets from customers that did not receive responses. Cebu Pacific was less engaged in conversation with customers, while Southwest did not engage with any customers, except with a contest winner.

Airlines used few promotional tweets. For two airlines, however, another Twitter account was likely responsible for sending such tweets (@AirAsia instead of @AskAirAsia and @Delta instead of @DeltaAssist).

Data visualizations were produced for each airline and their customers. The arrows in each visualization represent the direction of the communication. The more arrows that point outward from the center (the airline), the more conversations that are occurring. After each visualization is a summary of the nature of conversations and promotional tweets.

Figure 1: American Airline
February 27, 2012
1:30 p.m.-10:07 p.m. EST
53 nodes, 100 edges
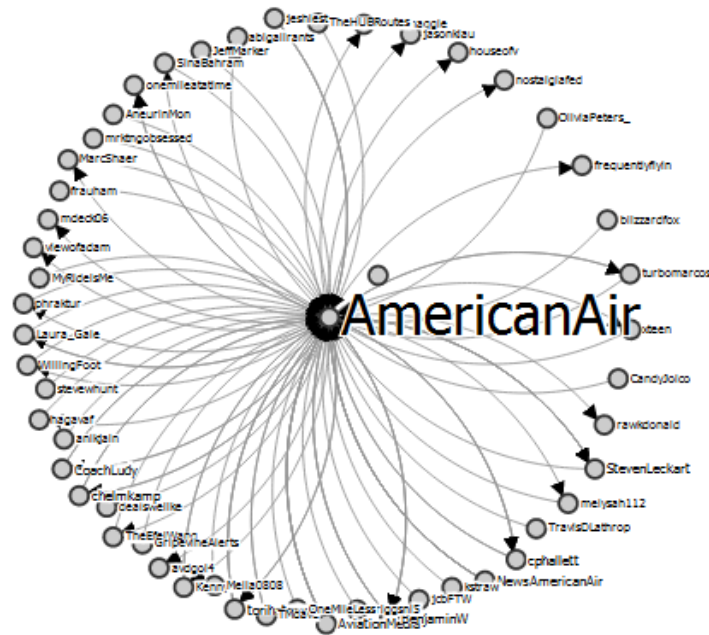
The 100 tweets included 42 by American Airlines representing 17 conversations and 12 responses to earlier conversations. The 17 conversations are classified as customer service issues, compliments, and other.

Customer service (76.5%). Customers tweeted about delays (3), technical issues related to a game on the website (2), a desire for pretzel bread, miles posting to the AAdvantage card, lack of Wi-Fi on the flight, lack of a power outlet on the plane, the high cost of one-way tickets. There was also one unknown customer service issue and requests to handle an issue off Twitter (2).

Compliments (11.8%). One customer tweeted about a delicious meal on the flight and one noted appreciation for an upgrade.

Other (11.8%). One customer tweeted about the desire to get low fares and another questioned a legal policy concerning prohibition of photography.

Figure 2: Air Asia
February 27, 2012
12:31-8:32 p.m. (Malaysia time)
43 nodes, 98 edges
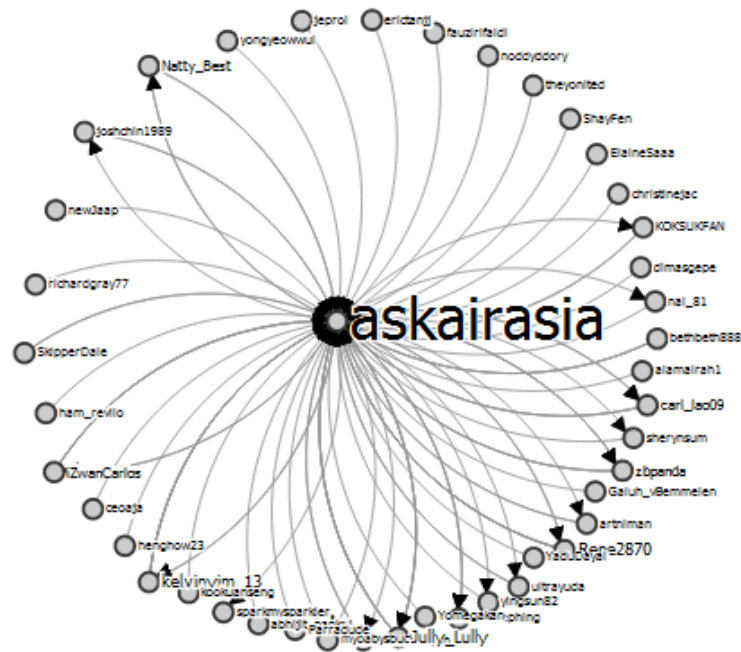
The 100 tweets included 31 by Air Asia representing 11 conversations and 20 responses to earlier conversations. The 11 conversations can all be classified as customer service issues.

Customer service (100%). Comments dealt with baggage costs (4), refund not being received, check-in credit, booked flights being no longer available, online booking, name correction, Sri Lankans not choosing Air Asia, and an unknown customer service issue.

Figure 3: Cebu Pacific
February 24, 2012 8:12 p.m. to
February 27, 2012 8:14 p.m.
(Philippines time zone)
67 nodes, 93 edges
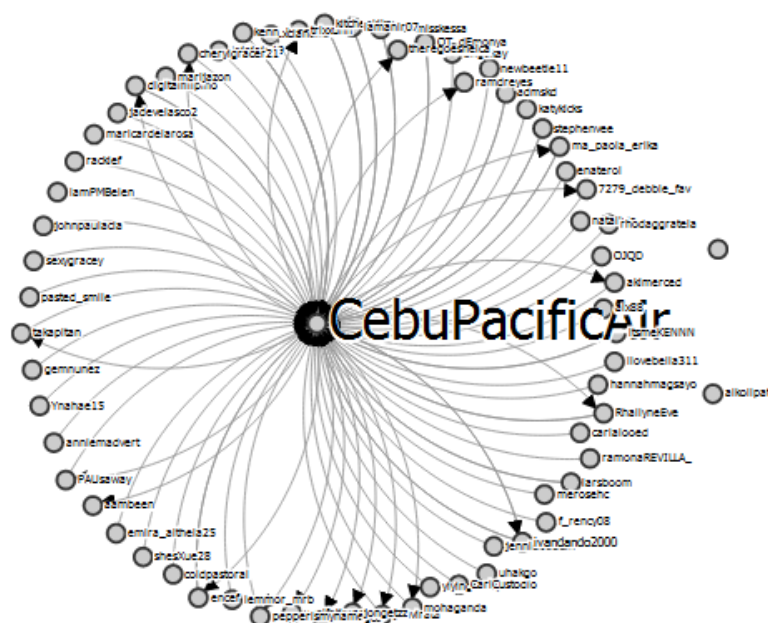
The 25 tweets by Cebu Pacific represented 12 conversations, seven replies to earlier conversations, and five promotional tweets. The 12 conversations and five promotional tweets were classified as customer service, recognition, well wishes, promotional and other.

Customer service (47.1%). Customer service issues included problems with the website (3) and questions about rebooking flights, web check-in, check-in times, seat sales, and no shows.

Compliments (11.8%). Cebu's Web Award from DigitalFilipino was acknowledged by the airline after DigitalFilipino sent a congratulatory tweet. Another tweet thanked the airline for a good flight.

Well wishes (5.9%). One tweet expressed well wishes to a customer after the customer tweeted he had landed at his destination.

Promotion (29.4%). Cebu also used Twitter to advertise promotional fares (3) and highlight their in-flight magazine (2).

Other (5.9%). Cebu responded to a tweet from a passenger who commented on the weather.

Figure 4: Delta Airlines
February 27, 2012
1:44-10:15 p.m. EST
53 nodes, 97 edges
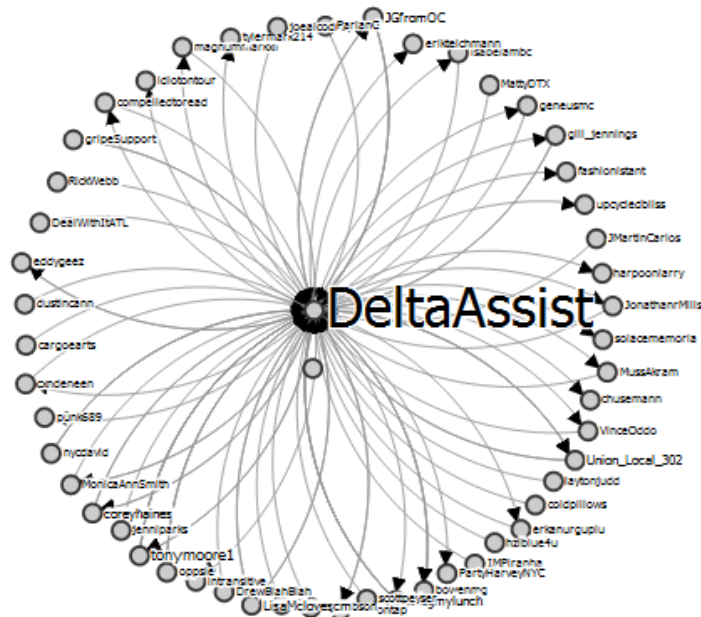
The 44 tweets by Delta represented 20 conversations and 12 replies to earlier conversations. The 20 conversations were classified as customer service and other.

Customer service (95%). Customer service issues included baggage delays (3), rebooking questions (2), flight delays (2), schedule change (2), luggage damage, travel plans problems, bereavement booking, lounge usage, lack of comfort in Economy Comfort seat, inflight Wi-Fi problems, SkyMiles, and issues of an unknown nature (3).

Other (5%). Delta also responded to a user who tweeted "hi" but asking if they had a question or issue.

Figure 5: JetBlue
February 27, 2012
9:46 a.m.-10:19 p.m. EST
53 nodes, 94 edges

The 47 tweets by JetBlue represented 20 conversations, 13 replies to earlier questions, and three promotional tweets. The 20 conversations and three promotional tweets were classified as customer service, compliments, well wishes, promotional, and other.
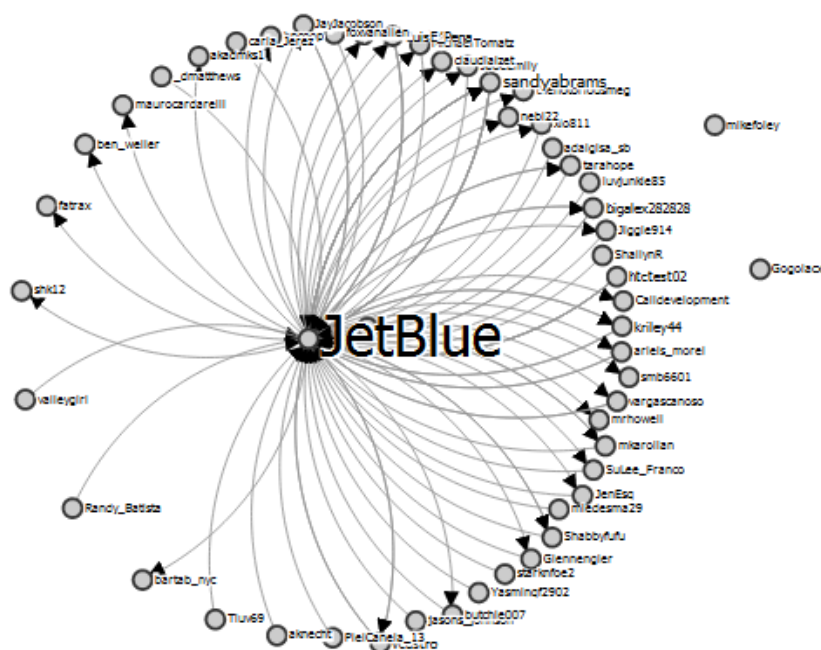
Customer service (60.9%). Issues included problems/questions about True Blue Points (3), website problems (2), having the wrong baggage claim ticket, problems with the in-flight entertainment system, and unknown customer service issues (3). Customers also had questions about bringing knitting needles on board and when flight schedules are posted. Two customers also made new route requests.

Compliments (13.0%). JetBlue received compliments about treatment by flight attendants and the flight itself. They also received a tweet of appreciation about a fixed seat.

Well wishes (4.3%). One tweet about a trip garnered well wishes from JetBlue.

Promotional (13.0%). JetBlue also tweeted about Dominican Independence Day in both English and Spanish (2) and highlighted a news story about the company from Bloomberg News.

Other (8.7%). One user requested biographies of executive leadership and another sent a photo of the Dominican flag. JetBlue responded to both.

Figure 6: KLM Royal Dutch Airlines
February 27, 2012
2:02 p.m.-9:00 p.m.
53 nodes, 98 edges
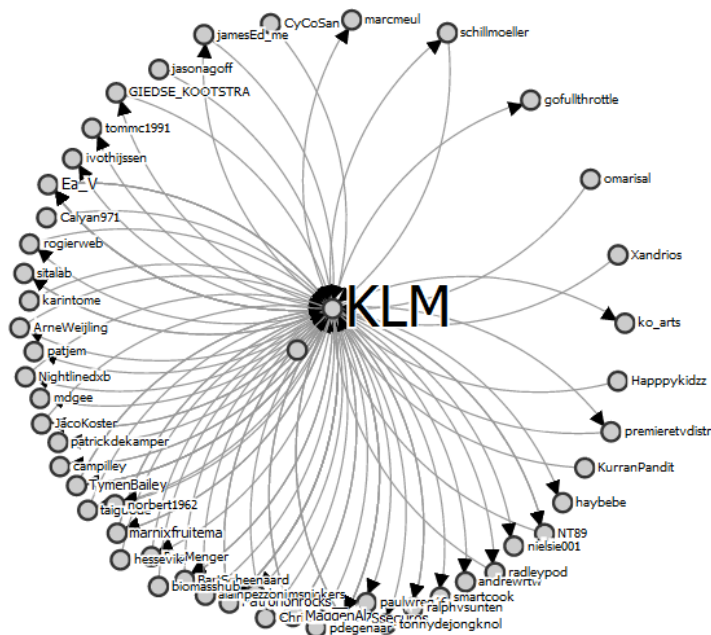
The 62 tweets by KLM represented 19 conversations, 23 replies to earlier questions, and one promotional tweet. The 19 conversations and one promotional tweet were classified as customer service, compliments, promotional and other.

Customer service (50%). Customers had questions about fares (2), whether a flight was on time for scheduled departure, online check-in, SkyMiles, credit card charges, and KLM social media sites. Problems included website issues, a cancelled flight and appropriate compensation, and checking in an extra bag online.

Compliments (15.0%). KLM received a compliment for a good flight and two compliments for service in the Dubai office.

Promotion (5.0%). KLM tweeted about a blog post by the CEO of World Wildlife Fund about their partnership with KLM.

Other (30%). KLM complimented a user's photo, engaged in conversation with a customer about giving a passenger a rose, and discussed a sandwich. There were also three conversations where the context of the conversation could not be established.

Figure 7: Southwest Airlines
February 26, 2012, 7:35 p.m. to
February 27, 2012, 10:30 p.m. EST
76 nodes, 95 edges
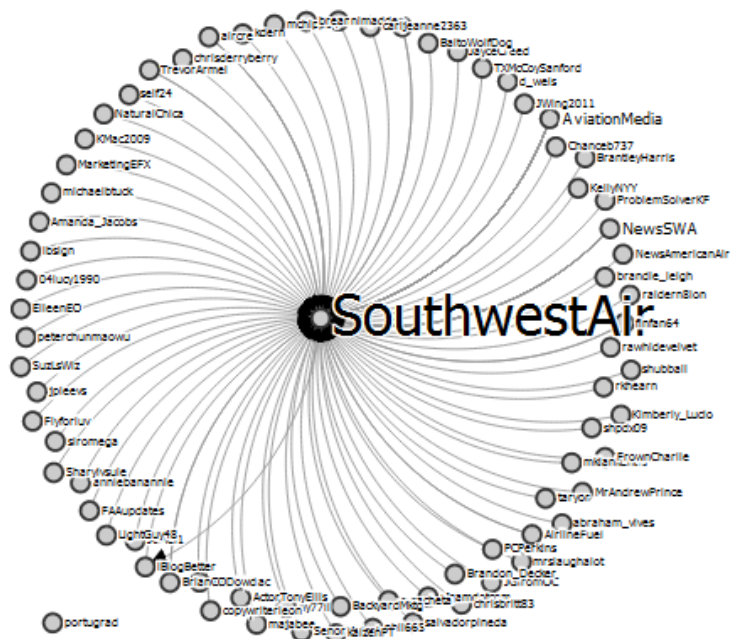
The three tweets by Southwest represented one conversation and two promotional tweets. The tweets were classified as well wishes and promotional.

Well wishes (33.3%). Southwest tweeted well wishes for a good flight for one of their #12DaysofLuv winners.

Promotion (66.7%). Southwest tweeted about a contest and a quote from the CEO.

Discussion

This research represents one of a few studies to explore Twitter dialogue among organizations and publics and possibly the only one to apply data visualizations to the process. Airlines are engaging customers in conversations through Twitter, but many tweets are still going unanswered. Some airlines, however, are doing better than others. Airlines like KLM, JetBlue, Delta, and American are fairly responsive to customers, having almost as many or more conversations with customers than unanswered tweets. Air Asia was slightly less responsive, followed by Cebu Pacific and then Southwest, who barely engaged at all. Not all tweets from customers are likely to be worthy of @replies from the airlines, so the responses from the top four airlines may be adequate.

    Many of the @replies from airlines were generated by a customer service problem or issue. Although not as prevalent, airlines are also using Twitter to engage in dialogue that is not prompted by a customer service situation. Most of these tweets take the form of well wishes (e.g., "@encef Thanks for flying with us! We hope to see you on-board again soon!") or appreciation of compliments (e.g.,"@PAUsaway We're glad you enjoyed your flight. :) See you on-board again soon!"). Airlines are using promotional tweets very little, and not using any tweets that attempt to engage customers in conversation.

    To put this within the framework of Kent and Taylor (1998), the question becomes whether a response to a tweet is enough to achieve dialogue. Looking at the communication between an organization and its publics the way this study and others (e.g., Bortree & Seltzer, 2009; Rybalko & Seltzer, 2010) have done treats dialogue as a process. But if dialogue is a product, not a process, as Kent and Taylor (1998) have noted, how do we measure this product? Another issue is whether the communication reflects mutuality rather than self-interest and domination as suggested by Anderson, Cissna, and Arnett (1994). Many organizations communicating with publics on Twitter are likely to be motivated by their own self-interest of market share growth and overall revenues, therefore thwarting an opportunity to create true dialogue.

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Differences in the Public Response to the Nuclear Crisis

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Abstract
The purpose of this study is to apply the Situational Crisis Communication Theory(SCCT) to the Japanese disasters of last year in order to determine both the Japanese and American public's response of the media's coverage of the events. This study employed a qualitative content analysis of major U.S. and Japan newspapers' coverage. The newspaper sources include: The New York Times and Washington Post Journal in the U.S. and Yomiuri shimbun and Asahi shimbun in Japan. All papers were selected based upon their circulation size and availability. These Major newspapers were analyzed in order to gain a better understanding of how the specific stance and coverage strategy of each competitive organization influenced the public opinion surrounding the various facets of the crisis including crisis management undertaken by the national and local Japanese governments and the effect on the individuals living in the disaster area.

Introduction

Much research is devoted to determining how the news media frames information in order to affect the audiences' understanding and interpretation of a specific issue.

This research involves the application of Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) to the Japanese and U.S. media coverage of the Japanese Tsunami and Nuclear Crisis in March 2011. Understanding the public response in the aftermath of a crisis is a key task in minimizing further worsening of the situation. As more research goes into understanding how humans respond to disasters, it is possible to develop guidelines on the best course of action. One theory in particular, called the Situational Crisis Communication allows crisis response managers to choose a best course of action to protect their interests. The strength of this particular theory lies in the fact that it can be applied to multiple types of crisis, most importantly large scale disasters. This study will focus on how this theory fits with the data gathered from the media coverage of the Japanese disasters on March 11, 2011 to April 11, 2011 by both Japanese and U.S. media outlets.

The Japanese disasters serve as a strong case study due to the scope of devastation and the degree of the media's coverage of the aftermath. To shortly summarize the magnitude of the disaster it is important to point out that although the immediate impact of the tsunami was overwhelming, Japan is still struggling with many issues related nuclear meltdown at the Fukushima nuclear plant. Much of the area is still uninhabited and these residents are struggling to find work and housing. Beyond the impact to those directly involved, the government of Japan faces increasing pressure from citizens who are critical of their response to the disaster as well as the future security of the country. In order to get a benchmark on how the public perceived the events it is necessary to analyze the media's coverage surrounding the issue. This is due to the fact that much of the public's perception about an event is dictated by the information they receive most of which comes from media outlets. According to SCCT control over the delivered message is very important due to the fact that much of the public's response is dependent on who they view as responsible for the event. However, other factors such as culture play a role in the response as well.

This article will outline the differences between the Japanese and U.S. media coverage of the event. It will also seek to explain some of the reasons for the differences between the observed coverage. These findings will then help to show how the media's message can change depending on interests of various organizations including governments and media outlets.

Method

This study aims to examine news media coverage of nuclear crisis in March 2011, by analyzing the coverage of 4 selected U.S. and Japanese newspapers which include: The New York Times, Washington Post, Yomiuri Shimbun, and Asahi Shimbun. These sources were selected due to three important characteristics: circulation size, availability, and influence in the national and international press. Lexis Nexis keyword database searches were used to gather the U.S. newspaper data while printed text of Japanese newspapers was required due to the lack of a similar database. The keywords utilized were, "Japan", "earthquake", "tsunami", and "nuclear." The period of collection for Japanese sources was March 11, 2011 to April 11, 2011 while the period for U.S. sources was March 12, 2011 to April 12, 2011. During this entire period there were a total of 2,248 total article published between each of the sources. In all, Asahi published the most articles, Yomiuri the second most, The New York Times third, and The Washington

Post had the fewest. The number of articles chosen for qualitative review in this study was proportional to the number printed by each source.

During this qualitative analysis the news sources were coded to help identify similar characteristics between the articles in hopes of exposing patterns. This helps to determine overarching themes within and between news sources. This analysis is important in that it allows for a better understanding of how the media's messages affect people on an individual level and helps to shape public perception (Bowers, 1989).

Findings and Discussion

First, the Japanese media focused more on the immediate impact instead of the causes of the disaster. Most of coverage offered personal stories of loss or brushed over significant events. For example, immediately after the earthquake and tsunami Japanese papers were filled with stories outlining issues directly related to the personal safety of Japanese citizens. Asahi Shimbun ran a story on March 13, the day after the earthquake titled, "What Is Happening?" In this story the author outlined the overall impact on the population by stating the number of reported deaths and number of houses destroyed. This would be an expected course of action in the immediate aftermath but as time went on, Japanese papers continued to focus on the personal impact of the disaster. On March 14, three days after the disaster, Yomiuri Shimbun ran an article titled "Sorry Yuna." This article followed the struggles of a mother who lost her child in the disaster. Then on April 6th, almost one month after the disaster, the same paper ran published an article titled, "We Cannot Restart." This article held the same theme as many of the others published and focused on the personal struggles of a fishing village who was struggling to earn money following the devastation.

The stories covered in Asahi were of similar characteristic to those in Yomiuri Shimbun. On March 12 this paper ran a story titled, "Uncertain, Refugees Return Home." This story offered little insight into the disaster and instead just outlined how much of an inconvenience the disaster was on travelers. On March 17th Asahi ran a story titled, "Physical and Mental Limits in Shelters." Which seemed to take a slightly more critical stance of the Japanese government's handling of the crisis but in no way criticized the government and instead focused on individual hardships in the crisis shelters. Finally on April 2, Asahi still remained focused on reporting the economic and personal impact by publishing an article titled, "Lost Homes and Jobs."

Although this is just a small example of all of the news stories published during this period, they offer insight into the theme of most of the stories that were written during this time. Little effort was made to determine the cause of the event or how things could have been prevented. They were also characteristic of one major attribute of the Japanese. Japan is a country famous for manuals and pre –established procedures and many news outlets relied on these when making their stories. They used very little descriptive words towards the disaster such as massive and severe. This was due to the fact that, any outlets were instructed on how to do many things such as not to stir panic, and how to properly apologize when calling local officials for updates.

Also, there was little reporting on the nuclear risks to Japanese citizens or neighboring countries. Much of the information reported in Japan came directly from the government and TEPCO. This made it very hard for citizens to obtain accurate and reliable information. It also made the Japanese skeptical of the information they were being told since they knew that TEPCO was responsible yet they were the only ones releasing information. According to Coombs, once a stakeholder perceives a certain organization to be responsible for an event use of

denial or other similar actions will not be effective in controlling public anger. The fact that the Japanese government was obtaining the same information as the public from the company that many viewed responsible for the nuclear crisis only made the public more angry at the government's response instead of charting the progress of relief and recovery.

In the U.S media, the characteristics of many of the published articles varied greatly from their Japanese counterparts. Being far removed from the Japanese people, U.S newspapers sought stories that their audience could relate to. In The New York Times on March 16, a story was published which pointed out past safety concerns over the type of nuclear reactor that was destroyed in Fukushima (Zeller, 2011). Throughout this article there was a detailed explanation of this type of reactor and it was also stated that this same reactor is used within the United States. Very little mention was made of personal loss in Japan; instead this article raised the fact that this same reactor design is also used within the U.S.

The Next day a New York Times article ran on the front page with the bold heading, "Data Shows Radiation's Spread; Frantic Repairs Go On" (Sanger and Broad, 2011). Not only does this article differ from the Japanese counterparts it its descriptive and emotionally charged title, the contents are far more critical of the Japanese Government. Inside, the authors were quick to point out that the nuclear fallout poised a risk to nearby areas of Japan as well as other countries close to Japan. This was an attribute lacking in many Japanese sources that were analyzed. In this article the authors also raised concerns that the Japanese government was not being prompt in its release of data to the public.

The same theme was present in many of the Washington Post articles which were analyzed during the same period. On March 17, the Washington Post published an article which called the Japanese government's response into question. The article titled, "The Government Is Not Doing Anything" is a very clear accusation that the Japanese government had failed many of the people affected by the disaster. In this article there are multiple interviews with Japanese citizens who offer clear criticisms of the government.

Overall, the U.S. sources took a stronger stance in criticizing the Japanese government along with reporting the impact of the nuclear fallout on the entire region instead of trying to limit focus solely on Japan like many of the Japanese sources did.

The difference in the type of reporting could have many causes. One of the most apparent differences between the Japanese and U.S. Media outlets is that the U.S reporters found it harder to obtain information. First, there was a government restriction on travel into north east Japan. This meant that most of the information came from freelancers who volunteered to go into northeast Japan. Secondly, the Japanese government and TEPCO (Tokyo Electric Company) controlled and released much of the information leaving U.S. reporters to often make assumptions or create misinformed reports. Thirdly, there was a strong cultural and language barrier between Japanese and the U.S. reporters.

Although the U.S did not face any direct damage from the tsunami or nuclear meltdown, many citizens wanted information related to the disaster. In the days following the tsunami the nuclear situation became worst and the U.S media outlets began focusing mainly on this. Reports often featured nuclear experts who laid out detailed explanations of what exactly happened at the Fukushima plants. There were also reports of similar nuclear plants being used in the U.S. Stories such as this lead to panic that a similar disaster might be possible on U.S. soil. At this point both countries began focusing their coverage on the nuclear crisis as the coverage of the tsunami began to decline.

It is now necessary to discuss why these differences were so visible. Firstly, there are

different motivations between the country's media sources. The Japanese government wanted to prevent panic which meant that the Japanese sources tended to shy away from controversial topics. The U.S. viewers were removed from the situation and instead the media outlets wanted report information that the U.S. readers could relate to. This came in the form of detailed explanations of the cause of the nuclear disaster and the possibility that it could happen in the United States.

Another reason for the variation is the fact there are stark cultural differences between the countries. As discussed earlier, cultural up bringing also plays a role in a population's response to crisis. Since most of the information was released in Japanese only, it had to be translated and interpreted in a different cultural filter. The difference between Japanese and U.S. customs created a distraction from the full impact of the disaster.

Conclusion

From this information it is possible to see how the public's perception of a crisis can be shaped depending on the message they are provided. However, using the situation crisis communication theory, it has been shown that governments and other organizations, which rely on the media to help deliver their messages, must pay attention to the public perceptions surrounding the issue. In the case of Japan, the government and TEPCO could have handled the issue differently by being more open with information release to the public. In the U.S., even though they were not directly affected by the disaster, the resulting focus on nuclear safety helps to demonstrate the importance of rapid communication among the government and other agencies with media and other information outlets in order to calm public worries.

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**Using Theory for Strategic Social Media Practices via Conflict Research:
Risk, Hazard and Outrage in University Crisis Communication**

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Abstract

The current study answers the call from Lachlan and Spence (2007) to identify the points of "intersection between new media and crisis communication" and the role of new media and capacity of the Internet to meet goals related to hazard and outrage…" (pp. 389-390). A combination of crisis plan analyses, in-depth interviews with university officials, and student focus groups across five universities with an emphasis on Peter Sandman's model of risk (1987, 2003) as the theoretical underpinning allowed the researchers to answer eight research questions relevant to crisis communication and public relations research.

Introduction

Organizational crises are defined as "specific, unexpected, and non-routine events or series of events that create high levels of uncertainty and threaten or are perceived to threaten an organization's high priority goals" (Seeger, Sellner, & Ulmer, 1998, p. 233). Crises also have the potential to threaten employee and community safety (Coombs & Holladay, 2002; Mitroff, 2000; Pearson & Clair, 1998). Scholars have since argued that the potential threat posed by crises has extended past private businesses, large corporations and non-profit organizations to include colleges and universities (Duke & Masland, 2002).

Gibson, Hancox and Peyronel (2007) argued that colleges and universities that were once regarded as "sheltered ivory towers" have been subjected to increasing levels of scrutiny for the last twenty-five years" (p. 426). This recent change has resulted in an increasing need for universities and colleges to implement and maintain effective crisis management plans that protect their campuses. Gibson and his colleagues pointed out that the typical university crisis management plan should include preparation for "campus crimes, natural disasters, administrative scandals, and student injuries and deaths" (p. 425).

Best practices in crisis communication emphasize the importance of pre-crisis, crisis response, and post-crisis relationship building and dialogue (Coombs, 2007). Researchers in the realm of crisis communication have attempted to identify the most effective forms of communication that successfully lead an organization through the various crisis phases. Recently, the increasing use of social media by key stakeholders has resulted in academic research that examines the best practices and uses of social media during a crisis (Jin, Liu, & Austin, 2011; Schultz, Utz, & Göritz, 2011).

The rapid emergence of social media usage has forced universities to combine traditional crisis communication strategies and tactics with more contemporary strategies that include the efficient use of social media. The shift in focus has also been triggered by the fact that nationwide crises are more commonly being broke via social media as opposed to traditional media, and universities generally cater to the demographic group termed Generation Y or Millennials, all of whom are strong users of social media technologies.

The Millennial generation, which is comprised of individuals that were born between the years of 1982 and 2001, surpasses the number of Baby Boomers by nearly 4 million people and it represents 27% of the American population (Tapscott, 2009). Millenials are the first group of individuals to be born into a society where the Internet permeates both business and social spheres of American life. In fact, a 2007 study conducted by eMarketer.com revealed that Millennials utilize user-generated sites 51% of the time in comparison to Generation X (ages 25-41) or the Baby Boomer generation (ages 42-60). These data further support the argument that organizations should incorporate social media tools into their overall public relations and communication strategy (Breakenridge, 2008).

Additional evidence, as it relates specifically to public relations, is detailed by Fitzgerald and Spagnolia (1999) who suggested that modern practitioners should "increase two-way communication with publics, reduce reliance on traditional print media, manage increased information clutter, and respond to more active information-seeking publics during times of crisis" (p. 12).

The current study, then, answers the call from Lachlan and Spence (2007) to identify the points of "intersection between new media and crisis communication" and the role of new media and capacity of the Internet to meet goals related to hazard and outrage…" (pp. 389-390). A combination of crisis plan analyses, in-depth interviews with university officials, and student

focus groups across five universities with an emphasis on Peter Sandman's model of risk (1987, 2003) as the theoretical underpinning allowed the researchers to answer eight relevant research questions.

Theoretical Considerations

Peter Sandman's model of risk operates under the basic premise that the perceived level of risk involved with a situation or agent is determined by the perceived level of *hazard*, which is comprised of its perceived likelihood and magnitude to cause damage, and the level of stakeholder *outrage*, which involves many emotional or intangible stakeholder responses to the crisis (Sandman, 2003). The model posits that risk communication involves "alerting people to the seriousness of the situation, …reassuring them that positive outcomes are imminent" and "…attempting to steer affected publics toward a level of outrage that is appropriate given the level of hazard" (Sandman, Weinstein, & Hallman, 1998; Sandman, 2003 as discussed by Duhe', 2007, p. 388).

Sandman's model of risk is represented by the formula Risk = Hazard + Outrage, which posits that the primary goal of a risk or crisis message is to complete the formula. The formula reveals that a potential or real crisis can be associated with varying levels of perceived outrage and hazard that may or may not be completely accurate or appropriate for the situation. For example, a potential risk may exist that poses high levels of harm to individuals that may fail to have the appropriate level of outrage, therefore failing to motivate them to take action. These types of risk are classified as high-hazard and low-outrage. Other risks may be associated with very high levels of outrage, even though they do not pose high levels of hazard, leading the public to be fearful and perhaps even take unnecessary precautions. These risks are considered low-hazard and high-outrage risk crisis.

Sandman (2003) argued that high levels of public outrage are the result of a lack of understanding of the level of hazard posed by a risk, which indicates the need to educate this public about the hazard caused by the crisis. Conversely, he pointed out that crisis messages must attempt to respond to public outrage if the public has a clear and accurate understanding of the high levels of hazard posed by a risk or potential crisis. In this way the level of hazard to be addressed may be a product of the degree of outrage. These messages must induce enough fear to motivate the public to take appropriate action yet not induce so much fear as to create panic.

Further, Sandman (2003) identified four kinds of risk communication appropriate for the varying levels of hazard and outrage: public relations (high hazard, low outrage); stakeholder relations (moderate hazard, moderate outrage); outrage management (low hazard, high outrage); and, crisis communication (high hazard, high outrage). First, he suggested that *public relations* is a kind of risk communication that indicates the audience is apathetic, and "the task is often to provoke more outrage." Sandman argued that he labels this as public relations "because the essence of PR is talking to people who aren't interested. […] The uninterested public is a huge group, so high-hazard low-outrage risk communication is likely to make heavy use of mass media."

It is important to note here that while the researchers disagree with the overtly simplistic label prescribed to public relations by Sandman, this does not dissuade the pursuit of the applicability of Sandman's model for the current research, and, as will become evident, strategic public relations is fundamentally applicable to each typology of risk communication identified by Sandman (initially as can be seen when he specifically identifies the different types of

audiences and media for which the risk communication activities should be prescribed based on typology).

Hence, Sandman suggests that *stakeholder relations* refers to an "attentive audience" where the task is "to discuss the issues openly and rationally explaining your views and responding to audience questions and concerns" with a reliance on interpersonal (as opposed to mass media) communication "supplemented by such specialized media as newsletters and web sites." Next, Sandman identifies *outrage management* as indicative of an outraged audience whereas the technical hazard itself is not actually high. He offers the following example: "And while the outrage may be justified in some nontechnical sense (for example, you may have been less than honest or less than courteous), it isn't technically justified: the hazard is low." Sandman suggests tactics such as listening, apologizing, etc. and recommends in-person dialogue where the audience will be the primary narrators. The concepts of listening, apologizing, etc. are not new to public relations (see Coombs & Schmidt, 2000, for a full review). For example, image restoration theory (Benoit, 1995) recognizes strategies for dealing with outrage to include denial, evasion of responsibility, reducing the offensiveness, apologizing, or taking corrective action. Actual *crisis communication*, on the other hand, is described as rare by Sandman who suggests that the audience in this case is "huge and very upset," and the outrage is even greater than in the preceding category with high outrage. Sandman states, "It's also different—more fear and misery than anger. If either is unbearable, it may flip into denial or escalate into terror or depression." He notes that a major difference is that the outrage is typically not actually aimed at the organization ("you") and suggests strategies to include avoiding over-reassurance and being empathic. Further, crisis communication according to Sandman uses mass media communication because "everyone is a stakeholder."

As may have become clear, strategic public relations is applicable for each typology of risk communication identified by Sandman. Perhaps, further rationale for the role of public relations in each typology of risk communication identified by Sandman comes from his own experimental research in which participants were given hypothetical news stories that differed in regards to the levels of hazard and outrage. Sandman and Miller (1993) found that across three different experiments, outrage significantly affected perceived risk at a much higher level than did the actual hazard. More recently, Lachlan and Spence (2010) found that hazard is unidimensional, whereas outrage is comprised of the concepts of event and blame. *Event outrage* describes audience responses to the hazard itself, and *blame outrage* refers to audience responses that seek to "place blame for the manifestations of crises or the failure to appropriately construct and disseminate risk messages" (p. 1883). This research seems to suggest that perceived hazard (based on the perceived probability and magnitude to cause damage) or technical aspect of risk/crisis communication would be the primary duty of those experts in emergency management. The disparity between actual hazard, as communicated by emergency management practitioners, and perceived risk, according to Sandman and other's own research lies in a lack of understanding on behalf of the public or the public's "low science literacy" (See Miller, 1983 for example). Sandman (1993) states, "This view is widely shared by technical experts and is tacitly accepted by much research…" Mazur (1981, 1990) suggests that the more technical information provided, the more concerned the audience will be in regards to crisis communication via mass media.

Outrage, then, it seems would be the primary duty of the public relations practitioner. Recently, the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) released a PRSA-led definition of public relations: "Public relations is a strategic communication process that builds mutually

beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics." Applying this definition to Sandman's model of perceived risk, it is clear that public relations practitioners serve to moderate outrage via strategic communication. This, in turn, results in mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics such that publics receive information that is beneficial in regards to generating understanding of the perceived risk via nontechnical communication or factors such as "trust, fairness, and courtesy" (Sandman & Miller, 1993).

Organizations receive benefits in regards to nonfinancial public relations outcome variables to include credibility, trust, reputation, relationships, goodwill, and confidence (Stacks, 2011). Clearly, neither hazard nor outrage communication operate in a vacuum (hence, Risk=Hazard+Outrage); however, if one thing has become clear, it is that neither should emergency management nor public relations practitioners in risk/crisis communication situations.

Research Questions

While the research regarding risk/crisis communication from an emergency management approach as well as from a public relations approach has been explored at length, what the public relations literature is lacking is an examination of risk/crisis communication regarding social media. Thus, the current study attempts to answer the call from Lachlan and Spence (2007) to identify the points of "intersection between new media and crisis communication" and the role of new media and capacity of the Internet to meet goals related to hazard and outrage" (pp. 389) according to Sandman's (1987, 2003) model of risk communication.

The current study seeks to gain insight into not only how universities are utilizing social media during crises but also seeks to develop a deeper understanding of how students use social media technologies during a crisis and their perceptions and expectations of universities regarding social media use. A combination of crisis plan analyses, in-depth interviews with university officials, and student focus groups across five universities with a focus on Sandman's model of risk as the theoretical underpinning allowed the researchers to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: Do universities use social media to send messages about the probability and magnitude (hazard) of various crises?
RQ2: Do universities use social media to assess the level of public outrage regarding university crises?
RQ3: Do universities use social media in attempts to reduce or increase (or both) public outrage related to university crises?
RQ4: Do students use social media to assess the probability and magnitude (hazard) of university crises?
RQ5: Do students use social media to assess the level of public outrage regarding university crises?
RQ6: Do students use social media to communicate their outrage regarding university crises?
RQ7: What are students' expectations for universities regarding the use of social media to communicate hazard and outrage related to university crises?
RQ8: Based on this initial qualitative examination, does Sandman's model fit well within general university crisis communication via social

Methodology

In order to answer the aforementioned research questions, the researchers used a combination of in-depth interviews with seven university officials from five universities (one private and four public, which can be further categorized in regards to size as follows: one small, one mid-sized, and three large), to include the emergency management directors of three campuses within a single university (seven interviews total), and three focus groups with (N = 26) participants representative of the Millenial demographic group from two universities in the Southeast region of the United States, one public and one private.

Interview Participants

The professional experience of the emergency management participants included serving in the military or police force and working in emergency management at the government level, corporate public relations, and journalism. Participants in the study included both males and one female that all served authoritative roles regarding their respective universities' emergency management departments. Participants typically had the job title of "Director" of emergency management at their respective universities. The combined student population of the universities represented by interview participants was approximately 195,000 students, and all but one interviewee reported using social media for crisis communication efforts. The interview protocol used in this research is detailed in Appendix 1.

Focus Group Participants

The focus group participates were 58% female, 42% male, aged 18 to 27 years of age, and ranged from freshman to senior level classification. The participants were recruited from undergraduate communication courses and offered a small amount of extra credit as incentive for their participation. Efforts were made to ensure that participants were comfortable and the lines of communication were open. The focus group protocol used in this research is detailed in Appendix 2.

Results

First, a discussion of general social media use for crisis communication is important to understand logistics and gain perspective. A majority of university officials in the current research indicated that their universities use social media during crises. Specifically, Facebook, a social networking site, and Twitter, a micro-blogging site were mentioned by all participants except the aforementioned director who did not use social media for the medical campus' crisis communication efforts.

The majority of interview participants pointed out that their universities have dedicated emergency Facebook and Twitter sites (two universities did not have dedicated Facebook accounts but maintained dedicated emergency Twitter accounts); however, the amount of fans and followers, as well as engagement via social media on behalf of the fans and followers seemed to differ greatly across universities in this research. Tables are provided for perspective. Main pages for university social media sites are also included because this research indicates that emergency notifications are often cross-posted among accounts, although the seriousness of the crisis typically dictates such behavior.

Table 1: Facebook Fans of University Emergency Notification (EN) and Social Media Sites

University (identified by number and size)*	Dedicated EN Facebook Fans	% based on Student Population	Main University Facebook Fans	% based on Student Population
1 (small)	NA	NA	11,801	1.31
2 (mid-sized)	122	0.01	163,088	10.51
3 (large)	NA	NA	95,215	3.07
4 (large)	3,228	0.08	13,574	0.34
5 (large)	62	0.00	2,335	0.04

*The university for which three campuses in the system were included was collapsed into a single category.

Table 2: Twitter Followers of University Emergency Notification (EN) and Social Media Sites

University (identified by number and size)*	Dedicated EN Twitter Followers	% based on Student Population	Main University Twitter Followers	% based on Student Population
1 (small)	127	0.01	4,454	0.49
2 (mid-sized)	39	0.00	26,439	1.65
3 (large)	405	0.01	4,194	0.14
4 (large)	3,133	0.08	5,046	0.13
5 (large)	98	0.00	1,175	0.02

*The university for which three campuses in the system were included was collapsed into a single category.

As Table 1 and 2 demonstrate, the relative size of the university does not appear to be an indicator of the amount of fans or followers for either the dedicated emergency management pages or the main university pages, which is unexpected particularly in regards to the university main pages. Also, as will be addressed at length later, it is clear that fans and followers for many universities are not current students; however, one could reason that this specifically applies only to the main university pages where percent based on student population reached the hundreds and one thousand in one case. The remainder of this research will make reference to the numbers assigned to each university for identification in all relevant discussion.

The first research question determined if universities use social media to send messages about the probability and magnitude (hazard) of various crises.

RQ1: Do universities use social media to send messages about the probability and magnitude (hazard) of various crises?

` To review, Sandman (1993) suggests that hazard is "the technical aspect" of perceived risk or "the product of risk magnitude and probability" (p. 586). Participants in this research suggested that they do use social media to communicate the nature of the crisis or technical details, defined by Sandman (1993, 1998) as hazard, and its perceived likelihood (probability) but, rarely, its magnitude to cause damage. One participant discussed how his university used social media to tell students to avoid a particular area due to reported suspicious activity, and another participant posted tornado warnings. Participants felt as though using social media to indicate the possible magnitude of the damage that could be caused by the crisis would cause unwanted and exaggerated levels of outrage. Perhaps, this view is supported by the

aforementioned research on providing technical detail or hazard (Mazur, 1981. 1990; Miller, 1983; Salomone, 1992; Sandman, 1993; Lachlan & Spence, 2010). This is in large part, as noted by participants, because in many crisis situations there is no way to know the actual magnitude. For example, one participant explained, "Ok, if it's in a classroom building, we know that if everybody showed up there, it should be about 600 people in that building today, but I don't know if somebody was sick, or didn't show up, or dropped a class, of if the teacher may have cancelled the class. It's almost impossible to predict those things." Another participant stated,

> The issue is sometimes we do not know the true nature of an emergency. We may get a call that says there is a chemical leak from a train car, but we do not know what that chemical is, so therefore we do not know what the hazard actually is. This means the first thing we will do is say "stay away" and "stay out of the fumes" until we can get more information to provide the students.

In other words, university emergency management officials are reporting the probability (likelihood) that there is, in fact, a hazard, but they are unable to or do not feel comfortable communicating the magnitude. Further, it should be noted that not including weather-related alerts, unforeseen crisis events preclude universities from communicating the probability. For example, an active shooter on campus cannot be predicted whereas a hurricane can be with some accuracy. Therefore, this research finds that overall universities do use social media to send messages about the hazard of various crises (RQ1); however, the inclusion of probability and magnitude content in those messages differ on a case-by-case basis, which is not surprising in that the inherent quality of a crisis is that each case is different or "specific" according to Seeger et al. (1998, p. 233). Thus, this research proceeds to RQ2 to discuss outrage as it relates to university crisis communication efforts.

> **RQ2:** Do universities use social media to assess the level of public outrage regarding university crises?

Again, to review, Sandman (1993) suggests that outrage is the "nontechnical aspect" of perceived risk" or "a function of whether people feel the authorities can be trusted, whether control over risk management is shared with affected communities, etc." (p. 586). Empirical research by Lachlan and Spence (2010) suggests that outrage includes affective responses to risk, such as (but not limited to) anger, distrust, fear, suspicion, and contempt. Their research further suggests two dimensions of outrage: event outrage, responses to the crisis event itself, and blame outrage, personal emotional responses to the crisis.

University officials in this research discussed how they utilize social media (specifically, Twitter and Facebook) to obtain feedback from the environment that alerts them to the existence of a possible crisis, how the public is responding to a crisis and the university's messages, and assessing how well the university handled the crisis. In other words, participants indicated that the use of social media in the assessment of public outrage by university officials is used in all three crisis phases such that it is used in the pre-crisis phase to indicate a situation or issue that has the potential to become a crisis based on public outrage, during the crisis to assess the level of public outrage, and following the crisis for assessing how well the crisis was handled by the university in regards to managing public outrage. For emergency management participants in this research, outrage serves as a sort of signaling mechanism that indicates the various crisis phases

and prompts responses accordingly. One participant stated, "When we put the message out there, we have used Twitter to determine if our message communicated what we intended in terms of not causing too much panic [outrage] but getting our point across." In reference to recent emergency communication, another participant stated,

> We were actually watching to see how the students were responding to the particular message. In the incident where we told students to avoid a particular area (cops thought a bomb was located in a car, which ended up being a false alert), kids were making jokes about what it might be or what it could be, but there did not seem to be too much distress. This made us feel as though the message was working in terms of not making people get too upset. Now, we did not cause panic, but they were avoiding the area.

Thus, RQ2 can now be answered such that universities are using social media as a primary tool for assessing the level of public outrage regarding a university crisis.

RQ3: Do universities use social media in attempts to reduce or increase (or both) public outrage related to university crises?

While the previous research question determined that universities are using social media as a primary tool for *assessing* the level of public outrage regarding a university crisis, emergency management participants in this research suggested that reducing public outrage in applicable crisis situations is a primary goal in regards to crisis communication via social media. However, there was little evidence that emergency management practitioners sought to moderate outrage (increasing or reducing) *in actuality* for university crisis events. Most of the communication on behalf of the university emergency management participants focused on technical (hazard) information. A potential exception may be found in a common theme identified by all participants indicating that there are large amounts of erroneous information obtained from environmental scanning in the assessment of public outrage in crisis situations. Participants discussed how they felt as though the students often sacrificed accuracy to receive the messages with more immediacy, which can be an unrealistic expectation during a crisis event. Others pointed out that the media rely on social media to be the first to get the message out about a crisis, which has the potential to compound the inaccurate information that is then reported on their websites as unsubstantiated claims. Therefore, university emergency management officials communicate via social media to diffuse public outrage as a result of any inaccurate information. However, this may be viewed, again, as providing technical detail or factual hazard-related information to outraged publics in order to mitigate inaccurate information that has caused outrage. Thus, RQ3 suggests that while university emergency management officials do, in fact, use social media to assess outrage (RQ2) and agree that reducing outrage in applicable crisis situations is a primary goal in regards to crisis communication via social media, the actual moderation of public outrage appears to be rare except in cases where additional hazard information is provided to reduce uncertainty.

Next, this research sought to not only understand the perspectives of university emergency management officials, but also sought to understand students', a primary stakeholder for universities, use of social media in university crisis situations as applied to Sandman's model for risk communication. Again, three focus groups were performed across two universities with a

total of 26 participants. The research began by asking student participants to define a crisis in order to gain an initial understanding of their perspectives in regards to specific research questions. Student participants defined crises as events that are "hectic," "tragic," "sudden," and "unpredictable" with the potential to disrupt the state of normalcy at their universities and cause panic. In comparison to scholarly literature and definitions surrounding crisis communication, the student participants' description was similar. Thus, RQ4 begins by asking,

      RQ4: Do students use social media to assess the probability and magnitude (hazard) of university crises?

As may have been expected from the social media data provided in Tables 1 and 2, results were mixed as to whether or not students used social media to assess the probability and magnitude (hazard) of university crises via social media. It can be posited that this is due to the fact that participants from the universities had geographically undergone crises at extremely different levels in regards to proximity. Participants at university one (see Table 1 and 2 for corresponding demographic data) had been in close proximity to extreme crises. A participant from university one explained, "If it happened once, it can happen again." On the other hand, the student participants at university two (see Table 1 and 2 for corresponding demographic data) had not experienced any such extreme crises in the past five years, if ever. Therefore, this research purported that the salience prescribed to crisis communication by participants at these two universities would differ. And, in fact, it did. For university one, where students had geographically been in close proximity to more than one extreme university crisis, students indicated that they felt as though they were currently susceptible to crises their university or surrounding universities had experienced in the past. Besides using emergency text alerts, students at university one indicated that they obtain information related to crises using both Twitter and Facebook, but they felt as though Twitter was more appropriate for crisis communication on behalf of the university because Facebook was ineffective for crisis communication due to its "friending" function. For example, one student stated that she would rather "follow" the local police department on Twitter rather than "friending" it on Facebook. Another participant stated, "Facebook seems more like something you use for friends and for social reasons. Twitter is different because it allows you to follow organizations and keep up with what they are saying." In other words, this research suggests that student participants do not want to be socially associated with university emergency management departments, which are commonly an extension of university police departments, and felt the purposes of a social networking site like Facebook differed in comparison to a micro-blogging site like Twitter. Ultimately, the decision to use social media during crisis situations was attributed to what student participants from university one perceived as a lack of information from their university. When asked to elaborate on what they meant by "lack of information," they argued that it was either a failure of the university to provide specific information at all, or the university's inability to provide the information in what they felt was a timely manner. If the information received from the university conflicts with the information obtained from social media, students argued that they view the university information as more credible.

Conversely, the majority of student participants from university two indicated that they would not use social media (Facebook or Twitter) to obtain information during a crisis situation because they felt the alerts sent out via traditional media sufficed and further suggested that becoming a "friend" on Facebook or following the university emergency management account

on Twitter did not serve much of a purpose with the use of traditional alert systems in place. In addition, student participants at university two paralleled the opinions of participants from university one such that they indicated that their primary use of a social networking site like Facebook was for social purposes and did not want to use it for official university communications. Further, students at university two seemed to indicate irritation toward the amount of university-related communication they received. Students at university two specifically described crisis-related communication as occurring too often and suggested an alternative system be used. University two sends emergency alerts (phone call, text message, and email) for all crisis-related events to include crime advisories such as a robbery on-campus, which students particularly noted as a source of frustration. Student participants suggested an alternative system that sends only "serious" emergency alerts via the aforementioned traditional means. Thus, RQ4 can be answered such that *some* students are using social media to assess hazard, particularly those who prescribe salience to crisis communication and feel susceptible to crises. Thus, this research proceeds to RQ5 and RQ6 to discuss outrage as it relates to university crisis communication and perceptions and behaviors of student focus group participants.

RQ5: Do students use social media to assess the level of public outrage regarding university crises?

RQ6: Do students use social media to communicate their outrage regarding university crises?

Research questions five and six are important to understand because student participants in this research who indicated that they do use social media to assess hazard (RQ4) often referenced third-party sources in discussions surrounding their assessment. Student participants at university one suggested that they would use social media to assess the level of public outrage for a university crisis (RQ5) via third-party sources (their fellow students, friends, and the media) when a lack of official university communication to this extent exists. As a specific example, university one recently had a crisis at another university campus that is located in close proximity to the university one campus. University one did not send out emergency alerts or release any information regarding the matter until the post-crisis phase. One participant stated,

I got on Facebook and we were looking all over to find out what was going on. The worst part of this was we all had class and the school was still in session. We wondered what we should do. Should we go and get penalized for missing a day or should we stay at home where it is hopefully safe? Our parents wanted us to stay home so if the school is not saying anything and we miss school and get penalized, that is not right. It put us in a hard position because the school is not giving any information, and Facebook is making you feel as though you should panic.

This suggests that information obtained via social media from third-party sources in the midst of a lack of communication on behalf of the university caused students to feel panic during what they perceived to be a potential crisis situation. Returning to Sandman's model, the actual, technical hazard was low because the crisis was not on university one's campus, which is perhaps why university one did not activate the emergency notification system. However, the nontechnical, emotional responses or outrage to the crisis was high among students, ultimately

resulting in a high level of perceived risk on behalf of the participant (and the participant's parents). Because this research has demonstrated that the primary information sent from universities regarding crisis events is focused on communicating technical hazard details (RQ1), it can further be surmised that student participants are seeking out outrage-type information that provides cues as to how they should personally feel or behave, which leads to RQ6 (Do students use social media to communicate their outrage regarding university crises?**).**

Student participants from university one also indicated that they communicated outrage regarding university crises specifically in regards to retweeting information on Twitter and reposting information on Facebook. Again, this seems to reinforce the idea that student participants are using third-party cues on social media and are reposting information, perhaps, to demonstrate a personal response in regards to salience for the crisis situation, or what could be classified as event outrage, i.e. responses to events according to Lachlan and Spence (2010). Further, in response to a query as to what other information student participants send out via social media (in addition to reposts) during crises events, one student participant succinctly stated, "It all depends on how you feel in the moment." Returning to the aforementioned crisis situation where students did not receive the desired information from university one, students confirmed that they communicated outrage toward the university for not communicating with them at that time. According to Lachlan and Spence (2010) this would be classified as blame outrage, or personal, emotional responses, and clearly relates to such outrage factors as "trust, control, fairness, and courtesy" (Sandman, 1987) and public relations outcomes for the organization such as credibility, trust, reputation, relationships, goodwill, and confidence (Stacks, 2011).

Conversely, again, the majority of student participants from university two indicated that they would not use social media (Facebook or Twitter) to obtain information during a crisis situation. However, student participants from university two did indicate that they would use social media for crises such as university scandals where they wanted to see what friends were posting. This, again, is likely attributable to the experience and subsequent salience of different types of crises across the two universities. Students at university two have encountered two such university scandals in the past year alone and, thus, use social media in a similar fashion as university one in regards to assessing and communicating outrage. Although the crises at university one have the potential to be more serious or life-threatening, student participants at university two also used social media to assess outrage (RQ5) in regards to university scandals via third parties. Information obtained from third parties showing a low level of outrage provided cues to students as to how they should personally feel or behave (RQ6). In fact, university two's public relations department created a campaign in the wake of the university scandal. The campaign was generally embraced by students, and this, perhaps moderated potential outrage on behalf of students as they assessed outrage among their peers and took cues as to the level of outrage they should express or communicate. Therefore RQ5 and RQ6 can now be answered affirmatively such that, while the types of crises differ, students are using social media to assess outrage (RQ5). Again, this can be attributed to the experiences and, hence, salience attributed to different crises by students across the two universities involved in this research. Further, the assessment of public outrage consists of third-party posts among friends on Facebook and tweets from those they follow on Twitter. Students further indicated that they communicated outrage on social media (RQ6) via reposts on Facebook and retweets on Twitter (event outrage) as well as in regards to emotional responses for student participants at university one (blame outrage).

Next, it was important to ultimately evaluate students' expectations for university social media use in regards to crisis communication. Thus, using Sandman's model of risk communication, RQ7 asks,

RQ7: What are students' expectations for universities regarding the use of social media to communicate hazard and outrage related to university crises?

Student participants at both university one and two all seemed to be in agreement that the universities should first focus on traditional means of emergency notification where getting the message out as quickly as possible is the top priority. Student participants at university one posited that email, specifically, was the least effective method to communicate with them regarding a crisis because of the overwhelming amount of university-related messages they receive. Student participants at university one also expressed an expectation of universities to use social media for crisis communication. For example, a student participant stated, "If there was a crisis on campus I would hope that [university one] would tweet about it so I get it. Once I get it, I'm going to text all my friends." At both universities, students primarily expressed that they wanted to receive what would be classified as hazard information (whether via social media or traditional means). For example, one participant stated, "Tell me what I need to do to avoid the danger. I want instructions on how to be safe," and others described the "who, what, when, where, why." No student participants suggested that nontechnical, outrage sorts of information as an expectation regarding social media and crisis communication. On the other hand, but somewhat similarly, students at university two did not have an expectation for the university to use social media to communicate crisis information and expressed irritation with the amount of information they received. Thus, RQ7 can be answered such that some students, particularly those who prescribe salience to crisis communication and feel susceptible to dangerous crises, expect university crisis communication via social media regarding hazard information, and no student participants suggested that nontechnical, outrage sorts of communication were an expectation regarding social media and crisis communication. However, this research further notes that students are assessing outrage information from third-party sources in the absence of such university-related crisis communication. Perhaps it follows then, that when such information is provided by the university, outrage is effectively moderated as in the case of university two's campaign in the wake of its scandal.

Following this extensive qualitative examination of both university emergency management officials' as well as students' use of social media for crisis communication using Sandman's model of risk as the theoretical underpinning, it is important to now evaluate Sandman's theory for its face validity and applicability for the current research. Thus, the final research questions asks,

RQ8: Based on this initial qualitative examination, does Sandman's model fit well within general university crisis communication via social media?

As has been evidenced by the aforementioned research questions, it appears that overall Sandman's model of risk works well for evaluating perceived risk among student participants in this research, particularly in regards to social media. Social media allows for the communication of hazard on behalf of universities, although these messages are typically the same as are used via traditional emergency notification media. However, social media differs from traditional

media used in crisis communication in that it can be used for environmental scanning, research, and feedback that allows an assessment of outrage, although universities are not typically using social media in the moderation of such outrage. Thus, the researchers do note a primary shortcoming of Sandman's model in its ignorance toward and exclusion of the public relations role in crisis communication that can serve to impact outrage.

Discussion

To summarize, the universities in this research are using social media to send messages about the hazard of various crises (RQ1); however, the inclusion of probability and magnitude content in those messages differ on a case-by-case basis. Universities in this research also indicated that they are using social media as a primary tool for assessing the level of public outrage regarding university crises (RQ2); however, while university officials agreed that reducing outrage is a primary goal in regards to crisis communication, the actual moderation of public outrage appears to be rare expect in cases where additional hazard information is provided to reduce uncertainty or combat misinformation (RQ3). Some student participants in this research indicated that they use social media to assess hazard, particularly those students who prescribe more salience to crisis communication due to feelings of susceptibility to risk (RQ4). Moreover, student participants use social media to assess outrage (RQ5) among third-party sources, as well as communicate outrage (RQ6) primarily via retweets on Twitter and reposts on Facebook (event outrage), but also emotional responses, particularly for students who felt they were not receiving enough information from the university (blame outrage). Overall, students who prescribed more salience to crisis communication due to feelings of susceptibility to risk indicated an expectation of crisis communication via social media on behalf of their university (RQ7). This is particularly the case in regards to hazard information, but not in regards to outrage information. Finally, in applying Sandman's model to university-related crisis communication via social media, this research concludes that the model works well for understanding and evaluating the perceived risk among student participants in this research (RQ8).

To expand, most crisis communication, as indicated by university officials, focused on the probability such as stating that a tornado was predicted to impact the university area or that traffic was predicted to be particularly difficult due to a campus visitor. However, the researchers note here that magnitude, redefined to include damages resulting from a crisis (not, the *potential* magnitude) may also be communicated particularly in the post-crisis phase. For example, it would not be outrageous to expect that following a tornado, communication may include the number of university facilities or homes damaged number of people affected, lives lost, etc. Further, however, the researchers posit that this may particularly come in the form of such communication that tends to offer emotional support or a humanizing quality on behalf of the university. In so much, this sort of communication may fall within the expertise of the public relations practitioner such that it is used to moderate outrage and serves outcomes such as reputation. For an actual example, in February 2012, 11 people were killed just outside of Gainesville, Florida in a pileup of vehicles that resulted from smoke and fog on a major interstate. A university participant used in this research and located in proximity to the site of the incident reported the event on Facebook via the dedicated emergency notification site and offered condolences as well as preparedness information regarding smoke and fog conditions. In this way, social media is being used to communicate technical information in the form of magnitude (how many killed or affected) as well as pre-crisis technical preparedness information, but arguably serves an additional purpose in regards to an emotional response on

behalf of the university. Importantly, this information was not sent out via any of the traditional emergency notification systems, and can be posited to serve public relations goals of reputation, credibility, confidence, etc. for the university. In this circumstance, the researchers are hesitant to prescribe the communication as a moderator of outrage because the university itself was not impacted; nonetheless, the communication on behalf of the university might otherwise be categorized as such. It is, perhaps, further important to note here that this example may be the exception as the current research suggests that most post-crisis communication does not, in fact, include emotional responses on behalf of the university. Rather, when the university undergoes a crisis that necessitates the use of the emergency notification system, the typical social media message includes only technical, hazard information such as "all clear" messages (RQ1).

As can be expanded from the Gainesville case, communication that addresses outrage appears to be the exception, not the norm. Another potential exception may be found in a common theme identified by all participants indicating that there are large amounts of erroneous information obtained from environmental scanning in the assessment of public outrage in crisis situations. Others pointed out that the media rely on social media to be the first to get the message out about a crisis, which has the potential to compound the inaccurate information that is then reported on their websites as unsubstantiated claims. Therefore, university emergency management officials communicate via social media to diffuse public outrage as a result of inaccurate information. However, this can be viewed, again, as providing technical detail or factual hazard-related information to outraged publics in order to mitigate inaccurate information that has caused outrage. While providing technical detail to combat inaccurate information may serve to lessen outrage in regards to uncertainty, it does not effectively address many of the other emotional reactions involved in the moderation of public outrage such as "trust, control, fairness, and courtesy" (Sandman, 1987).

University officials did indicate that they use social media to *assess* public outrage (RQ2). It is, perhaps, important to note here that social media is the only such tool that allows for this kind of environmental scanning, research, and feedback, aside from traditional attitude and opinion research initiatives that are not as timely as the information provided via social media. The importance of social media, in addition to enabling such monitoring, is also in the two-way nature of communication, which further allows for the moderation of outrage (RQ3). It is recommended that universities embrace such an approach in regards to crisis communication not just in monitoring, but also in allowing students to pose questions to officials and get feedback. This is perhaps, easier said than done; however, in order to use social media to its fullest potential for crisis communication, such an approach should be implemented.

Of further importance to address, social media use during crises among students at university one and two appears to be directly related to the salience and susceptibility prescribed by students. Students at university one suggested that they felt susceptible to university crises and, thus, had more salient attitudes toward university crisis communication, whereas students at university two did not describe any such feelings. Importantly, for student participants at university one, who prescribed more salience to crisis communication and indicated that they felt susceptible to crisis events, social media served as an important medium for assessing hazard; however, it appears that their assessment of hazard via social media comes primarily from third-party information that becomes relevant only when they perceive a failure of the university to provide specific information or the university's inability to provide the information in what they feel is a timely manner. Student participants at university two, on the other hand, expressed that they would not use social media to obtain crisis communication; however, also suggested that a

better emergency notification system is needed to decrease the amount of emergency alerts they receive. The researchers suggest that for university two, where it appears that both feelings of susceptibility and salience prescribed to crisis communication are low, social media could serve as the primary crisis communication tool for crime, weather, and travel advisories. As such, students who were interested in receiving this sort of information could opt into it.

Further, research questions five and six are particularly important to understand because student participants in this research who indicated that they do use social media to assess hazard (RQ4) often referenced third-party sources in discussions surrounding their assessment. Previous research with university emergency management officials indicated that hazard was being communicated (RQ1), and university officials agreed that reducing outrage in applicable crisis situations is a primary goal in regards to crisis communication via social media (RQ3). However, the actual moderation of public outrage appears to be rare except in cases where additional hazard information is provided to reduce uncertainty (RQ3). Thus, it was important to understand that students are using social media to assess outrage (RQ5) such that it can be posited that third parties' levels of outrage may provide cues to students as to how they should personally feel or behave (RQ6). Perhaps, research that supports this assertion can be identified in literature surrounding norms and in-group behavior.

In fact, participants from university one noted that social media is one of the first mediums they consult in a crisis situation because communication from the university does not provide enough information. In regards to a recent crisis that occurred on-campus, one participant stated, "I received a text from [university one] that didn't really say anything. That is when I immediately went to Facebook. I knew that someone would know something." Further, it is important to note participants recognized the potential for social media to provide inaccurate information, but that appeared to be less important than actually obtaining information, inaccurate or otherwise. One participant explained, "I know it could be incorrect information, but it is still more information than the university is giving us. I will go to a news website if I feel as though this is really far-fetched and unbelievable."

Further, it was interesting to find that no student participants suggested that nontechnical, outrage sorts of information as an expectation regarding social media and crisis communication (RQ7). Perhaps, this is not surprising for two reasons: (1) this research suggests that university emergency management officials are not currently using social media to this extent, and, thus, students are unfamiliar; (2) this research further suggests that students are assessing outrage information, not from university communication, but from third-party sources such as Facebook friends and those they follow on Twitter. Thus, the expectation of outrage information may be indicated by the mere fact that student participants seek out and opt to be friends with and follow certain people and, perhaps, news organizations (that were mentioned specifically by student participants) in order to obtain outrage information. However, it is important to note here that student participants at university one particularly noted that they were drove to third-party sources, despite what may be inaccurate information, when the university did not provide enough information. It is possible, then, that student participants at university one would rely less on third-party information if the university emergency management sought to provide more information, that may be indicative of an appropriate level of outrage. For example, if university one had provided information about the aforementioned crisis in close proximity to campus (hazard) and then further expressed appropriate outrage (most effectively in the post-crisis phase), such as in the Gainesville case where condolences or an emotional message were sent out via social media, students would feel that they have more confidence in the university to include

other public relations outcomes as well: credibility, trust, reputation, goodwill, and relationships (Stacks, 2011). On the other hand, but somewhat similarly, students at university two did not have an expectation for the university to use social media to communicate crisis information and expressed irritation with the amount of information they received. However, student participants at university two embraced the university public relations campaign during a university scandal, and thus, it might be reasoned here that these students were receptive to emotional or nontechnical information on behalf of the university that served to moderate outrage. Again, then, we see that public relations outcomes such as credibility, trust, reputation, goodwill, confidence, and relationships (Stacks, 2011) result from communication that moderates outrage.

Finally, it should be noted that the researchers disagree with Sandman's overtly simplistic characterization of public relations as "talking to people who aren't interested" in his typology of the kinds of risk communication. Perhaps, the best evidence for public relations as important for all four kinds of risk communication described by Sandman is apparent as he specifically identifies audience and media variables to define his typology. So, for example, Sandman describes outrage management as having low hazard, high outrage. This, in Sandman's own description, creates a barrier to effectively communicating because emergency management practitioners seek to focus on the technical, actual hazard information; however, as Sandman states, "barriers include the audience's outrage when you'd really rather talk about the substance, and sometimes the complicating presence of the media." Clearly then, as advocated by this research, strategic public relations can serve to moderate outrage, which in turn benefits emergency management professionals in effectively communicating actual hazard information.

A university-specific example may be in moderating outrage surrounding H1N1 or swine influenza for which it was stated that the World Health Organization had exaggerated the actual hazard; however, outrage among university stakeholders was high. While emergency management officials are the best equipped to deal with a pandemic situation, public relations practitioners are the best equipped to moderate outrage. In fact, students such as those who were focus group participants in this research, indicated that they expect social media to be used in university crisis communication, and it is further noted that these students are using third-party sources via social media to assess outrage (overtly at university one and less overtly at university two). Again, then, the role of public relations in university crisis communication becomes important in serving to moderate outrage among key university stakeholders. Thus, a better understanding of the public relations function in crisis communication should be incorporated into Sandman's model, and this research serves to provide the rationale for such research. Finally, it should again be noted here that feelings of susceptibility to crises and, hence, salience prescribed to different types of crises among student participants from different universities seemed to directly impact attitudes toward crisis communication. Thus, this research suggests that Sandman's model may be more effective in predicting perceived risk if situational considerations such as personal experiences and /or salience of crisis communication were included.

Directions for Future Research

Having established the feasibility of Sandman's model for university crisis communication via social media as well as the importance of the public relations role in such efforts, it is recommended that a quantitative examination of Sandman's model within this context be undertaken. While the aforementioned literature review cites similar such research, this research has largely neglected the importance of public relations variables such as trust,

reputation, relationship, credibility, etc. as well as ignored the university crisis communication context. Thus, the primary opportunity for future research exists in creating a measure and validating Sandman's model to this extent. The current research has provided the rationale for such an approach.

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Appendix 1

Interview Protocol

Hello, my name is_____, and I am here as part of a study looking at university crisis communication and, more specifically, that communication via social media. I would like to ask you a few questions regarding your organization's use and participation in social media for crisis communication efforts. Your responses will help in preparing and evaluating crisis communication plans via social media. Let me assure you that your name will not be used in the final report without your permission and that your anonymity will be maintained at all times. Would you mind if I recorded this conversation? If not, I will rely on handwritten notes. May we begin?

Demographic Information
- What is your background, current position with the university, and areas of expertise?

Crisis Communication
- Do you use social media during a crisis event? If so, what types of social media do you use?
- Do you use social media before, during, and/or after a crisis?
- Who do you feel are the primary receivers of the messages you disseminate using social media?
- Do you think students expect your department to use social media?
- Do you use social media to send messages? Do you use social media to get feedback from your external stakeholders? What are other ways in which you use social media?
- What are some of the limitations and obstacles of using social media during a crisis?
- Are there specific types of crises that you feel are more appropriate for using social media?
- Do you use social media to communicate the potential hazard (how many people threatened) with a crisis?

Appendix 2

Focus Group Guide and Demographics

Hello, my name is_____, and I am here as part of a study looking at university crisis communication and, more specifically, that communication via social media. I would like to ask you a few questions regarding your perceptions and opinions of your university's use and participation in social media for crisis communication efforts. Your responses will help in preparing and evaluating crisis communication plans via social media.

Before we begin, let me suggest some things that will facilitate our discussion. Please speak up—only one person should talk at a time. I will be tape recording this session because I don't want to miss any of your comments. We'll be on a first name basis, and let me assure you that your name will not be used in the final report and anonymity will be maintained at all times. If anyone wishes to withdraw or does not want to be tape-recorded, you are free to leave the group now without bias from the investigator.

My role here is to ask questions and listen. I won't be participating in the conversation, but I want you to feel free to converse with the group. I will be asking you about 8 questions, and I'll be moving the discussion from question to question. There is a tendency in these discussions for some people to talk a lot and some people to not say much at all, but it is important for me to hear each of you because you all have different experiences. So, if one of you is sharing a lot, I may ask you to allow others to talk, and if one of you isn't talking much, I may ask for your opinion.

Crisis Communication
1. How would you define a crisis?
   a. Are there different types or categories of crises?
   b. If so, which of these are you interested in receiving information about?
2. Generally speaking, how do you obtain information from your university during times of crisis?
   a. Does the information you receive parallel the information you previously mentioned? In other words, is it information you are interested in receiving?
3. Generally speaking, do you receive the information in a way that you feel is effective or ineffective?
   a. What methods of communicating a crisis with you are most effective?
   b. What methods of communicating a crisis with you are least effective?
4. Do you expect the university to use social media to communicate with you about crises? (expectations of university)
   a. What information do you expect to receive (or not receive) from the university?
   b. Are there specific types of crises that you feel are more appropriate for using social media?

Crisis Communication and Social Media
- Do you access or use social media when there is a university-related crisis?
  o Why or why not?
  o Which social media do you use, and what do you do?
    ▪ Do you post questions, opinions? (communicate outrage)
    ▪ Do you read others questions and opinions? (assess outrage)
- Do you use social media to assess your personal risk? (hazard)
- Do you use social media to make decisions about the best possible course of action during a crisis? (hazard)

- If you were faced with conflicting information from the university and from students via social media during a crisis, which information are you most likely to use.
  - For example, the university tweets that…, but a student tweets that…

Demographics

Please answer the following questions for further analysis for this study.

- Please indicate how active you are in using the following social media tools from 1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree

I actively use:
  - Audio-sharing sites (iTunes, Podcasts)
  - Blogs
  - Forums or Message Boards
  - Microblogs (Twitter)
  - Photo-sharing sites (Picasa)
  - Social bookmarking sites (Delicious)
  - Social networking sites (Facebook)
  - Video-hosting sites (YouTube)
  - Wikis (Wikipedia)
- What is your current class level?
  - Freshman
  - Sophomore
  - Junior
  - Senior
  - Graduate Student
  - Other (please specify)_____
- What is your major? _____
- What year were you born? 19_____
- From the following list, which best describes your racial or ethnic background?
  - Asian
  - Black
  - Hispanic
  - White
  - Other (please specify)_____

- What is your gender?
  - Female
  - Male

Content Analysis of Fortune 500 Social Media Policies

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Abstract

Organizations interested in keeping current with marketing technologies are embracing advances in digital and social media to promote brands, increase sales, build reputation and encourage employee productivity. Adoption of these social media tools is accompanied by awareness that they carry potential liability if not used or managed effectively. Lost productivity, security concerns, compliance problems and reputation management issues have led some organizations to restrict and define acceptable employee usage of social networks. These policies often serve the dual function of providing guidelines and boundaries to employees and empowering users with recommendations for effectively managing social media efforts.

This study investigates the content of internal social media policies published online by 23 Fortune 500 companies. The authors attempted to discover how the policies cover risks and opportunities presented by social media, as well as legal and ethical issues. Academic and professional literature about social media policy will be reviewed. Attempts were made to examine these categories by critically evaluating the apparent values reflected by the policy language. The opportunity and risk are examined as a tension between a desire to leverage employees' personal voices as advocates and a reluctance to turn centralized control of the organization's messaging over to employees. The ethical and legal discussion revolves around the concerns reflected in the policies.

Introduction

Miami Heat owner Micky Arison was fined $500,000 for venting on Twitter about the NBA lockout (Wasserman, 2011). CNN suspended political analyst Roland Martin for tweeting what some called offensive and anti-gay messages during 2012 Super Bowl ("CNN suspends," 2012). Virgin Atlantic Airways fired 13 flight attendants for Facebook messages criticizing its flight safety standards and using inappropriate language to describe passengers (Conway, 2008). The increasing social media mishaps, resulting from inappropriate social media updates, images or comments committed by employees, have led some companies to resort to disciplinary actions or job terminations. Although a study found that 65% of companies used social media to communicate with their stakeholders, 44% were reluctant to let their workers use or access social media at work (Brito, 2011), probably because such unfortunate messages could harm the organization's reputation and business interests.

As social media have revolutionized information sharing and changed the way we communicate with each other, organizations have begun to embrace it to connect, engage, and build relationships with both internal and external audiences. They are leveraging digital and social media to promote brands, increase sales, build reputation, and encourage employees' engagement and productivity. But with this open, free flow of information sharing comes legitimate legal, ethical and business concerns for employers, who want to ensure that their employees use social media legally, ethically, and productively.

Social Media Policy

A global survey of communication managers in 2007 found the majority of managers believed social media improve employee engagement and internal collaboration (Hathi, 2007). Despite the benefits and opportunities that social media present, management still holds reservations about their possible risks and negative consequences. One concern is that employees' online participation via blogs or other social networks may pose a risk to a company's reputation. Understandably, managers realize that failure to manage social media properly could result in managerial, ethical, and legal liabilities.

Concerns about workplace time and resource management, security, compliance, and reputation management have led some organizations to develop a social media policy to guide, define, and restrict employees' use of social networks. A social media policy serves a dual function of providing internal users with guidelines, boundaries, and cautions of possible risks and, simultaneously, empowering them with open access, opportunities or best practices to use social media intelligently and effectively. In light of the need to balance risk and opportunity, the pressing challenge for organizations is to create a social media policy that respects the rights of employees while protecting their brands online.

Literature Review

As a response to concern over "cyberloafing," or lost workplace productivity, abuse of company resources, and potential legal liability, policies governing employees' Internet use have become fairly commonplace and received some attention from scholars (Henle, Kohut, & Booth, 2009; Young, 2010a). Although social media use at work is now routine, managing their use in the workplace has also proved challenging. The need to study policies governing their use is increasingly pressing. A 2011 study of international social media use conducted by employment service firm Randstad found one-half of surveyed employees maintained a social media account, and one-third received some form of guideline or policy on social media professionalism

(Ranstad Holding, 2011). In the Americas, a Manpower (2010b) study found the United States is the least likely to provide a social media policy, with 24% of employers reporting a formal policy. Perhaps the slow adoption of social media policies is related to the high rate of employers banning social media use entirely. Devaux (2009) reported 54% of surveyed chief information officers said their organizations banned social media, and 19% limited their use to "business purposes only" (p. 20).

Yet, unlike Web browsing behavior addressed by general Internet usage policies, social media are a potentially invaluable communication tool, though their use is associated with both significant advantages and liabilities. Competing literature portraying social media as a possible workplace risk and as a marketing opportunity provided context for this study.

Competing Views of Social Media as Risk and Opportunity

Social media accounts often blur the line between personal and professional communication (Brus, 2011), and they enable employees to access mass audiences with ease. Rapid transmission and dissemination of content leaves businesses vulnerable to employees acting as informal but potentially influential representatives of the institution. Concerns over reputation management have been noted and studied by workforce professionals (Devaux, 2009; Manpower, 2010a). Some authors have approached social media policymaking as a solution to these problems, and as a means of addressing legal risk (Lyncheski, 2010; Maryott, 2010).

However, the extent to which a social media policy can restrict employee speech to protect employers' interests is unclear. For example, a complaint before the National Labor Relations Board involving a Connecticut paramedic, who was fired over a post on Facebook criticizing her supervisor, was resolved by a settlement in which "the company agreed to revise its overly-broad rules" ("Settlement Reached," 2011, para. 4). Although nothing prevents inclusion of a restrictive clause within the policy, this case suggested that it could be contested.

Opposite these concerns is the recognition that employees' online communications are useful to businesses seeking to engage audiences in a direct and organic relationship (Foley, 2010). The ability for employees to speak directly to mass audiences presents a powerful opportunity for more credible dialogue with audiences than traditional institutional communication outlets, albeit at the cost of the organization's central message control. Further, social media are proving a valuable platform for strategic marketing (Campbell Laidler, 2010). From a public relations perspective, they are particularly well suited to Grunig's (2001) two-way symmetrical model. Grunig (2009) argued that digital media, properly used, can facilitate this relationship and dialogue-based paradigm: "If the social media are used to their full potential, I believe they will inexorably make public relations practice more global, strategic, two-way and interactive, symmetrical or dialogical, and socially responsible" (p. 1).

This opportunity-risk balance manifests in the language social media policy authors use to frame social media guidelines. Boudreaux (2009) analyzed 46 social media policies from various types of organizations and found that 37% of them portrayed social media as a positive opportunity for their employees and organization, while 15% focused on risk. Employers may find the opportunities enabled by social media becoming increasingly vital and expected, as the cost of entirely blocking social media use increases (Reeves, 2011).

Research Questions

The present study focused on discovering common values or concerns expressed in Fortune 500 companies' social media policies. Specifically, it examined:

- The common areas or topics addressed in social media policies.
- The extent to which the policies addressed the employees' opportunity and risk associated with social media.
- The extent to which the policies addressed legal and ethical concerns.

Method

The social media policies in study were selected from the Fortune 500 list published by CNNMoney (2011). From this list, 30 policies were identified via keywords in a search engine and downloaded from those companies who published their internal social media guidelines online. The final convenience sample of 23 policies was determined after seven were excluded for cursory treatment of social media within a broader technology policy. The policies ranged in length from 99 to 5,655 words, with an average of 1,203 words.

Coding System

Using an inductive data reduction approach, both authors read the 23 policies to familiarize themselves with the content. The authors then organized the data into themes and categories, following their previous work in a related project (Ekachai & Brinker, 2012). The categories were mutually exclusive, but not necessarily exhaustive, as this is an exploratory piece.

Coding Themes and Categories

The content of the social media policies fit two thematic categories of principle interest in this study: Opportunity and Risk and Legal and Ethical considerations. Opportunity indicators were identified as phrases that suggest the benefits and offer proactive tips for using social media. Risk indicators included language expressing concern about damage to the corporate image or reputation, acceptable types of content, loss of workplace productivity, and caution about the public and permanent nature of social media.

The second dual theme that emerged from the content of the Fortune 500 policies was legal and ethical considerations. The legal element included language that instructed employees not to violate laws on copyrights, disseminate confidential or proprietary information, and caution about defamation. Ethical considerations included disclosure of affiliation and position within the company, and urging respect, honesty, and accuracy in social media content.

Findings and Analysis

Descriptive differences in content seemed to fall within the dual sets of concerns: proactively highlighting opportunities and preemptively mitigating risks, and alerting employees to legal hazards and encouraging ethical considerations. These categories elaborate studies of internal policy comparing "proactive" and "reactive" approaches to limiting undesirable Internet use (Young, 2010b). Policies concerned with the opportunities of social media and addressing ethical issues can be characterized as proactive, while risk management and legal concerns seem generally reactive.

Opportunity vs Risk

In general, the policies analyzed were vastly more concerned with highlighting risks than opportunities. Table 1 shows that 91.3% of policies addressed risks, while only about half (52.2%) highlighted the benefits.

Table 1
Opportunity vs. Risk Content (N=23)

Indicators	n	%
Policy describes dangers of SM use	21	91.3
Policy describes benefits of SM use	12	52.2

This is unsurprising, as the purpose of employee policies tend to serve restrictive purposes. However, social media's unique benefits are worth highlighting because proactive guidance can serve to help employees serve as advocates and spokespersons for the brand. It should be noted that some of the large companies have specific social media training available, and so use their formal policies to define the boundaries and restrictions on social media use in the workplace.

The individual opportunity and risk indicators are identified in the following sections, along with select examples.

Opportunity Indicators

Two content areas served to indicate a company's effort to encourage employees to use social media, or to guide that usage. First, the policy may discuss the specific appropriate purpose(s) of social media in the workplace (for example, brand building or professional networking). Approximately half (52.2%) of the policies included language that specifically identified an application of workplace social media. Second, some policies included proactive usage instructions or guidelines. Rather than identifying the purpose of social media communications, this second indicator offers proactive tips for users about how to execute social media communication (for example, guidelines on how to keep content relevant to audiences). Nine of the policies (39.1%) offered users any guidance for strategy, tactics and execution. However, some of the policies alluded to separate training initiatives, where those resources are available to employees.

The coding scheme also measured particular benefits of social media identified within the policies. Because the sample size is small, list only suggests that all of these benefits were sometimes present. The frequency of each benefit is reported in Table 2. 'Direct communication with customers' (39.1%) and 'brand growth' (26.1%) were the most commonly identified, followed by 'facilitating internal communication' (13%), 'professional networking' (13%) and 'customer opinion monitoring' (8.7).

Table 2
Opportunity Indicators (N=23)

Indicators	n	%
Outlines the specific purpose of the company's SM activity.	12	52.2
Provides proactive usage instructions or guidelines.	9	39.1
Listed Benefits:		
Direct Customer Communication	9	39.1
Brand Growth	6	26.1
Facilitating Internal Communication	3	13.0
Professional Networking	3	13.0
Customer Opinion Monitoring	2	8.7

Risk Indicators

Twenty-one of the 23 policies (91.3%) expressed concern about the potential risks of employee social media use. The most common risk concern was language expressing corporate image or reputation concerns (82.6%). Most (78.3%) of the policies defined unacceptable types of speech, such as obscenity or confrontational language.

The policies often (60.9%) expressed concern about separating personal and company social media use, indicating a distinction between social media use for work purposes and social media use for personal purposes that still potentially implicates the company. Indeed, many policies suggested that as an employee, all personal social media activities potentially have implications for the company – both in terms of brand image and potential legal hazard. Proctor and Gamble, for example, was clear that the opportunities of social media are accompanied by risks: "However, like any exciting new opportunity, how we use Social Media and what we say also has the potential to affect P&G's reputation and/or expose the Company (and each of us) to business or legal risk."

Many policies (56.5%) made reference to the idea that online communication is virtually indelible, public, and highly searchable. The Coca-Cola Company, for example, warns its employees that "… the Internet is permanent. Once information is published online, it is essentially part of a permanent record, even if you 'remove/delete' it later or attempt to make it anonymous."

Surprisingly few policies (26.1%) expressed concerns regarding loss of workplace productivity, including the need for responsible use of technology/computer resources, time management, or the use of resources for work purposes only. However, many of the policies referred to broader Internet and technology use policies, which commonly outline productivity concerns related to corporate technology resources.

Table 3
Risk Indicators (N=23)

Indicators	*n*	*%*
Corporate Image or Reputation Concerns	19	82.6
Content Guidelines (pictures, wording, guidelines)	18	78.3
Separating Personal and Professional SM Use	14	60.9
Public Nature and/or Permanence of Social Media	13	56.5
Loss of Workplace Productivity	6	26.1

Legal Indicators

Legal concerns are a key consideration of most workplace policies. The extent to which social media present a unique set of legal considerations is still evolving and, therefore, social media specific guidelines often refer back to familiar legal topics that are addressed in other policies.

The potential for release of sensitive or proprietary information is one type of legal concern that is particularly applicable to social media, because that information is easily and rapidly distributable and generally irretrievable. Thus, 95.7% of policies explicitly prohibited discussing confidential information about employees, customers, and financial matters. Likewise, 91.3% explicitly addressed proprietary information and intellectual property. The latter is a distinct from confidential information, because it concerns property rights that the business itself holds, rather than information to which the company is privy and obligated to keep private.

Other legal aspects of social media policies included concerns about copyright (73.9%), defamation (30.4%), and notifying employees that their work technology resources may be monitored or blocked (21.7%). The last category is generally addressed by broader information technology policies, which is likely why it was the least common of the legal indicators.

Table 4
Legal Indicators (N=23)

Indicators	n	%
Prohibits Releasing Confidential Information	22	95.7
Proprietary Information / Intellectual Property	21	91.3
Copyright	17	73.9
Libel and Defamation	7	30.4
Stored Communications Act (SCA), or notice that computer may be monitored or blocked.	5	21.7

Ethical Indicators
A majority of the policies analyzed addressed ethical considerations in one way or another (87.0%). The most frequent ethical consideration was disclosure of affiliation and role with the organization (65.2%). For example, Kodak's guidelines state, "When you are communicating in social media say who you are and who you work for." Other ethical concerns involved guidelines for online writing: accuracy (56.5%), respect for others (52.2%), transparency (39.1%), and honesty (30.4%).

Table 5
Ethical Indicators (N=23)

Indicators	n	%
Disclosure of Affiliation / Role with Company	15	65.2
Accuracy	13	56.5
Respect	12	52.2
Transparency	9	39.1
Honesty	7	30.4

Discussion

Opportunity and Risk
The results of this exploratory study suggest that risk is a considerably more substantial concern for large companies. Concerns about loss of control over message and institutional image, as well as legal considerations, can manifest in restrictive policy language. Interpreting this cursory finding could be addressed by several studies of all different methods and disciplines. For public relations practitioners, the prime concern is crafting policies with

consideration for brand or image consequences.

From a public relations perspective, one conceptual question is whether internal public relations should have a voice in crafting internal policy, or if policy falls under a separate administrative domain. This varies, of course, by organization culture and character. However, cases from this study demonstrated that policy matters for internal and external image management. This is particularly the case when employees understand an emphasis on risk over opportunity as a cultural statement about the balance between empowerment and restrictiveness.

For example, when Oracle acquired Sun Microsystems, the Oracle social media policy displaced the Sun policy. When the differences were discussed on Oracle's Technology Network Blog, users interpreted the policy change with analytical comments about the internal cultures of the two companies. One user suggests "The bit about not having personal info and the quote above sure define the philosophical differences between the two organizations" (Matt Ingenthron, 2010). In reply, another user says "… Sun was more idealistic, Oracle is more pragmatic …" (Justin Kestelyn, 2010). These comments illustrate why public relations practitioners should take note of how social media policy may carry brand implications into the public discourse. Particularly, we may speculate that employees will react, both in terms of attitude and behavior, differently to a risk-oriented policy, an opportunity-oriented policy, and a balanced policy.

Legal and Ethical Considerations

Legal guidelines are intended to protect institutions and employees from the explicit threat of legal actions resulting from violations of particular laws (e.g. copyright, defamation). It is clear that companies are concerned about the broad and unforeseeable legal implications of social media use. When employees release compromising information, they can potentially implicate business facets from labor and workplace laws to contracts to financial regulation.

Ethical concerns seemed driven mostly by concerns that employees may negatively affect stakeholder opinion or tarnish a brand identity. Ethical issues such as "honesty" and "respectfulness" are more akin to reputation issues.

New media seem to challenge some aspects of traditional thinking about public relations practice. In the case of ethical behavior on social media, the role of the corporate public relations and brand management efforts may be implicated in this discussion. Allowing more social media use in the workplace necessitates re-defining who is expected to act as an institutional communicator. For example, it has become considered poor practice for public relations people to dismiss the press with a curt "no comment." It is foreseeable that it will become equally unacceptable for employees to refer public inquiry to the marketing and public relations department, as is suggested in many social media policies. IBM, for example, instructs employees: "You should merely say, 'no comment' to rumors." That is, it may become unacceptable to expect employees to be non-public communicators. However, this consequently expands, rather than reduces the role of the public relations professional. Brand management drives the ethical concerns embedded in social media policies, and it is the public relations practitioner who is responsible for ensuring the facets of the brand are well managed.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Studies

Caution is due in interpreting the results of this study because of its sampling technique. The 23 policies analyzed in this study were exclusively published online. It is quite likely that publically available internal policies differ from those that are unpublished. The authors recognize that any relatively small convenience sample is not necessarily representative.

Additionally, it should be noted that published social media policies do not reflect the entirety of a company's social media management efforts. However, this study raises questions for an emerging literature that investigates the role of public relations in internal social media use.

In particular, the potential for policy to alter internal and external brand perceptions may have serious implications for companies seeking to orchestrate messages and campaigns to project a coherent corporate personality. Many different theoretical perspectives may be salient to the study - from brand management (e.g. image and affect transfer) to organizational culture.

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Accepting the Blame and Making Things Right: Public Relations Practitioners' Identification of Effective, Ethical, and Likely to Recommend Crisis Communication Strategies

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Abstract

When organizations face crises, communication and public relations/public affairs managers play a key role in mitigating damage to the organization's reputation and maintaining stakeholder relationships and confidence in the organization. Crisis and post-crisis communication research that identifies factors that influence stakeholders' perceptions before, during, and after organizational crises; identifies processes and strategies that are effective in maintaining or restoring an organization's reputation and image; and identifies effective use of language, persuasive message strategies, and symbolic actions is especially relevant to communication professionals and in building theoretical models.

While research in crisis communication and the use of crisis communication strategies is dominated by case study analysis, this study offers evidence-based decision making from practicing public relations professionals' reported perceptions of specific crisis communication strategies that are ethical, strategies that are most effective, and strategies that are likely to be used and recommended. Perceptions and use of strategies are contextualized within three crisis scenarios (accidents, product safety, and illegal activity).

Effective crisis management, issues management, corporate reputation management, and image and brand management are critical, especially when organizations face the loss of reputation and relationship with stakeholders, as well as potentially billions of dollars, as a result of crisis situations. On a societal level, 9/11 and the War on Terror, and recent devastating and far-reaching consequences of natural disasters such as Hurricane Katrina, demonstrate the increasingly frequent and catastrophic failures to public and private infrastructure that result when crises occur. When an organizational crisis occurs and during the post-crisis period, maintaining or restoring the corporate or organizational reputation and image is crucial. Although organizations, their leaders, and spokespeople attempt a wide range of actions and messages as symbolic appeals to that organization's constituent publics, there is little certainty about what types of actions and messages are effective in mitigating damage to the organization's reputation and maintaining long-term viability and trust (Benoit, 1997; Coombs & Holladay, 2002; Huang, 2008; Kim, Ferrin, Cooper & Dirks, 2004; Seeger, Sellnow, & Ulmer, 1998).

Characteristics of Organizational or Corporate Crises

When organizations and leaders find themselves under scrutiny and targets of criticism that challenge their legitimacy or social responsibility (Hearit, 1995), their public response is an important factor in recovery from such a crisis (Coombs & Holliday, 2002; Fearn-Banks, 2001; Seeger & Ulmer, 2003). Responses to a crisis, including determining the optimal timing, response priorities, specific messages conveyed to the media and/or to individuals, source(s) of messages, and forms of responses, have significant and far-reaching implications for the organization and for crisis managers.

Crisis and Post-Crisis Corporate Communication

Crisis management encompasses the overall strategic planning to prevent, mitigate, respond, and recover routine operations during a crisis or negative occurrence. An effective process removes some of the risk and uncertainty, promotes long-term viability and trust, and allows the organization to adapt during the crisis and post-crisis (Fearn-Banks, 2001; Seeger & Ulmer, 2003). Crisis management is a broad area of research and application that includes pre-crisis decision making, training, planning, teamwork, goal setting, and crisis communication plans. Public crisis communication focuses on the verbal, visual, and/or written interaction between the organization and its publics (sometimes directly and sometime mediated through the news media) before, during, and after the negative event, and "is designed to minimize damage to the reputation of the organization" (Fearn-Banks, 2001, p. 480; Fearn-Banks, 1996) and to maintain stakeholder confidence. While crisis communication includes conveying the facts surrounding the event (e.g., the presence of an explosion, or the occurrence of a crash), it also focuses on questions of context, cause, responsibility, blame, relative harm and remedial action, which usually are disputed during and following a crisis (Coombs & Holladay, 2002; Kim, Ferrin, Cooper & Dirks, 2004; Seeger, Sellnow, & Ulmer, 1998).

Coombs' Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) begins with the assessment of reputational threat presented by a crisis. Threat is described as "the amount of damage a crisis could inflict on the organization's reputation if no action is taken" (Coombs, 2007b, p. 165). According to SCCT, the level of threat to reputation is determined by whether or not stakeholders believe the organization caused the crisis, the organization's crisis history, and the organization's prior relational reputation, or how well stakeholders believe the organization has

treated them in the past (Coombs, 2007b). SCCT research has shown that the threat to an organization's reputation increases as stakeholders' beliefs that the organization was responsible for the crisis intensifies (Coombs, 1998; Coombs and Holladay, 1996, 2002, 2004). This line of research raises the possibility that in different types of crisis situations, stakeholders' perceptions of communication strategies and, thus, communication professionals' selection of effective and ethical communication strategies, may vary.

Crisis and post-crisis communication research that identifies factors that influence stakeholders' perceptions before, during, and after organizational crises; identifies processes and strategies that are effective in maintaining or restoring an organization's reputation and image; and identifies effective use of language, persuasive message strategies, and symbolic actions, is especially relevant to communication professionals and in building theoretical models.

Crisis Communication Strategies

Research of message strategies has helped develop the response strategy approach "from a prescriptive set of procedures to the recognition that crisis communication can be initiated from a variety of rhetorical perspectives" (Olaniran & Williams, 2001, p. 488; see also Benoit, 1997; Heath & Abel, 1996; Heath & Gray, 1997; Seeger & Ulmer, 2003; Sellnow & Ulmer, 1995). Benoit (1995) has developed the widely cited Image Restoration Theory that offers a descriptive system of examining image restoration or repair strategies employed in crisis communication. Benoit assumes that an organization's communication is a goal-directed activity, and that maintaining a positive reputation for the organization is one of the central goals of this communication. In crisis situations, Benoit claims that an organization's central, although not only, goal of communication is "restoring or protecting one's reputation" (p. 71). The importance of an organization's reputation leads the accused party to respond under potentially threatening circumstances. Fundamentally, an attack on an organization's or organizational leader's reputation is comprised of two components that rely on the relevant audience's (or audiences') perceptions. Only when a salient audience believes that both the action is offensive and that the individual or organization is responsible for the offense is the accused's reputation at risk, and is the actor/organization likely to employ image repair, or crisis communication, strategies.

Benoit's Image Restoration Theory (1995, 1997) posits five primary macro strategies employed by organizations in their crisis communication: denial, evading of responsibility, reducing the offensiveness, corrective action, and mortification. Fourteen specific message strategies fall within these five broad categories. In Huang's (2008) synthesis of crisis communication strategies, verbal and nonverbal, five broad strategies also emerged, with specific sub-strategies: denial, excuse, justification, corrective action, and diversion. Many of these strategies and sub-strategies were named identically to those in Benoit's typology and, conceptually, strategies and sub-strategies in both lists were compatible.

Discussion of the use of silence in image repair and crisis communication literature has been limited to the recognition that perceptions of the use of, and actual use of, silence as a strategy should examined (Kim et al., 2004). Silence, or no comment, was dropped as a possible rhetorical response in early explorations of this typology (Benoit, 1995; Len-Rios & Benoit, 2004), and did not appear in Huang's (2008) synthesized strategy list. Benoit intentionally omitted an organization's silence, ignoring accusations, or publicly stating "No comment" from his typology of image restoration strategies

(Benoit, 1995; Len-Rios & Benoit, 2004), but acknowledges that silence is a strategy that can be used.

  In the case of Enron, and in other organizational crises, silence impacts negative perception and has been connected with social morals (Rogers, Dillard, & Yuthas, 2005; Trinkaus & Giacolone, 2005). Trinkaus and Giacolone (2005) maintained that the silence of Enron's leaders and watchdogs was a problem or, at the least, a "communication glitch or a temporary lapse in social morality" (p. 237). Likewise, an analysis of public statements the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants issued during the Enron debacle argued that the AICPA's initial silence, followed by denial then false and inadequate support for counterclaims, increased the negative perception of the accounting profession (Rogers et al., 2005).

  This study adopts Benoit's typology of five primary image repair, or crisis communication, strategies (14, including sub-strategies), based on the long line of research in which the typology has found support. Table 1 provides summary definitions for the primary and sub-strategies, with a 15th strategy, silence, added by authors of the current study.

Table 1. Summary Definitions of Crisis Communication Rhetorical Strategies

	Categories	Strategies	Working Definition
1	Corrective Action		Restore situation or prevent reoccurrence
	Denial		
2		Simple Denial	Contradiction of accusation
3		Shifting Blame	Pass the guilt to another party
	Evading of Responsibility		
4		Accident	Unintentional action or effect
5		Defeasibility	Didn't know about or not in control
6		Good Intentions	Motives were good
7		Provocation	Responding to an offensive act
8	Mortification		Admission and acceptance of responsibility
	Reducing the Offensiveness		
9		Bolstering	Relate positive features of the offender
10		Minimization	Reduce importance of the offense
11		Differentiation	Less offensive than other actions
12		Transcendence	Viewed favorably in larger/different context
13		Attack	Counterattack accuser
14		Compensation	Reimburse victims
15	Silence		No comment or ignoring accusation

  This study investigates the perceptions of the appropriateness and effectiveness of these crisis communication strategies in mitigating damage to reputations and maintaining relationships with stakeholders. Benoit and Drew (1997) investigated perceptions of appropriateness and effectiveness of the five primary strategies and their sub-strategies image repair in interpersonal communication situations. They concluded that mortification and

corrective actions were perceived as more effective and more appropriate than other strategies. Bolstering, minimization, provocation, and denial were rated as the least effective and least appropriate strategies. However, no systematic attempt to extend these findings, or other empirical research, to the contexts of corporate reputation management and organizational stakeholder reconciliation has been made.

While numerous critical assessments have been offered as to the desirability and/or effectiveness of image restoration strategies, little research examines the degree to which these strategies are chosen by organizations and their communication, crisis, and public relations/public affairs managers when confronted by crises, and which strategies are perceived to have pragmatic utility (Coombs, 2007b; Hearit, 2001; Brinson & Benoit, 1996). Still less is known about which strategies are perceived by communication professionals to be effective and ethical, and are likely to be recommended to organizational leaders as preferred responses in crisis situations (Coombs & Holladay, 2002; Kim et. al, 2004). Further, there has been limited examination about how the type of crisis impacts on strategy selection and judgments about effectiveness and ethicality. Mortification has been found to be the most frequently used strategies when the crisis was judged to be preventable by the organization, but rarely used in crises caused by accidents (Kim, Avery, & Lariscy, 2009). Coombs (2007a) likewise recommended using corrective action and apology and to avoid attack-the-accuser strategies during preventable crises.

Research in crisis communication strategies is dominated by case study analysis, which limits understanding to descriptions about crisis situations that have occurred, and speculative analysis of the effective and responsible handling of organizational crises. Recent research found that organizations (involved in major crises from 1989 to 2002) used different crisis message strategies depending on the stakeholders that their message targeted, however, this study also is limited by its case study analysis (Stephens, Malone, & Bailey, 2005). In their content analysis of 51 crisis case study articles in communication- and business-related academic journals, Kim et al. (2009) found that bolstering was the most frequently cited crisis response strategy, followed by denial, corrective action, and mortification. Interestingly, the strategy evaluated as most effective by the journal authors was full apology, followed by mortification, corrective action, and bolstering. Denial was judged to be least effective. This conflicts with SCCT recommendations to use denial "when there is little attribution of responsibility or when challenges are unwarranted" (Kim, et al., 2009; Coombs, 2007a).

While Coombs and Holladay (2008) employed quantitative methods to the study of crisis response strategies and explored the factor of type of media design (print and video), only two strategies, sympathy and compassion, were examined, and by a college student sample rather than by public relations practitioners. The current study adds to our understanding of crisis communication by offering evidence-based decision making from empirical research of practicing public relations professionals' perceptions of ethicality, effectiveness, and use of specific strategies in three different types of crisis situations (unintentional accident, illegal activity, and product safety).

Student Perceptions of Image Repair Strategies

This is the second phase of research conducted by these scholars. The pilot study administered this survey to advanced public relations, law, and journalism students, a first step in a research program aimed at measuring perceptions of communication, crisis, and public relations/public affairs managers who regularly make the message strategy decisions for

organizations facing crises. Surveying pre-professionals who are preparing for careers, nearing completion of their major area of study, and who may be expected to represent the perspectives of professionals in those fields, was a reasonable first step and yielded significant findings. Two general findings seemed to emerge from the data. First, while the positive or negative evaluations of strategies differed among these professional groups, the hierarchical positioning (from highest to lowest) was relatively stable, indicating more positively and negatively perceived crisis communication strategies than neutrally valenced strategies. In general, strategies maintained their ranking in terms of respondents' preferences, and most strategies were viewed as either good or bad regardless of context or profession.

Second, three distinct identifiable categories, or tiers, emerged (see Table 2). The strategies perceived most positively were corrective action, compensation, mortification, and bolstering. These categories appeared to be fairly robust regardless of profession, scenario or saliency (effectiveness, likelihood to recommend, and ethicality).

Table 2. Pilot Study Crisis Communication Strategy Hierarchy in Pragmatism and Ethicality

Tier One	Tier Two	Tier Three
Corrective Action	Defeasibility	Accident
Compensation	Minimization	Provocation
Mortification	Good Intentions	Attack Accuser
*Bolstering	Differentiation	Shifting Blame
	Transcendence	Silence
		Simple Denial

*special case with some
variation across scenario

The primary purpose of the pilot study was to clarify the research questions and assess the usefulness of this method of investigation. While the generalizability of the findings from the pilot study sample of students is limited, the findings assisted in establishing a framework from which a more substantial investigation of communication, crisis, and public relations/public affairs managers' perceptions of crisis communication strategies can be launched, which is the current study. Further, the current study examines to what extent there is consistency or divergence in perceptions of these crisis communication strategies.

Research Questions

This study analyzes situational, pragmatic and ethical factors for their relative influence on selection and use of crisis communication strategies. The strategies are examined for perceptions of their pragmatic utility: Are the strategies deemed effective and are they likely to be recommended. Collected data will be analyzed in order to answer the following research questions:

- Research Question # 1 – Do communication, crisis, and public relations/public affairs managers differ in their perceptions of the effectiveness of communication strategies in different types of crises?
- Research Question #2 – Do communication, crisis, and public relations/public affairs managers differ in their likelihood to recommend different communication strategies in different types of crises?

- Research Question #3 – Do communication, crisis, and public relations/public affairs managers differ in their perceptions of the ethicality of communication strategies in different types of crises?

Method

Procedures

A survey instrument was designed using a five-point Likert-type scale, asking respondents to rate 15 crisis communication strategies in three situationally distinct organizational crises. Respondents rated the effectiveness and ethicality of each strategy, and how likely they were to recommend each strategy. The survey was prepared in a matrix format so that all communication strategies were rated in identical format and wording across the three distinctive crisis scenarios. This produced an instrument encouraging relative comparisons (rankings) between strategies. Rankings have been viewed as a more robust estimator of survey values even though they may produce some analytical difficulties (Krosnick & Alwin, 1989). The instrument was successfully pilot tested for face validity and usability (Chandler, Ferguson, & Wallace, 2001). Before the most recent administration of this survey instrument, minor revisions were made for language clarification between the accident scenario and accident strategy.

Members of the Public Relations Society of America were asked to participate via an announcement in the organization's email newsletter. The sample was stratified to include PRSA members (employed communication professionals in the United States), and to exclude educator members. The newsletter announcement included a link that directed members to a survey instrument with three hypothetical crisis scenarios: unintentional accident, illegal activity, and product safety. The online survey yielded 1,260 responses. As anticipated, a number of respondents did not complete the somewhat extensive survey. The completion rate for all three scenarios varied from 798 to 775, depending on which of the strategies was examined.

The instrument used a five-point scoring system. Categories ranged from highly ethical to highly unethical, with one highly ethical and five highly unethical. Pragmatic saliencies of effectiveness and likelihood to recommend were scored the same way. Significant differences were calculated with analysis of variance within strategies and between scenarios. Scheffe's multiple comparison procedure was used because of its relative conservative estimation of differences and ability to account for compound comparisons (Reinard, 2007). A limited number of demographic items (e.g., type of organization, years of experience) were added. The hypothetical nature of the organization helps control for historical or perceptual moderating factors (Coombs, 2004; Dean, 2004; Kim, et al., 2004; Pfau et al., 2004).

Perceptions of Effectiveness and Ethics

Research questions were addressed in several ways. First, it was determined if there were any differences holistically across all crisis scenarios and strategies. The appendix provides a breakdown of saliencies with the mean scores of strategies between scenarios. Second, the data was transformed into hierarchical rankings to expose order preferences among the communication strategies, similar to Wallace, Ferguson, & Chandler's (2007) hierarchical analysis (see Table 3 and 4). Standard deviation of rankings was used as visual indicator of possible hierarchical differences. Some deviation is to be expected, but rankings help to contextualize any mean differences in terms of their contribution of preference of one strategy over another.

Table 3. Hierarchical Rankings of Pragmatic Crisis Communication Strategies

	Effectiveness					Likely				
	Acdnt	Illegal Act	Prod. Safety	M	SD	Acdnt	Illegal Act	Prod. Safety	M	SD
Corrective Action	1	1	1	1.00	0.00	1	1	1	1.00	0.00
Mortification	2	2	2	2.00	0.00	3	2	2	2.33	0.58
Compensation	3	3	3	3.00	0.00	7	4	3	4.67	2.08
Bolstering	4	4	4	4.00	0.00	2	3	4	3.00	1.00
Transcend.	5	6	5	5.33	0.58	4	5	5	4.67	0.58
Good intentions	6	7	6	6.33	0.58	5	7	6	6.00	1.00
Minimization	7	5	8	6.67	1.53	6	6	8	6.67	1.15
Defeasibility	8	8	7	7.67	0.58	8	8	7	7.67	0.58
Counterattack	9	9	9	9.00	0.00	9	9	9	9.00	0.00
Differentiate	10	10	10	10.00	0.00	10	11	10	10.33	0.58
Accident	11	11	11	11.00	0.00	11	10	11	10.67	0.58
Provocation	12	12	12	12.00	0.00	13	13	13	13.00	0.00
Blameshift	13	14	13	13.33	0.58	12	12	12	12.00	0.00
Silence	14	13	14	13.67	0.58	14	14	14	14.00	0.00
Deny	15	15	15	15.00	0.00	15	15	15	15.00	0.00

Table 4. Hierarchical Rankings of Ethical Crisis Communication Strategies

Ethicality	Accident	Illegal Activity	Product Safety	M	SD
Corrective Action	1	1	1	1.00	0.00
Mortification	2	2	2	2.00	0.00
Compensation	3	3	3	3.00	0.00
Bolstering	4	4	4	4.00	0.00
Transcendence	5	6	5	5.33	0.58
Good intentions	6	8	7	7.00	1.00
Minimization	7	5	6	6.00	1.00
Defeasibility	8	11	8	9.00	1.73
Counterattack	10	9	10	9.67	0.58
Differentiate	11	10	11	10.67	0.58
Accident	9	7	9	8.33	1.15
Provocation	13	13	13	13.00	0.00
Blameshift	14	14	14	14.00	0.00
Silence	12	12	12	12.00	0.00
Deny	15	15	15	15.00	0.00

Third, responses were examined for significant differences among strategies within each scenario. As might be expected with a relatively large sample size, significant differences were found for most strategies. More rare were the strategies where no significant differences were found across scenarios; these included blame shifting and provocation in likelihood to use, and compensation in ethicality (see appendix for ANOVA and post hoc analyses).

Discussion

This study examined a range of communication strategies employed in organizational crises, which vary in their transformative impact on organizational perceptions. Perceptions were examined through both rankings and ratings. Ratings had numerous significant differences, while rankings were relatively stable.

Almost all strategies differed significantly across the scenarios in ratings of effectiveness, likelihood to recommend, and ethicality. Exceptions to this trend were in RQ2 and RQ3. Public relations professionals did not differ in terms of likelihood to recommend (RQ2) for the positively valenced strategies blameshifting and corrective action. They also did not vary in the negatively valenced strategy of provocation. Concerning ethicality (RQ3), strategies did not differ for positively valenced compensation. However, these findings are not surprising considering the size of the sample. Furthermore, valence shifts were rare. Only five of the 45 possible conditions exhibited a shift from positive to negative recommendations. Regarding these splits, with one exception the strategies, they considered strategies positively in the accident scenario and negatively in illegal activity and product safety. This was true for bolstering concerning effectiveness, transcendence in likelihood to recommend, and both accident and good intention strategies concerning ethicality. Interestingly, the accident communication strategy was likely to be recommended for both the accident scenario and the product safety scenario.

This examination of public relations professionals' perceptions of crisis communication strategies reveals a degree of consistency in ranking of strategies with those of advanced public relations students (Chandler, Ferguson, & Wallace, 2001). The exception to this is strategies for likely to recommend in the accident scenario. Corrective action, mortification, compensation, bolstering, transcendence, good intentions, and minimization were all positively valenced. Within this set, other strategies seemed somewhat stable with the exception of compensation, which moved to from a 3 or 4th ranking to the 7th position.

Otherwise, this study reveals that higher- and lower-regarded strategies were especially consistent in ranking regardless of contextual variables, which is consistent with these researchers' previous examination of students' perceptions. This finding merits further examination because previous studies have indicated that culpability and, to a lesser extent, response to an event, impact corporate reputation (Coombs, 1998; Coombs and Holladay, 1996, 2002, 2004; Dean, 2004). This consistency of ranking for higher- and lower-regarded strategies, regardless of contextual variables, was also found for RQ2, or likely to recommend, but not for effectiveness and ethicality regardless of crisis scenario, which is an important finding for scholars and practitioners. Image repair strategies generally were homogenously grouped at high (superior) and low (inferior) clusters. Strategies were viewed as either good or bad. Once again, the exception was for likely to recommend strategies in the accident scenario, which found the previous mentioned seven strategies positively valenced. While journalists and lawyers may view the strategies differently (Wallace et al., 2008), public relation professionals, in this study, see more latitude in the use of rhetorical strategies in accident crisis scenarios because the organization is not judged to be at fault. PR professionals may view accidents as having more latitude in rhetorical strategies because the organization is not at fault. However, other audiences (journalists and lawyers) may not see it the same way. Whether there is more actual flexibility in strategies, without damage to organizational reputation, or if public relations professionals are deluded or short-sighted in this view of accident crises should be explored in future studies.

Table 5. Organizational Image Restoration Hierarchy in Effectiveness and Ethicality

Tier One	Tier Two	Tier Three
Corrective Action	Bolstering	Provocation
Compensation	Transcendence	Blameshift
Mortification	Good intentions	Silence
	Minimization	Deny
	Defeasibility	
	Counterattack	
	Differentiate	
	Accident	

With the above noted exception, the three strategies consistently ranked highest were correction action, compensation, and mortification. These rankings remained consistent across the three types of crisis situations and other variables. This remains an important finding that has potential for influencing strategic choices of persuasive message strategies. Denial strategies (simple denial and blame shifting) and silence were consistently grouped as the least salient. Specifically, silence as a communication strategy typically held one of the lowest rankings for effectiveness and likelihood to recommend. The only strategy considered ranked lower was simple denial. Kim et al. (2009) pointed out that while denial was the most frequently employed strategy by practitioners, it was judged least effective by crisis communication researchers. This study indicates that public relations professionals do acknowledge that denial is ethically questionable and ineffective when dealing with organizational crises.

For scholars, these findings suggest several specific areas for future research. For communication professionals, these findings suggest that a sound and basic crisis communication message plan consistent with these findings may be adequate for most organizational crisis challenges, rather than a cumbersome and complex (difficult to enact) matrix of strategies matched to multiple situational and contextual variables. These findings may prove significant for message mapping for organizational communicators.

Consistent with the earlier study of student perceptions, three identifiable tiers emerged within this hierarchy of strategies. Professionals and students seem to make decisions based on hierarchy, or preferences. For the most part, the tier system seems to be stable. Positively perceived or "good" strategies clustering in Tier 1 were corrective action, compensation, and mortification. All top three strategies were positively valenced. It seems clear from the most preferred strategies that public relations professionals are focused on maintaining and strengthening the organization's reputation and relationships with stakeholders long term. While there was considerable shuffling within tiers, very few strategies jumped far beyond the tier's border. One exception was accident, which moved up to Tier 2 from the previous study of students' ranking in Tier 3. This may be due to either clearer language in the description of the accident strategy that more closely aligns with definitional language presented earlier in the paper. While the three tier structure holds a degree of consistency for effectiveness and ethicality, communication professionals are likely to recommend bolstering, transcendence, good intentions, and minimization strategies when confronted with an accident. That said, provocation, blameshifting, silence, and denial are always considered among the least desirable choices, pragmatically and ethically.

Limitations and Future Directions

This study, combined with the earlier study's results, suggest multiple future areas of research, alleviating some of the limitations in the current study. Clearly, one of the limitations of this study is that the large sample size resulted in even small differences showing statistical significance. However, this is considered an equitable tradeoff as future analyses can parse organizational differentiations and other demographics. This study has many of the typical limitations of survey research; in this case the length of the instrument resulted in a substantial number of incomplete surveys.

Further research would allow examination of the slight changes in strategy preferences within scenario, and for examination of additional types of crisis situations. One thing is certain: crisis communication will continue to be a fertile and relevant field of study with clear implications for public relations professionals, and one which provides public relations professionals opportunities for the transformative nature of effective and ethical communication strategies to mitigate reputational damage and maintain stakeholder relationships and trust during and after organizational crises.

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Appendix

ANOVA for Saliencies by Scenario

	Effective			Likely			Ethical		
	df	F	Sig.	df	F	Sig.	df	F	Sig.
Deny	2	11.04	0.000	2	5.06	0.006	2	3.14	0.043
	2383			2377			2385		
Blameshift	2	21.20	0.000	2	0.26	0.768	2	23.19	0.000
	2384			2373			2385		
Provocation	2	20.71	0.000	2	2.64	0.071	2	42.21	0.000
	2376			2368			2371		
Defeasibility	2	70.47	0.000	2	16.30	0.000	2	165.72	0.000
	2374			2365			2374		
Accident	2	185.40	0.000	2	46.34	0.000	2	236.71	0.000
	2362			2371			2369		
Good intentions	2	122.00	0.000	2	24.38	0.000	2	135.77	0.000
	2368			2367			2375		
Bolstering	2	61.11	0.000	2	36.68	0.000	2	73.31	0.000
	2383			2375			2385		
Minimization	2	7.31	0.001	2	30.91	0.000	2	24.66	0.000
	2378			2375			2383		
Differentiate	2	6.22	0.002	2	7.06	0.001	2	25.33	0.000
	2373			2364			2379		
Transcendence	2	48.41	0.000	2	38.37	0.000	2	68.26	0.000
	2367			2372			2383		
Counterattack	2	3.70	0.025	2	12.08	0.000	2	26.55	0.000
	2374			2364			2378		
Compensation	2	12.80	0.000	2	35.71	0.000	2	1.97	0.140
	2365			2355			2362		
Corrective Action	2	22.21	0.000	2	3.35	0.035	2	3.00	0.050
	2387			2371			2384		
Mortification	2	73.07	0.000	2	27.18	0.000	2	21.88	0.000
	2378			2368			2379		
Silence	2	10.91	0.000	2	11.32	0.000	2	18.51	0.000
	2372			2361			2377		

Saliencies by Scenario Post Hoc Analysis*

Strategy	Scenario	Effective				Likely				Ethical			
		N	M	SD	sig	N	M	SD	sig	N	M	SD	sig
Deny	Accident	796	4.95	0.24	a	793	4.30	0.96	a	796	4.81	0.50	a
	Illegal	797	4.88	0.40	b	795	4.26	1.02	b	795	4.87	0.39	b
	Safety	793	4.87	0.39	b	792	4.41	0.89	a	797	4.83	0.48	
Blameshift	Accident	794	4.84	0.45	a	790	3.90	1.17		797	4.60	0.64	a
	Illegal	797	4.79	0.58	a	793	3.92	1.18		795	4.80	0.45	b
	Safety	796	4.65	0.73	b	793	3.94	1.21		796	4.65	0.69	b
Provocation	Accident	789	4.79	0.48	a	786	3.94	1.07		789	4.32	0.79	a
	Illegal	797	4.70	0.65	b	793	3.94	1.11		792	4.66	0.61	b
	Safety	793	4.58	0.76	c	792	4.05	1.09		793	4.51	0.78	c
Defeasibility	Accident	788	4.15	0.93	a	785	3.01	1.19	a	791	3.32	0.97	a
	Illegal	795	4.37	0.89	b	792	3.36	1.24	b	793	4.24	0.90	b
	Safety	794	3.78	1.18	c	791	3.09	1.31	a	793	3.74	1.13	c
Accident	Accident	775	3.25	1.16	a	791	2.54	1.10	a	787	2.83	1.01	a
	Illegal	796	4.31	0.99	b	793	3.15	1.32	b	791	4.02	1.05	b
	Safety	794	3.49	1.26	c	790	2.82	1.30	c	794	3.49	1.20	c
Good intentions	Accident	782	3.23	1.05	a	788	2.48	1.05	a	792	2.67	0.82	a
	Illegal	794	4.05	1.03	b	792	2.86	1.21	b	791	3.49	1.11	b
	Safety	795	3.44	1.16	c	790	2.76	1.15	b	795	3.25	1.10	c
Bolstering	Accident	793	2.81	1.03	a	792	1.93	0.90	a	796	2.23	0.73	a
	Illegal	797	3.43	1.15	b	794	2.27	1.07	b	795	2.75	1.03	b
	Safety	796	3.15	1.18	c	792	2.35	1.12	b	797	2.70	1.04	b
Minimization	Accident	791	4.27	0.78	a	792	3.21	1.17	a	795	3.79	0.87	a
	Illegal	796	4.42	0.79	b	793	3.48	1.20	b	794	4.04	0.87	b
	Safety	794	4.36	0.77	b	793	3.67	1.15	c	797	4.08	0.86	b
Differentiate	Accident	790	4.59	0.60	a	787	3.72	1.11	a	795	3.70	0.90	a
	Illegal	796	4.52	0.73	a	792	3.71	1.15	a	795	3.93	0.94	b
	Safety	790	4.47	0.73	b	788	3.90	1.10	b	792	4.03	0.93	b
Transcendence	Accident	783	3.54	1.10	a	791	2.64	1.11	a	796	2.96	0.94	a
	Illegal	793	4.04	1.01	b	791	3.06	1.25	b	795	3.49	1.07	b
	Safety	794	3.91	1.05	c	793	3.13	1.23	b	795	3.48	1.08	b
Counterattack	Accident	786	4.38	0.83	a	787	3.59	1.12	a	794	3.91	0.96	a
	Illegal	797	4.49	0.79	b	788	3.73	1.12		791	4.22	0.89	b
	Safety	794	4.41	0.84	b	792	3.86	1.11	b	796	4.18	0.93	b

Strategy	Scenario	Effective				Likely				Ethical			
		N	M	SD	sig	N	M	SD	sig	N	M	SD	sig
Compensation	Accident	786	2.28	0.95	a	782	2.71	1.08	a	787	1.96	0.93	
	Illegal	789	2.13	1.12	b	788	2.42	1.06	b	787	1.94	1.00	
	Safety	793	2.01	1.08	b	788	2.27	1.07	c	791	1.87	0.96	
Corrective Action	Accident	795	1.15	0.42	a	789	1.66	0.79		795	1.17	0.44	A
	Illegal	797	1.30	0.59	b	793	1.67	0.84		794	1.22	0.48	B
	Safety	798	1.30	0.58	b	792	1.57	0.80		798	1.22	0.52	C
Mortification	Accident	791	1.84	1.01	a	789	2.47	1.18	a	796	1.51	0.75	A
	Illegal	796	1.37	0.65	b	791	2.18	1.15	b	793	1.30	0.56	B
	Safety	794	1.49	0.75	c	791	2.06	1.09	b	793	1.38	0.64	B
Silence	Accident	791	4.85	0.44	a	787	4.05	1.10	a	793	4.22	0.89	A
	Illegal	794	4.75	0.62	b	790	4.10	1.08	a	794	4.42	0.82	b
	Safety	790	4.73	0.61	b	787	4.29	0.96	b	793	4.47	0.83	b

*different letters indicate significant differences

Organizational values: comparing Brazilian and North American companies

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Abstract

The object of this completed research involves a study into the organizational values of the 100 largest business groups that operate in Brazil. The theoretical corpus composing this analysis is based on the theories of organizational communication and on the theory of values from philosophy. The intersection point occurs in the organizational culture, in which the values are revealed, experienced or projected. The analysis of data available shows differences between Brazilian and North American values, even comparing similar organizations. Another important finding is the fact that mission, vision and values have little relation to the organizations core business and a great connection with the management. Profit (results) and ethics are the two values most often present in the 100 groups consulted. Sustainability is also frequently mentioned including values connected to the triple bottom line. The organizational communicators are directly involved in the process of disseminating and interpreting these values, which are the genesis and the source of inspiration for projects and management programs of organizational identity.

Introduction

Since the late 1990s and along the first decade of the XXI century until today, organizational communication has been operating successive changes in its theoretical universe, its influence areas, its practices and, as a consequence, in the profile of professionals acting in this field.

What differentiates organizations, one from another, is the way in which they decide to accomplish their mission or, in other words, how they define their way of being. So that everyone is aware of this way of being, it is necessary for the organization stakeholders to be impacted by the messages that translate this intention.

Organizations communicate by means of a series of processes, methodologies and tools and by a mix of both formal and informal means, designed so that the stakeholders' perception conform with the desired image. The more symbolic power this organization builds and exerts on a certain group or society, as stated by Baldissera (2009, p. 137): "the stronger its influences tend to be and the more fragile will resistances to its standards, its actions, its procedures, its values and its beliefs be."

In the last decades, Brazil has experienced a growing increase in the participation of organizations in the society ambit of community life, be it for pressures by the population and markets; be it for beliefs in values that more and more require participation in social life; be it for the demand that the public sector does not manage or does not intend to meet and ends up asking the private sector. With the expansion of companies importance beyond their economic production function, society is attributing them a social role and the place taken by organizations is part of the life history of people, of cities, of the media and of social relations.

In this new configuration, organizational communication interplays with other areas of knowledge, such as philosophy, sociology, psychology and history, expanding the perspective of the communicational approach supported by human sciences.

Pesqueux (2008, p. 9), a contemporary philosopher, states that philosophy has currently been very valued, as it can provide a large contribution to the conceptual framework of organizational sciences. In Pesqueux's (2008) opinion, there is a certain conceptual frailness in organizational sciences and philosophy is apt to clear and to fundament companies' behavior, since it works with predictive models.

Comte-Sponville (2008), in his book *Valeur et Verité* dedicates a chapter to discussing morality in companies. The author is emphatic when he says capitalism is neither moral nor immoral, but simply rational, as expected from an economic activity. However, companies more and more try to express moral attributes. Why? Comte-Sponville criticizes the use of ethics by companies saying that "it seems admissible that good ethics can be a quality factor, therefore a marketing argument, not an ethic one! Moral is disinterested; by the way, this is why it is acknowledged" (COMTE-SPONVILLE, 2008, p. 287).

Once companies record their values in their communicational production, we opted for analyzing the communicative aspect of company morals which is the record of values in the companies' sites and virtual environments directed to their stakeholders.

The article is structured into three parts. The first one approaches the inter-relation between communication and organization. In the second, the approach lies on the concept of value, focusing on value as a virtue, value as affection and value as power. In the final part, the applied research data, of quantitative approach, are presented, using as its universe the 200 largest corporate groups operating in Brazil.

Organization and Communication: Deep Interrelations

Studies on organizational communication, aiming at theoretical-conceptual classification, started in the second half of the XX century and were intensified, particularly in Brazil, in the last three decades. Many are the Organization Theories or Management Theories that were developed along over a century and many are the scholars dedicated to translating them.

Inspired in the large modern capitalist companies, in the early years of the XX century, Weber designs a model that prescinds the individual, stating that "The 'objective' discharge of business primarily means discharge of business according to calculable rules and without regard to persons." (WEBER, 1979, p.250). Bureaucracy is dehumanized, explains Weber, as it eliminates from official business love, hate and all the personal, irrational and emotional elements that not stemming from calculus.

In the early XX century, the first studies by Frederick Taylor (1903) and by Henri Fayol (1916) based on the principles of the Scientific Theory or Classical Management Theory were started. These studies very emphatically distinguished work organization and control. Organizations management was characterized by planning, commanding, organizing, controlling and coordinating tasks. This management model was named mechanicist management.

The turning point in organizational studies occurs with the emergence of the Human Relations School, in the 1930s, as opposed to the mechanicist thinking represented by Taylor and Fayol. The new perspective, presented in Elton Mayo's studies, points out, as summed by Caldas:

> (...) that interpersonal communication, group dynamics and employees' values and attitudes concerning the organization were more important to the organizational results and performance than work structuring itself. (CALDAS, 2010, p. 31).

According to Chiavenato (2000, p.113), the main results of Mayo's experiments with a factory employees indicate that: (1) the production level results from social integration (2) an individual's behavior is supported upon the group; (3) behavior is conditioned by social norms and standards (4) groups are informal and not connected to hierarchy (5) emotional aspects are considered and (6) the content and the nature of work influence a worker's moral.

From this, the relation between organization and communication begins to build up. Still in the 1930s, Chester Barnard, who had executive experience, was the first to connect management efficacy to communication aspects. Also in the same decade, Maslow's studies emerge, defining people's hierarchy of needs.

In the 1960s, a new school begins to be delineated in organizational studies and was called Systems Theory. An integrated perspective of the organization vision by means of communication is found in Kunsch (2009), an author who has been developing studies on the different dimensions of organizational communication in Brazil for several years. For her, communication is present in the organization in a systemic way, in the administrative, marketing and institutional dimensions. Communication serves planning and strategic management and, for this reason, "integrated communication projects and actions effected have to be aligned with the organizations mission, vision, values and goals." (KUNSCH, 2008, p.117). As can be seen, communication and organization are recursively related.

Organizational communication studies are imbricated with organizational studies in such a way that approaching the first necessarily means involving the second. Hence, at each theoretical leap in the management theory, the same was observed in the communication field.

In the 1990s, one of the groups that worked to study organizational communication is Canadian and was named Montreal School, the greatest exponent of which is James Taylor. The central proposal for analyzing this theme was an expansion of this concept related to information and interlinking, for an idea of action, without losing its original meanings.

When explaining his concept, Taylor mentions what an organization is not: it is not a machine, not an object, no brain, as what it really is only occurs by means of communication. For Taylor; Casali (2010, p.73), "an organization is a configuration of individuals, technologies, buildings and objects that keep connected by the most fragile of ties: communication." Or, in other words, "in Taylor's early studies, organization is a communication fabric" (TAYLOR; CASALI, 2010, p. 31).

Schuler (2005) presents a multidimensional and multirreferencial view of the organization by means of a transdisciplinary approach:

> Transdisciplinary approach is the tendency of gathering disciplines into a whole, when faced with natural phenomena. It is the tendency of building bridges between disciplines, a common ground for exchange, dialog and integration, in which natural phenomena from several different perspectives at the same time, generating a holistic understanding of this phenomenon, an understanding that no longer fits into any discipline, after all. (SCHULER, 2005, p. 2).

The transdisciplinary approach is highly valuable in this study, once communication always occurs in a certain context; in the case of the study of values, it occurs in the organizational culture.

Organizational Culture: the Cradle of Values

Studies into this culture date back to the 1960s, when Allport (1962) and Schein (1965) published their researches into organizational psychology. For Schein (1986, apud Deal; Kennedy, 1982), a group's organizational culture can be defined as the set of basic presuppositions a certain group invented, discovered and developed when it learned how to deal with external adaptation and internal integration problems.

According to Katz and Kahn (1978), an organization main components are papers, standards and values. These three elements define and guide a company operation. Roles define and prescribe forms of behavior associated to certain tasks, standards are expectations transformed into requirements and values "are the justifications and more generalized ideological aspirations." (1978, p.54)

In 1982, Deal & Kennedy published a book called *Corporate Cultures*, resulting from studies they had jointly conducted into the profiles of eighty American companies. One-third of them had clearly defined beliefs and all of them were considered high-performance companies.

Some common characteristics were found in the companies with this type of culture: (1) values, the cornerstone of corporative culture; (2) heroes, who personify the culture and define the organization strength; (3) rites and rituals, which are culture in action; (4) communication, accounting for the cultural network. As from these evidences, Kennedy & Deal asserted that it was possible to foresee the performance of a company.

Studies into Organizational Culture in Communication

"Culture and communication have one of the closest relations in the human world of knowledge", says Marchiori (2009, p. 294) and culture accounts for what can be called

"organization personality". The author advocates that communication is the construction of meaning and interrelation and that culture and communication are surely indissociable, strategic resources and accounting for organizations performance.

For Schuler (2009, p. 244), the term culture can be defined as a "collective process of building reality, by means of representation, which allows people to see, interpret and understand the shared reality in a similar way". According to her, generating culture is, above all, to share meanings or "to make meanings common, or still, to communicate".

According to Marchiori (2006, p. 161) "the only way of modifying an organization is by means of its culture". The more unity there is among the members, the more consensual will the organizational culture vision be: "the express definition of values, ideas shared by all the organizational agents". Therefore, "(...) culture is not something an organization has; culture is something an organization is." (MARCHIORI, 2009, p. 303).

Studies conducted in the 1980s, such as Peters; Waterman (1982) successful organizations "build cohesive cultures around common sets of norms, values, and ideas that create an appropriate focus for doing business". The complexity of what is called organizational culture, its metaphors and values are not to be set aside.

The organizational culture influences the accomplishment or non-accomplishment of the mission, of the vision and of the values in organizations. For Kotler (1994, p. 74) A clear, thoughtful mission statement "provides employees with a shared sense of purpose, direction, and opportunity" acting as an invisible hand that guides the work towards realizing the organization goals.

Virtue, Moral Excellence and Value

Along the history of humanity, man changed, society changed, values changed. Heller says that this is explained by the evolutive character of history, a natural development trend: "(...) the course of history is the process of building values, or of the decay and decline of this or that value." (HELLER, 2009, p. 14).

The concept of value has also changed and this paper presents three analytical perspectives: value as an ideal (old philosophy), value as affection (modern philosophy) and value as power (contemporary philosophy).

Value as an Ideal

Virtue, moral excellence and value are some of the concepts that deal with explaining human essence and its finality. Who is man, after all? What is his purpose? What is the best life to live? What are virtues? Where do they come from? What are they for?

In classic Greece, even before Socrates, whose ideas were assimilated, disseminated and expanded by Plato, philosophers reflected about the reason concerning human existence. The philosophical questions are about how to live a virtuous life, hence the discussion about values such as justice, friendship, love, beauty, temperance and prudence.

Socrates had his ideas structured in form of dialogues by his disciple Plato for whom there was the sensitive world, of appearances, which was a shadow, a simulacrum of the world of ideas. And the latter, in turn, was the intelligible world, immutable, universal. In such a world there would be no transformations, contradictions or doubts. The Platonic world of ideas comprises all the concepts, all the values, and this would be a divine world, an eternal world.

What differentiates the sensitive (visible) world from the intelligible (invisible) world is the distinction between opinion and concept. To opinion can be added habits, uses, beliefs and prejudices. A concept or an idea, explains Chauí (2000), is:

> (...) a network of significations which provides us with the inner and essential meaning of that which it refers to, the causal nexuses or the relationships between its elements, so that through them we learn about the origin, the principles, the consequences, the causes and effects of that which it refers to. (CHAUÍ, 2000, p.198).

Although the thematic of virtues permeates all of Plato's dialogues, *Menon* is the work that specifically deals with virtues. Socrates and Menon debate whether virtue can be learned as a science, once it is rational. Since every science is um asset and being virtue an asset, it is possible for virtue to be a science. If virtue is not something belonging to nature, could it be learned? For Socrates it could not, and he explains why: virtue is not something that can be taught because there are no masters and if they do not exist it is because it is not a science. By neither belonging to nature nor to the essence of man, it could only be connected to something divine.

In the Aristotelian perspective, which followed Plato, the purpose of man is to do good. There are obviously other objectives for man's life, such as being happy, having pleasure, improving, earning wealth, but Aristotle (2001, p. 20) explains the latter "only happens to be a profitable life and a life dedicated to earning wealth is lived under compulsion." And living like this is not living well. Doing good results in happiness, which is the main goal of life for Aristotle. Could such a goal be applied as a value for organizations?

Aristotle adds the power of deliberation to the Platonic concept, that is, an individual's choice, as differently from nature in which everything is given, in daily life, at every moment, man is submitted to choices. It is in deliberation that he can attain a virtuous life. Or not. How can this fit in the life of organizations?

"Moral excellence is related to actions and emotions" (ARISTOTLE, 2001, p.37) and may cause pleasure and pain, thus evidencing that moral excellence only occurs in the exercise of the being. Hence, by performing just acts, man becomes just and good. Moral excellence would therefore be a human disposition oscillating between two extremes.

In this sense, values are criteria for decision of conduct. Faced with an issue, a problem or a decision, a man asks himself: what is the best choice (as only man can choose)? What is the best choice for the organization? The conduct as from his decision defines his moral excellence.

Value as Affection

In ancient philosophy, philosophers approached virtue as related to reason, connected to the intelligible world and not to the sensitive world; in modern philosophy, in turn, the framework is changed with the conceptions of philosophers Descartes, Spinoza, Nietzsche and others.

For Spinoza (1973, p. 185) what moves man is passion, as we act stimulated by external causes, and, therefore, uncontrollable. Man does not control his body or even his soul; how could he then control his actions, since he is impacted by other beings acting on him all the time? Spinoza explains that there is no judgment of value over passions, they are neither good nor bad in principle; they are natural. Things, persons, organizations, nothing has value in itself; valuation is thus attributed from the perspective of the one being impacted.

Spinoza deals with his theory of affections in his work *Ethics demonstrated in the geometrical manner*. It is necessary to understand the concept of *conatus*, which is an effort made by each being to perseverate in their being the appetite (or desire), as the power of acting. The power, or the intensity of the feeling, fluctuates according to the impact another existence

causes on us. Hence, if it causes joy, it is because the power of acting increases and if, on the contrary, it causes sadness, it is because the power of acting is reduced.

There is a relationship between the adequate ideas originated in the soul and inadequate ideas, which depend on passions (proposition III). When defining affections, Spinoza lists desire, happiness and sadness, but also admiration, despise, love, hate, inclination, aversion, adoration, derision, hope, fear, safety, despair, contentment, remorse, commiseration, favor, indignation, esteem, disesteem, envy, mercy, humility, regret, pride, glory, modesty, greed, lust and a number of others. The knowledge of good or evil would therefore lie on the joy or sadness it causes us, as long as we are aware of it. (SPINOZA, 1973, p. 253).

Also sharing the ideas developed by Spinoza, we find the German philosopher Nietzsche, who deconstructs the whole of the philosophical thinking current up to the XVIII century and reorganizes it in a new order.

Nietzsche proposes a transvaluation of values, by questioning that everything society is, does, establishes, was molded (in the sense of being constituted) to meet the expectations of a historical time and of the current moral. A large share of this moral anchorage is established in the Christian vision, full of guilt, which prevents the exercise of true aspirations, which stimulate the vital power of men. Transvaluating, revaluating, reconsidering criteria, reassessing established truths is what Nietzsche (2008, p. 106) proposes: "The question concerning the origin of moral values is for a me a question of the very first rank because it conditions the future of humanity".

"Nietzsche's work is one of the sources of the philosophy of values and of the moral philosophy" (MARIÁS, 2004, p.403). The philosophy of values emerges in the early XX century and was developed in a structured manner by two German thinkers: Max Scheler and Nicolai Hartman.

Value as Power

If until then philosophers dealt with the issue of virtue under a divine and human perspective, in the XIX century a new vision begins to be structured considering society a platform for making values explicit. Value would then be a way of sharing feelings, at distinct levels. If it is already difficult for man to have predictable conduct, once he is either positively or negatively affected, what can be said about the behavior of society?

"It is above all in the vision of value according to the *homo economicus*, with Adam Smith (1999), that the study of value begins to acquire autonomous epistemological status", explains Reale (2001). Until then, the axiological concept, as we know it today, did not exist. Axiology deals with the study of values field, particularly that of moral values. The adjective *axios*, root of the term axiology, meant deserving praise, which was the way they praised the bravery of heroes or of warriors, their worthy statesmen and artists and the valid virtues of the craftsmen, as explains Reale (1991, p. 1).

Scheler, a German philosopher, published his most important work – founded on the value-perception theory - between 1913 and 1916. Scheler mentions that history is the product of a series of effected values, as a result of their real opportunities. For Scheler, there would be a universality of values for all men, since all of them are endowed with emotion, but there is also the social context, social objectivity (for him), which allows capturing and realizing certain values. There would therefore be a human individual ethics and an ethics of collectivities. If organizations are collectivities, values are articulated between the individual and the organization, varying as much as historical times and societies vary.

In his work *The revolution of values*, the German philosopher selects and details the elements that characterize modern moral. I highlight one of them here: the subordination of life values to utility values. For Scheler, "Among essential values there are two that have medium rank: utility value and vital value. The latter is evidently preferable to the former". (1994, p.158-169).

Economic organizations are part of a sphere in which values are made explicit and in which the company activity is of moral nature, as moral is a relationship between human activities (HELLER, 2009, p.18). In the relationship between companies and their stakeholders, a requirement and uses system is established, which is permeated by moral values. Among the other categories of values, such as economic, universal, aesthetic and spiritual, there is no human relation; they cannot thus be said to refer to moral values. In the same way, there is no moral in nature, as there is no choice.

The valuation of attitudes derives from social relations. Value only makes sense if it is linked to the representations of man in society. The stronger is the link between individual value and the value perceived in society, the greater the perception of the reality of the value.

To value is to judge. To assess criteria, models, standards, to compare moral weights and measures. As man is a social being, the act of making values explicit occurs in socialization instances (or as some authors prefer it, socialization levels) such as family, school, church, political parties, companies.

Thinking of the economic, organizational sphere, when do companies make their "values" explicit to society, what do they signal to their target public? Do they mean that value lies on things, as an idealistic perspective would be? Or would values transcend the objects, in which those affected valuate? What do companies mean to say when they present in their communication: our values are ethics, respect, innovation and sustainability?

Heller (2009) explains that values have always been forms of human elevation, and it may be the same in organizations. For her, there is an axiological hierarchy that changes as history changes. When analyzing Heller's (2009) propositions about values as a way of human elevation, I wonder if that which is valued is that which we lack. If we are afraid, we place greater value on courage. If we perceive evil, we place greater value on good. In a society of fair people, would justice have any value?

There is a strong relation between the hierarchy of values and culture. Agreeing with Heller (2009), Reale (1991) recognized the same hierarchy of values and already signaled, in 1991, that other values could be revealed to compose the universe of culture. He stated that the last of these values is the ecological value, universally acknowledged as an axiological invariant, as the survival of men depends on it, the source value.

Scheler related this change not with values, but with *ethos*, which for him was defined as a specific set of values valid at a certain time or culture. (MATHEUS, 2002, p.21). At each time or at each collectivity, such as companies, for instance, a set of values supports its economic action. Thus, change is not axiological, but of the collectivity in its specific vision of values.

Questioning organizations that consider themselves ethical, would ethics be a value above all? Would ethics be what we lack? Would an ethical organization be that model, Platonic company, from the world of ideas? Would ethics be a value affecting us positively and bringing us joy? In the organizations perspective, what would ethics be, after all?

Corporative Values: A Quantitative Analysis on the Diffusion
of Values of the Largest Corporate Groups in Brazil

The study of the philosophical schools dealing with virtue, moral excellence and value, in their distinct perspectives, was fundamental for understanding the relations between values-culture-organizations and communication. It happens that the authors dealing with these issues failed to model analysis instruments that could be reproduced by other scholars.

Even Scheler, acknowledged as the Value Theorist, failed to formalize analysis procedures (1994). In the 1960s, also Rokeach (1973), a North-American social psychologist, developed a Theory of Values based on the relation among beliefs, values and attitudes. The scholar listed 36 dominant beliefs among humans and classified them into 18 instrumental values (what we do in our day-to-day) and 18 terminal values (to attain what we wish),

This theory is founded on five presuppositions, as explains Aust (2004, p,521): (1) people have relatively few values; (2) humans have the same number of values, yet at different degrees; (3) values form value systems; (4) values derive from cultures, societies and institutions (or corporations) and (5) values are manifested in messages and can thus be examined,

As from these verifications, Rokeach developed a model; in the tables that follow, its values were organized by him into terminal values and instrumental values; the terminal ones associated to a final goal and the instrumental ones as a way of attaining the terminal values.

Table 1 - Terminal values: values connected to the final goal

Value	Examples
True friendship	Comradeship, companionship, sympathy, communion
Mature love	Intimacy, sexuality, spirituality, maturity
Self-respect	Meritocracy, respect, self-esteem
Beauty	Beauty, charm, elegance, splendor
Family	Family, home, stability
Happiness	Happiness, euphoria, contentment
Inner harmony	Harmony, organization, order, determination, balance
Equality	Equity, equality, impartiality, justice
Freedom	Liberty, choice, opportunity
A world at peace	Peace, agreement, serenity
Pleasure	Enjoyment, satisfaction, leisure
Social recognition	Recognition, admiration, appreciation
Wisdom	Wisdom, awareness, discernment, understanding
Salvation	Salvation, immortality, redemption,
National security	Protection, defense, support
A sense of accomplishment	Accomplishment, contribution, achievement, result
A comfortable life	Comfort, prosperity, good luck
An exciting life	Activity, stimulus, stirring

Table 2 - Instrumental Values: values connected to day-to-day behavior

Value	Examples
Joy	Animation, brightness, joviality, happiness, enjoyment
Ambition	Hard work, entrepreneurship, willingness
Love	Love, affection, charity
Self-control	Self-control, discipline, perseverance
Broad-mindedness	Flexibility, tolerance,
Capability	Competence, effectivity, capacity, proficiency
Courage	Courage, firmness, boldness, daringness, bravery
Politeness	Politeness, good behavior, good manners, civility
Honesty	Honesty, truth, morals, ethic, sincerity
Imagination	Imagination, creativity, inspiration, innovation, originality,
Independence	Independence, autonomy, self-sufficiency
Intelligence	Intelligence, reflection
Cleanliness	Cleanliness, clarity, order
Logic	Logic, rationality, consistency, focus
Obedience	Obedience
Forgiveness	Forgiveness, pardon, absolution, revision
Responsibility	Responsibility, dependence
Sympathy	Well-being, assistance, support

Comparative Analysis between Brazilian and American Corporations

Starting from the presupposition that values may be codified, as her research population, the author used the list of the largest corporate groups published by *Valor Grandes Grupos*, 2010 issue, published by Valor Econômico S.A. and yearly classified by their gross revenue. The gross revenue of the groups listed among the 200 largest corporate groups exceeds US$ 1.2 trillion.

For the author's Master's dissertation, 100 cases were investigated, which list 61% of the Brazilian capital corporate groups. Among the groups analyzed, 40% are industries, 44% are service-rendering companies and 16% are classified as commercial groups.

All the values found in the corporations websites were codified, totaling 208 different values, in 692 mentions, an average of 7 values for each corporate group researched. After identified in the Rokeach 26 categories, about 40 values could not be categorized, as they do not happen to be human values, but organizational ones. So as to include these values, three new categories were created: (1) management values, (2) values associated to stakeholders and (3) sustainability,

In the graph below, the incidence of each of the categories: terminal values, instrumental values, management values, values associated to stakeholders and sustainability.

Graph 1: Categorization of values

MENTIONS

- Instrumental Values — 56,5%
- Terminal Values — 23,0%
- Management Values — 9,0%
- Stakeholders — 8,5%
- Sustainability — 2,9%

Database: 692 mentions of values
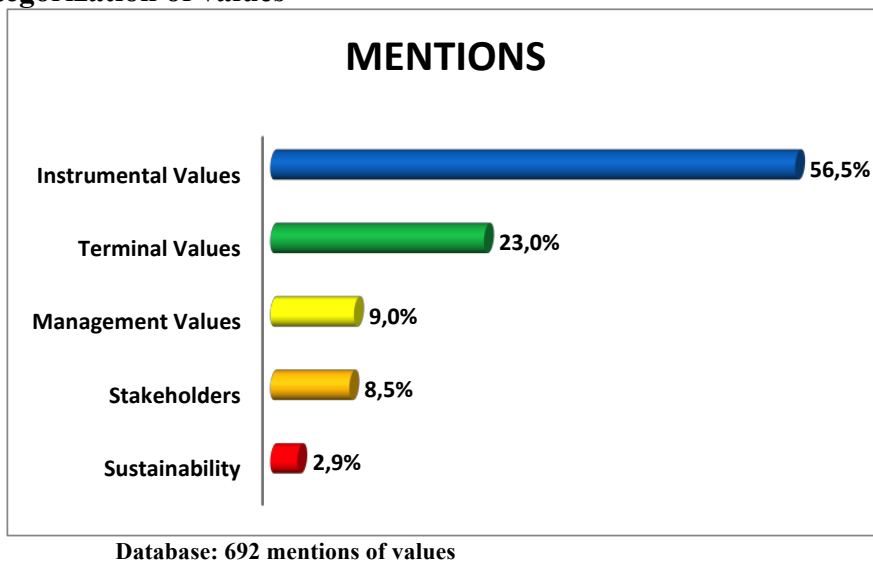
As observed, most values fit the instrumental values category, which Rokeach (1973) defines as the means that lead us to the final goal. It seems clear that organizations should count on a series of values to attain their goals; that is, being ethical, innovative and involved with their stakeholders so as to provide yields to their shareholders (terminal value). In spite of the obvious importance of these terminal values, 22% of the corporate groups fail to define their terminal values,

When the values are classified into the Rokeach categories, as shown in graph 4, 78% of the corporate groups disseminate categorized values such as **honesty** (honesty, truth, dignity, ethic, sincerity, sobriety, integrity and coherence), values denominated instrumental by the author.

Graph 2: **Values most mentioned in the total sample**

MOST MENTIONED

- HONESTY — 78
- CAPABILITY — 37
- ACCOMPLISHMENT — 35
- RESPONSIBILITY — 34
- LOVE — 32
- CLIENTS — 31
- IMAGINATION — 29
- PEOPLE — 25
- RESPONSIBILITY — 24
- SOCIAL RECOGNITION — 23
- SUSTAINABILITY — 20
- SECURITY — 14
- AMBITION — 14
- SELF-CONTROL — 14
- EQUALITY — 12
- MANAGEMENT — 12
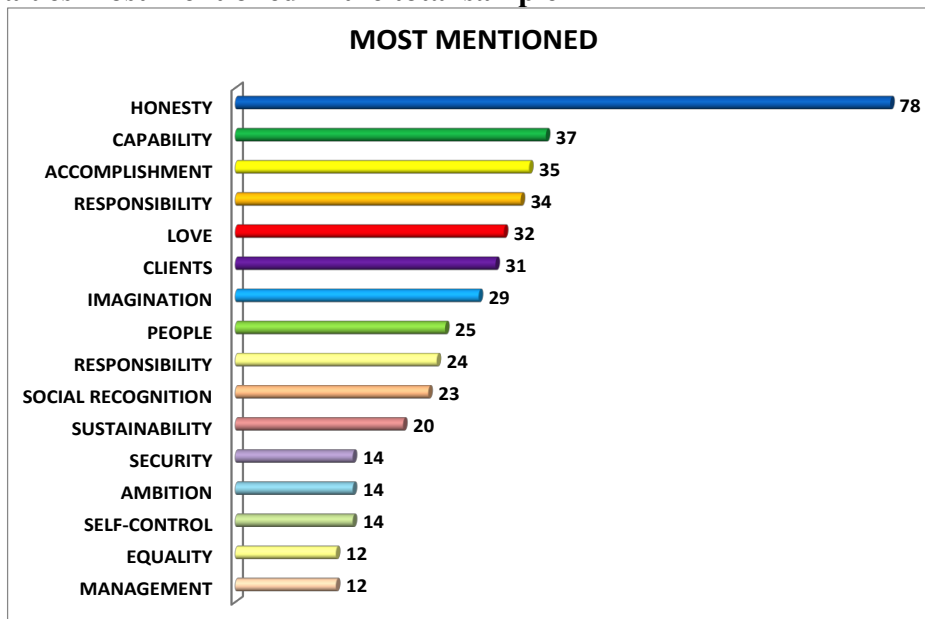
It is important to stress that some corporate groups mention stakeholders as a value. Being man the source value of all values, if all the mentions on clients (31%) and people (25%) are added, over 50% of the groups place the human being as a value in the organizational operation.

A selection of the 10 largest Brazilian groups and the 10 largest North-American ones was then made, the Brazilian being the ones that hire the most, totaling 747 thousand employees, as compared to the 140 thousand of the North-American groups.

Table 3 - Brazilian and North-American groups and areas of activity

Brazilian	Activity	Employees	North- American	Activity	Employees
Petrobras	Industry	76,919	Walmart	Trade	79,801
Itausa	Services	117,373	AES	Services	5,878
Bradesco	Services	85,548	Cargill	Industry	6,032
Banco do Brasil	Services	103,971	Whirlpool	Industry	18,000
JBS-Friboi	Industry	55,361	Citi	Services	6,519
Vale	Industry	60,036	Dow	Industry	2,300
Caixa Econômica	Services	91,306	Du Pont	Industry	5,300
Oi	Services	28,224	White Martins	Industry	4,285
Ambev	Industry	40,787	Alcoa	Industry	6,299
Odebrecht	Services	87,662	Dixie Toga	Industry	5,402

On average, the 10 Brazilian groups communicate 9 values, whereas the North-American ones communicate 6. When the values of the organizations in the two countries are compared, the Brazilian ones mention more instrumental values than the North-American ones. There is a certain conceptual redundancy in the exposition of the Brazilian groups' values: in turn, the North-American ones are more objective and there is a balance between terminal values and instrumental ones.

Graph 3: Comparison between Brazilian and American values
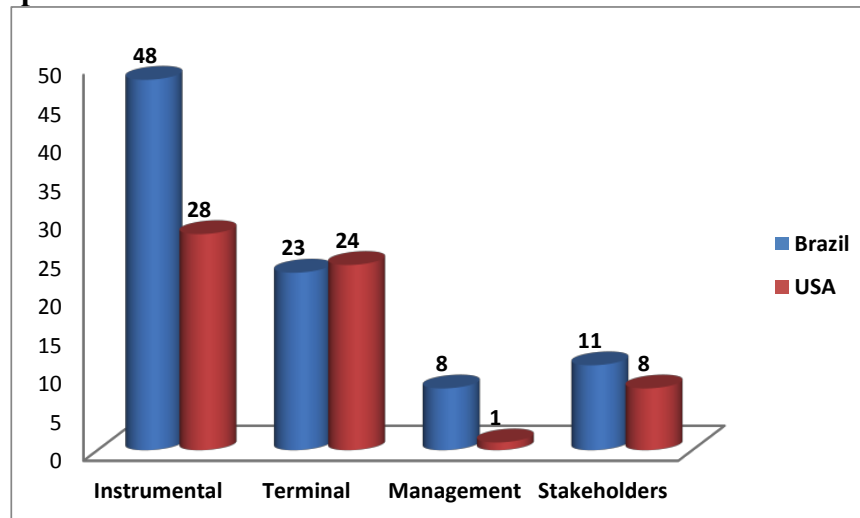
Although profitability is a presupposed value for economic corporations, only one of the North-American groups mentions it. Alcoa advertises "We earn sustainable financial results that

enable profitable growth and superior shareholder value", Among the Brazilian groups, the 5 that recognize profit as a value are from different areas (power, finance, beverage, telecommunication and civil construction),

Besides profit, 4 other terminal values were identified: safety, health, trust and inclusion. The latter was found in 3 Brazilian banks and safety was identified in 3 North-American industries.

Table 4 - Values of the Brazilian x American groups

NORTH-AMERICAN			BRAZILIAN		
MENTIONS	CATEGORY	VALUE	MENTIONS	CATEGORY	VALUE
5	Instrumental	Respect	9	Instrumental	Honesty
4	Instrumental	Excellence	5	Terminal	Yield/Profit
4	Instrumental	Integrity	5	Sustainability	Sustainabilit
4	Stakeholder	Clients	5	Stakeholder	Clients
4	Instrumental	Innovation	5	Stakeholder	Employees
3	Terminal	Safety	5	Instrumental	Innovation
2	Terminal	Health	5	Instrumental	Transparency
2	Terminal	Inclusion	5	Instrumental	Ethic
2	Terminal	Trust	5	Instrumental	Excellence
2	Sustainability	Sustainability	5	Terminal	Inclusion
			4	Instrumental	Simplicity
			4	Instrumental	Respect

García (1999, p,56) explains that, in function of the historical time, each era has its own significations and valuations, owing to different processes for selecting options, as well as to each moment or concrete situation. Sustainability is currently a stronger thematics for Brazilian companies than for North-American ones and, as historical cycles are cultural, so is corporate valuation.

Conclusion

The study on the values of human beings, of society and of corporations provides a new analysis perspective to organizational communication, more particularly to institutional communication. For the different authors, a common denominator: there is no organization without culture and there is no culture without communication. There are thus no doubts that it is in culture that organizational communication seeks its source of inspiration, the feedstock to develop its strategic goals.

Some values are more present in service rendering (such as client's satisfaction) and others are more present in industry (such as innovation). Independently of the company profile, country of origin or field of activity, some values permeate several organizations, suggesting a certain universality of the value or even the lack of the desired value. Some categories are common to several companies, being integrity, trust and respect values made explicit in Brazilian, American and European - of different nationalities - organizations, as well as from different fields of activity.

If a value reflects culture, organizations should have their values linked to the business. Few are the ones translating this concept. What would the major terminal value of commercial

bank be? Profit, certainly. Of a public bank: social inclusion. For a pharmaceutical company, the terminal value should be health. In the food segment, nutrition should be the value. By combining mission and values, the communicational perspectives would thus be truer and would make more sense.

However, when the incidence of values in Brazilian and in North-American companies is contrasted, the strong presence of ethic and of sustainability as values in the Brazilian companies stands out. Retaking Scheler and his *ethos,* these values may already be more incorporated by the foreign companies than by the Brazilian society. Another aspect that attracts attention is that half of these companies are of governmental origin, were privatized or are still public. This is a probable explanation for these groups to attribute ethic and honesty a value or their way of accounting to society.

This study allows observing that it is possible to attribute a value to everything; as the value concept condensates many ambiguities, all the relations can be positively or negatively valued. Therefore, when a corporation says people come first, which people are they referring to? Stakeholders? Clients? Employees? If respect is a value, how is it possible to place the client first to the detriment of the employees' life quality? And more: what is the social responsibility of a finance company that stimulates its clients' indebtedness with the marketing purpose that "we all have to make our dreams come true"?

More important than discussing convergences and divergences of values between Brazilian and North-American corporations is stimulating the discussion between corporate communication professionals and public relation ones who are at the core of this debate, once they are the disseminators of the mission, of the vision and of the values. They are the ones who signalize with the signification of values and the creation of narratives. One of the orders in the theories of values – the communicational order, transcendent and contemporary, as pointed out by Habermas (1989) – states that ethic occurs within the work and the interaction environment, with dialogue. Resweber (2002) says that the reflection on values currently reaches the communication and the language field, since it is through communication that the whole of the axiological heritage of humanity is organized and revealed. It is time we reflected on what legacy we, communicators, are leaving to future generations.

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Is Ghost Blogging Like Speechwriting? A Survey of Practitioners About the Ethics of Ghost Blogging

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Abstract

Based on the support of 71.1% of the public relations practitioners in our online survey (total *n*=291), there is a general consensus in favor of undisclosed organizational ghost blogging, provided that the ideas for the content come from the stated author and the stated author gives content approval. Moreover, about half of the practitioners in our sample who had organizational blogs (53.7%) indicated that the blogs were not written by their stated authors. It is important to keep in mind, however, that the practice is not necessarily ethical just because many practitioners believe it is and just because many practitioners are engaging in it. This study explores reasons to support undisclosed organizational ghost blogging and reasons to reject it, so practitioners can make an informed decision until more research can be conducted to determine whether audience deception is occurring and to determine whether radical transparency provides a strategic advantage with regard to ghost blogging disclosure.

A recent survey of public relations practitioners showed that about half (54 percent) of the 1,616 respondents believe that blogs *are* somewhat or very important to their public relations efforts, and most of the respondents (80 percent) believe that blogs *should be* at least somewhat important if not very important to their public relations endeavors (Wright & Hinson, 2011). Considering the importance of blogs to many public relations professionals, it is not surprising to also learn that practitioners want to know more about how to "engage in a meaningful and transparent manner" online, and they want to learn more about social media policies that minimize risk and maximize effectiveness (DiStaso, McCorkindale, & Wright, 2011, p. 327).

Although online practices such as astroturfing[1] have been established as unethical, considerable debate exists in the practitioner community about whether organizational ghost blogging is ethical (Paine, n.d.). *Ghost blogging* refers to the practice of writing blog posts on behalf of someone else who is stated as the author, and it can occur with or without disclosure of writing assistance[2].

In this study, we differentiate organizational blogs from personal, organization-aligned blogs. An *organizational blog* officially represents an organization, such as General Motors' FastLane blog (2011), which addresses the company's products and services, in addition to "important issues facing the company" (para. 1). A *personal, organization-aligned blog*[3] is a blog that is intended to solely represent the author's opinions and not necessarily the employer's positions, even though the author's employer is mentioned on the blog. For example, IBM (n.d.) has a Web page that lists all IBM bloggers and states

> As they'll tell you themselves, the opinions and interests expressed on IBMers' blogs are their own and don't necessarily represent this company's positions, strategies or views. But that doesn't mean we don't want you to read them! Because they do represent lots of business and technology expertise you can't get from anyone else. (para. 1)

This study is focused on organizational blogs, specifically those in which executives are listed as the authors, even though the blogs are really written by other people.

Through an online survey, we explored public relations practitioners' views of ghost blogging acceptability to discover whether the public relations industry has crystallized behind a set of disclosure and transparency standards and whether there are distinctions in positions on this issue based on work setting or demographic characteristics.

Literature Review

Conversations about organizations happen online, and it is important for organizations to be aware of those conversations and participate in them (DiStaso et al., 2011; Teich, 2008). In fact, most public relations practitioners in a recent survey reported that they had found inaccurate information about their organizations in online chatrooms (Lariscy, Avery, Sweetser, & Howes, 2009). In addition to monitoring and participating in conversations outside of an organization's social media sites, companies such as Starbucks have found that it is advantageous to host conversations on their own blogs (Gallicano, 2011). Doing so allows organizations to prioritize stakeholders who want to directly engage in dialogue with them (Gallicano, 2011).

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[1] Astroturfing occurs when public relations practitioners attempt to create the appearance of grassroots support by engaging in communication without revealing that they represent their employers (Young & Cook, n.d.). This strategy often involves paying others to engage in the communication. See Sweetser (2010) for a case study about astroturfing.

[2] The idea that ghost blogging can occur with or without disclosure is based on Fleet's (2009) discussion of the topic.

[3] The term *personal, organization-aligned* blog is based on a discussion by Defren (2010).

On a related note, a primary reason why organizations have blogs is to cultivate relationships with stakeholders (Kelleher & Miller, 2006; Kent, 2008; Seltzer & Mitrook, 2007; Teich, 2008). Specifically, interactive blogs can ultimately result in trust and satisfaction (Kelleher, 2009; Terilli & Arnorsdottir, 2008; Yang & Lim, 2009), and they can be used to develop a personal connection with readers, encourage positive attitudes toward the organization, and increase readers' intentions to promote the organization through word-of-mouth communication (Terilli & Arnorsdottir, 2008; Yang & Kang, 2009).

There are several other reasons why organizations have blogs. Blogs can be used to develop an organization's image (Gilpin, 2010), frame issues (Gilpin, 2010; Kent, 2008; Terilli & Arnorsdottir, 2008), and establish thought leadership (Terilli & Arnorsdottir, 2008), which can help with attracting new clients and helping to retain current clients (Porter, Sweetser Trammell, Chung, & Kim, 2007). Blogs can also increase an organization's media coverage through *media catching*, which occurs when journalists contact organizations because of content on the organizations' social media sites (Waters, Tindall, & Morton, 2010). In addition, blogs can be used during organizational crises to meet stakeholders' demands for frequently updated information (Coombs & Holladay, 2010).

There are several challenges to maintaining organizational blogs. One challenge is the time blogging requires (Briones, Kuch, Liu, & Jin, 2011), which includes listening to the blogosphere, positioning blog posts within the context of previous conversations by bloggers and readers, generating a steady stream of engaging material, and responding to readers' comments. Also, an organization runs the risk of confronting online criticism by having a blog, and bloggers can be significantly constrained by their regulatory environments in terms of what they are allowed to communicate (DiStaso et al., 2011). There are also risks that an organization should be able to prevent with a good editing chain, such as the risk of providing information that is inaccurate, inappropriate, or confidential (DiStaso et al., 2011). Another challenge that can be overcome is employees' need for additional knowledge with regard to strategically using social media and measuring its impact (DiStaso et al., 2011; Lariscy, Avery, Sweetser, & Howes, 2009).

Best Practices for Organizational Blogs

An organization should first begin with its objectives for the blog and make sure the audiences mentioned in its objectives are likely to follow the blog (Paine, 2011; Teich, 2008). Organizations should evaluate their blogs' success based on their objectives for it (Paine, 2011). Objectives should always specify audiences, and common audiences for CEO blogs include "employees, customers, investors, communities, regulators, and competitors – both current and future" (Terilli & Arnorsdottir, 2008, p. 5). It is important to create conversations in ways that interest audiences rather than pontificating about key messages or merely advertising products (Teich, 2008; Terilli & Arnorsdottir, 2008).

Organizations should also determine appropriate topics for the blog, a regular schedule for updating the blog, in addition to the blog's voice and tone (Teich, 2008; Terilli & Arnorsdottir, 2008). It is important for bloggers to create an intimate, personalized tone and conversational voice that encourages readers to get the sense that they are getting to know the author and getting a behind-the-scenes view of the organization (Kelleher & Miller, 2006; Terilli & Arnorsdottir, 2008; Trammell & Keshelashvili, 2005; Xifra & Huertas, 2008).

In addition, studies have shown that overall, organizations need to do a better job than they are currently doing of using social media for two-way communication, as opposed to using

it to merely broadcast information (Bortree & Seltzer, 2009; Sweetser & Lariscy, 2008; Taylor, Kent, & White, 2001). A recent analysis of 45 CEO blogs concluded that nearly all of them embraced two-way communication; however, the study only made this conclusion based on whether readers had the ability to comment, rather than identifying statements in the blog that encouraged readers to leave comments and identifying two-way interaction in the comments section (see Terilli & Arnorsdottir, 2008). Organizations should engage in two-way communication on their blogs by asking readers for their opinions (Trammell & Keshelashvili, 2005) and responding to readers' comments. The social media content itself must be compelling enough to inspire reader interaction, as well (Hovey, 2010; Yang & Lim, 2009).

Quality two-way communication reflects the five features of dialogue that Kent and Taylor (2002) described. *Mutuality* refers to having a collaborative philosophy. Organizations can achieve *propinquity* by discussing issues that affect stakeholders before decisions are made and by being accessible. *Empathy* results from creating an atmosphere of support, focusing on mutual understanding, and acknowledging the value of others. Quality dialogue also involves *risk* when organizations disclose information and are receptive to change. Finally, *commitment* occurs when organizations are honest and forthright and when organizations seek to understand audiences as opposed to treating them as opponents who they are trying to defeat.

Bloggers with a high readership demonstrate competence and often refer to other sources to add credibility to their arguments (Trammell & Keshelashvili, 2005). In addition, popular bloggers contextualize their contribution to the blogosphere by providing links to what others have had to say about the topic at hand, and there is frequent reciprocation with linking to others who have linked to them (Teich, 2008; Terilli & Arnorsdottir, 2008; Trammell & Keshelashvili, 2005). Popular bloggers also reveal their own talents while praising others (Trammell & Keshelashvili, 2005).

Ethical Considerations Regarding Organizational Ghost Blogging

Members of the public relations community should be familiar with the idea of achieving transparency by revealing their identity and motivation in public communication (Bivins, 2009). Public relations practitioners need to meet the standard of *substantial completeness* by providing the information a reasonable person would need to make an informed decision (Rawlins, 2009). They should consider questions based on Bowen's (2005) Kantian model for ethical decision making, such as whether they would accept the decision if they were in the reader's shoes. The question remains as to how deep the disclosure needs to be – is it enough for people to identify a CEO with a blog, or do they also need to know that the ideas and content approval come from the CEO, but he or she did not write the blog post?

The most commonly used ethics policies and regulation guidelines in the public relations industry – PRSA, WOMMA, SMBC, and the FTC – emphasize disclosure (Sweetser, 2010), although they do not specifically address whether organizational ghost blogging should be disclosed. PRSA has given tacit endorsement, however, through two articles in *Tactics*, which is one of its publications. The first article was a question and answer column about whether ghost blogging is ethical. The author expressed that organizational ghost blogging is ethical, provided that the executive is involved in the creation of the post, the executive gives final approval of the product, and the blog post is not misleading (Subveri, 2010). The second article was about how to engage in effective ghostwriting, it explicitly mentioned ghost blogging as an example, and it emphasized the importance of getting feedback from the executive (O'Brien, 2011). Despite

PRSA's current position on the issue, the organization believes that it is important to find out what practitioners think, as expressed by its willingness to recruit participants for this study.

Proponents for organizational ghost blogging use the same reasons that others have offered for ghostwriting speeches. Executives tend to lack the time and skills, and authenticity can be achieved by having them provide the main ideas and give final approval (see Sledzik, 2009; Subveri, 2010, for ghost blogging and see Auer, 1984; Einhorn, 1981; Riley & Brown, 1996, for speechwriting). After all, an organizational blog or speech is really about the organization, writers often possess as much core knowledge about the topic as the stated author, and an executive should use writers just as he or she uses other specialists for running the organization (see Defren, 2010; Nerad, 2010, for ghost blogging and see Einhorn, 1991, for speechwriting). Furthermore, audiences are sophisticated and likely expect that someone has assisted the executive with the endeavor (see Nerad, 2010, for ghost blogging and see Riley & Brown, 1996, for speechwriting).

The debate about ghost blogging, however, is not so easily resolved. Critics of undisclosed organizational ghost blogging assert that the rules for social media differ from the rules for traditional tactics (Fleet, 2009; Harte, 2009). Blogging is a personal relationship-building medium. After all, "When did outsourcing your relationships become okay?" (Fleet, 2009, para. 5). Furthermore, ghost blogging can result in audiences making poor assessments of an executive's skills and the organization's future (Terilli & Arnorsdottir, 2008). Also, if audiences expect the stated author to be the real author, then ghostwriting deceives audiences and is therefore unethical (see Fleet, 2009; Harte, 2009, for ghost blogging and Bormann, 1956, for speechwriting). Notably, most case studies about unethical online practices involve concealing information (Martin & Smith, 2008).

In a climate where concealing information often results in a crisis due to exposure by the online community, there is a movement among professional communicators towards radical transparency (Beal & Strauss, 2008). In a public relations context, the term *radical transparency* is a philosophy for doing business that refers to putting transparency above all other competing values, with the exception of disclosing information that violates regulations or ethical principles. The idea is that radical transparency can result in increased trust, which can go a long way toward relationship building, especially given that corporate blogs are trusted by only 16% of the people who read them (Bernoff, 2008). This percentage climbs to 39% for people who have blogs themselves; however, this number is still low (Bernoff, 2008). Radical transparency is likely to only result in a competitive advantage when an organization is ethical and competitive in the marketplace. Otherwise, radical transparency could result in people avoiding an organization due to its unethical practices or rejecting it because it is not a wise investment.

The practice of radical transparency can include but is not limited to "spill[ing] information in torrents, posting internal memos and strategy goals, [and] letting everyone from the top dog to shop-floor workers blog publicly about what their firm is doing right – and wrong" (Thompson, 2007, para. 8). Radical transparency also includes revealing policies for the organization's operations (Anderson, 2006), which includes sharing the practices behind ghostwritten blogs or avoiding ghost blogging all together. In addition, radical transparency can involve inviting stakeholders' input into organizational policies (Anderson, 2006); the resulting dialogue can contribute to the creation of an environment that supports ethical decision making (Bowen, 2004). Thompson (2007) described how Zappos practices radical transparency under the leadership of CEO Tony Hsieh:

A company-wide wiki lets staff members complain about problems and suggest solutions. Hsieh and other executives work at desks sprinkled among the banks of customer-service phone agents ("Anyone can hear our conversation," Hsieh said when I called). If customers can't find the shoes they want at Zappos, agents are encouraged to point them to other stores. (para. 15)

Clive characterized this level of disclosure as seeming "freakish" to some executives but commonsense within the philosophy of radical transparency (para. 15).

Radical transparency has gained traction in the public relations community. In a keynote address at the Institute for Public Relations' annual dinner, Richard Edelman (2011) emphasized four principles for public engagement based on the example of former Johnson & Johnson public relations chief Bill Nielson, and one of the principles was to "practice radical transparency" (para. 4). In a PRWeek article, Ketchum president Rob Flaherty (2011) stated, "The era of radical transparency and instant mobilization is upon us and, as with every other sweeping change in society and communications, it's important for us as counselors to be ready to advise management on the implications" (para. 9). This sentiment was also expressed by Bob Pickard, president and CEO of Burson-Marsteller Asia Pacific. He commented, "We live in a time where there would be radical transparency and companies are unsure of how to proceed from here" (de Vera, 2011, para. 6).

In the spirit of radical transparency, communicators have suggested several alternatives to undisclosed organizational ghost blogging. Instead of having a CEO as an author, an organization could have a different employee serve as the author, or even a group of employees could be responsible for the organizational blog (Beal & Strauss, 2008; Fleet, 2009). Another option is for the executive to use a social media tool that he or she has time for rather than a blog, which tends to be particularly time consuming (Fleet, 2009). A third option is disclosure. Fleet (2009) offered this example: "I don't write these posts, but I do read them and I stand behind them" (para. 8). Holtz (2011) offered a disclosure that included the fact that the content comes from the executive:

Welcome to my blog. Several times each week, I articulate my thoughts to Mary Jones, who runs communications for the company, and she posts them here ensuring that I make the points I want to make. But rest assured, while Mary makes me sound better, the messages you read are mine; they come from my heart and I read all the comments myself. (para. 3)

Despite these alternatives, a content analysis of CEO blogs suggested that ghost blogging could be widespread for organizational blogs that are purportedly authored by CEOs. The study revealed that out of 45 CEO-attributed blogs, 40 did not identify writers or editors other than the CEO (Terilli & Arnorsdottir, 2008). Given the time constraints of CEOs, it seems doubtful that most of them authored the blogs themselves.

Research Questions

Terilli and Arnorsdottir's (2008) content analysis provides initial evidence that undisclosed organizational ghost blogging is the norm; however, more research is needed because the sample was limited to only 45 blogs, and it is possible that the CEOs actually authored the pieces. Research is needed to discover the extent to which agreement exists about the professional acceptability of ghost blogging practices, especially considering the vibrant debates online (see Defren's 2010 post, which drew 60 comments and 106 tweets; Fleet's 2009

post, which generated 47 comments; Harte's 2009 post, which resulted in 70 comments; and Sledzik's 2009 post, which attracted 25 comments).

To investigate ghost blogging, we developed a multi-item scale that reliably and validly describes practitioner perceptions of ghost blogging acceptability. We then used this scale to explore the following research question:

RQ 1: Do public relations practitioners approve of undisclosed organizational ghost blogging?

Next, we looked for differences in ghost blogging acceptability across several dimensions through a second research question:

RQ 2: Do public relations practitioners' views about the acceptability of undisclosed organizational ghost blogging depend on age, gender, industry, the number of people employed in the practitioner's organization, or whether the practitioner's organization engages in ghost blogging?

Because extant literature suggests that professional norms are developed, in part, on the basis of one's understanding of how common a given practice is (e.g., Brinkmann, 2002), we also investigated a third research question:

RQ 3: Do public relations practitioners' views about the acceptability of undisclosed organizational ghost blogging depend on how common they believe the practice is?

Finally, we wanted to discover whether public relations practitioners are following best practices for ghostwriting in the context of blogs, so we posed the following research questions:

RQ 4: According to public relations practitioners who engage in ghost blogging, how often does the content come from the stated author?
RQ 5: According to public relations practitioners who engage in ghost blogging, how often does the stated author provide content approval?

Method

Following Institutional Review Board approval, the data for this study were collected through an online survey that was hosted on Qualtrics. Convenience sampling was used by partnering with the Public Relations Society of America. PRSA sent a recruitment email on our behalf and a follow-up email to a random sample of 3,609 members. A second follow-up email could not be sent due to PRSA's transfer to a new database system. Students and educators were excluded from the sample, and a screening question was also used at the beginning of the survey to disqualify students and educators from participation. No participants expressed that they were students or educators in response to the screening question. The survey was active for a 12-day period between September 20 and October 1.

The survey questions can be found in the Appendix. To understand how common a practitioner perceived ghost blogging to be, respondents evaluated four questions, such as "I think it's *common* for an organization to have blogs that list executives as the author, even though they are really *written by someone else*."

In support of a proposed ghost blogging acceptability scale, respondents evaluated four statements, such as, "I think it's *okay* for an organization to have blogs that list executives as authors, even though they are really *written by someone else* as long as the ideas come from the executives and the executives approve the message." All questions related to perceptions of ghost blogging as a common practice and as acceptable practice were placed on 5-point Likert scales in which higher scores indicated higher levels of agreement. In addition, several questions were used to ask about any experiences the respondents had with ghost blogging. Other questions were devoted to demographics.

Of the 3,609 emails that were sent, 468 people viewed the email and 318 people participated in the survey. Questionnaires missing responses to five or more questions were deleted, resulting in an analytic sample consisting of 291 completed survey questionnaires. The total response rate (calculated by dividing the number of completed questionnaires by the number of e-mails sent) was 8.1%, which is an expected response rate for a survey that does not have an incentive. Response rates for other surveys of public relations practitioners have been 5.6% for Kang (2010); 11.9% for Porter, Sweetser, and Chung (2009); and 14% for Porter et al. (2007).

Below is a table that depicts the respondents' demographic information. Percentages are approximate. The years used in this study for categorizing generations (as shown in the table below) have been commonly used (e.g., Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman, & Lance, 2010; Winograd & Hais, 2009).

Table 1

Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Variable	Category	%	*n*
Gender	Female	61.5	179
	Male	36.8	107
	Not indicated	1.7	5
Generation	Silent (born 1925-1945)	1.7	5
	Baby boomer (born 1946-1964)	45.7	133
	Generation X (born 1965-1981)	42.6	124
	Millennial (born 1982 or later)	9.3	27
	Not indicated	0.7	2
Organization size	1 to 12 employees	26.8	78
	13 to 50 employees	10.7	31
	51 to 200 employees	15.5	45
	201 to 1,000 employees	12.0	35
	>1,000 employees	35.1	102
Work setting	Agency	19.2	56
	Corporate	33.3	97
	Government and Military	16.8	49
	Nonprofit and NGO	23.4	68
	Other	7.2	21

Research in this domain is in its iterant stages; thus, few reliable measures exist. Therefore, the proposed ghost blogging acceptability scale was constructed based on a review of extant research and professional community commentary on public relations blogs in this area of interest. The

blogs were located through a Google blog search with "ghostblogging" and ghost blogging" as the search terms. The five-item scale was constructed using the response means ($M = 3.12$, $SD = 0.92$). The measure demonstrated acceptable reliability, $\alpha = .84$.

Respondents were invited to add comments about ghost blogging at the end of the survey to avoid limiting practitioners' contributions to the closed-ended questions we asked. There were 68 comments, which resulted in a total of 5,028 words. While reading all comments, five overall categories emerged: reasons why undisclosed organizational ghost blogging should be accepted, reasons why this practice should not be accepted, the conditions under which the practice should be acceptable, the role public relations practitioners fulfill for ghost blogging, and blanket statements in support of the practice or against it without substantive information. The unit of analysis was the sentence, and all comments were placed into one of the five categories. During the process of sorting, comments were arranged by a bolded theme within each category.

Results

RQ 1: Views of Ghost Blogging

Most participants (71.1%) agreed or strongly agreed that it is acceptable to engage in undisclosed organizational ghost blogging, as long as the content comes from the stated authors and the stated authors give final approval. A substantial number (20.7%), however, disagreed or strongly disagreed, while only a small number of practitioners were neutral on this question (see Table 2).

Table 2
Views about Ghost Blogging

	Strongly disagree (1) (*n*, %)	Disagree (2) (*n*, %)	Neutral (3) (*n*, %)	Agree (4) (*n*, %)	Strongly agree (5) (*n*, %)	M, SD
I think it's *okay* for an organization to have blogs that list executives as authors, even though they are really *written by someone else,* as long as the ideas come from the executives and they approve the message.	15 5.2%	45 15.5%	24 8.2%	150 51.5%	57 19.6%	3.65 1.12
I think it's *okay* for an organization to not disclose the agency's assistance with writing *blog posts* under a client's name.	36 12.4%	74 25.4%	51 17.5%	105 36.1%	25 8.6%	3.03 1.21
As a standard practice, any ghostwriting of	18	101	64	83	25	2.99

employer executive or client executive blogs should be publicly disclosed.	6.2%	34.7%	22.0%	28.5%	8.6%	1.11
I think it's *okay* for an executive to have a staff member write comments in reply to readers' comments on the executive's blog without a disclosure statement that it is a staff member responding on behalf of the executive, as long as the ideas come from the executive and the executive approves the message.	34 11.7%	69 23.7%	24 8.2%	136 46.7%	28 9.6%	3.19 1.24
I think it's *okay* for an executive to have a staff member write comments in reply to *other people's blogs* without a disclosure statement that it is a staff member commenting on behalf of the executive, as long the ideas come from the executive and the executive approves the message.*	41 14.1%	87 29.9%	37 12.7%	104 35.7%	20 6.9%	2.91 1.21
Note: 2 missing responses, 0.7% of total response category						

A more divisive question for respondents was whether an organization needs to disclose a public relations agency's assistance with writing blog posts under a client's name. Nearly half the of the participants (44.7%) agreed or strongly agreed that an organization did not need to disclose an agency's assistance with writing blog posts under a client's name, compared with 37.8% who disagreed or strongly disagreed.

A question that asked about whether organizational ghost blogging should be disclosed – without the details that an executive would provide the content and approve the blog post – resulted in a split of opinion, with 37.1% believing in disclosure and 40.9% believing that disclosure is not necessary.

The next question asked about the practice of having staff members reply to readers' comments on the executive blog. Respondents were told that in this scenario, the content would

come from the executive and the executive would approve the ghostwritten comments. Slightly more than half of the participants (56.3%) agreed or strongly agreed that ghostwritten comments are acceptable, compared with 35.4% who disagreed or strongly disagreed with this practice.

Another question asked about ghostwritten comments; however, the comments would be placed on other people's blogs. Provided that the stated author provided the content and gave content approval, 42.6% of respondents found this practice to be acceptable, and 44% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with this practice.

RQ 2: Influence of Demographics and Other Variables on Views

Independent samples t Tests were used to determine if perceptions of ghost blogging acceptability differed by gender and by whether practitioners actually engage in ghost blogging. In the first test, it was determined that there was a very slight difference among the genders in that women ($M = 3.20$) scored slightly higher than men ($M = 3.09$) on the ghost blogging acceptability scale, $t(282) = 0.91$, $p < .05$, meaning that they were slightly more likely to believe that ghost blogging is an acceptable practice. In the second test, a fairly substantial difference in perceptions of ghost blogging acceptability was observed between those who engage in ghost blogging or work for an organization that engages in ghost blogging ($M = 3.55$) and those who do not ($M = 3.05$), $t(287) = 3.97$, $p < .01$.

Next, one-way ANOVA tests were used to determine if differences in the perception of ghost blogging acceptability existed between work setting, age, or size of the organization. In each case, no significant differences were observed. Specifically, there was no difference between work setting and perceptions of ghost blogging acceptability, $F(6, 282) = 0.73$, $p = .63$; there was no difference between organization size and perceptions of ghost blogging acceptability, $F(4, 284) = 1.86$, $p = .12$; and there was no difference between age (measured in terms of one's generation) and perceptions of ghost blogging acceptability, $F(3, 283) = 1.66$, $p = .18$.

RQ 3: Influence of Commonality on Views

Multiple regression analysis was used to discover the relationship between practitioner perceptions of ghost blogging acceptability and practitioner perceptions of how common ghost blogging is. Because the exploration of the differences in means indicated that those who engage in ghost blogging scored substantially higher on the ghost blogging acceptability scale, such individuals were controlled for in the regression model. To that end, the variable was dummy-coded so that those who did not engage in ghost blogging were assigned a 0 and those who did engage in ghost blogging were assigned a 1. The initial regression model, inclusive of only the variable describing the use of ghost blogging, significantly predicted 5% of the variance in scores on the ghost blogging acceptability scale, $R^2 = .05$, $F(1, 285) = 15.39$, $p < .01$.

The addition of the variables measuring practitioner perceptions of ghost blogging as a common practice significantly improved the model, $\Delta R^2 = 0.11$, $F(4, 281) = 8.94$, $p < .01$, in that the final model accounted for approximately 16% of the overall variance in the ghost blogging acceptability scale, $R^2 = .16$, $F(5, 281) = 10.58$, $p < .01$. As shown by the standardized betas presented in Table 2, the strongest individual predictor of scores on the ghost blogging acceptability scale was the variable that measured whether the organizations that respondents work for engage in ghost blogging. However, as a group, practitioner perceptions of ghost blogging as a common practice accounted for substantially more variance than the sole measure of whether respondents' organizations engaged in ghost blogging.

Table 3

Summary of Nested Hierarchical Regression Analysis for the Use of Ghost Blogging and Perceptions of Ghost Blogging as a Common Practice Predicting Ghost Blogging Acceptability Scale Score

Predictor	Model 1			Model 2		
	B	*SE B*	β	*B*	*SE B*	β
Constant	3.05**	0.06		1.04**	0.35	
Use of ghost blogging	0.50**	0.13	0.23	0.45**	0.12	0.21
Common to have a ghost blog				0.21**	0.07	0.18
Common to not disclose written by someone else				0.17*	0.07	0.14
Common to ghost blog response to reader comments				-0.03	0.06	-0.04
Common to ghost blog responses on other's blogs				0.16*	0.07	0.15

* p < .05. ** p < .01.

RQs 4 and 5: Ghost Blogging Practices

Of the respondents, 41.6% (*n*=121) had at least one executive blog. Slightly more than half of the respondents who had blogs (53.7%, *n*=65) indicated that their blogs were not written by their stated authors. Thus, not enough participants had organizational blogs that were ghostwritten to make the results to research questions four and five meaningful. Consequently, the findings are reported with extreme caution and only provide a glimpse into ghost blogging practices. As shown in Table 4, nearly a third of the respondents (27.7%) expressed that the ideas for the blog content always come from the stated author, and most respondents (61.5%) expressed that the ideas sometimes come from the stated author. Content approval for the blog by the stated author is consistently given for the overwhelming majority of respondents (84.6%).

Table 4
Ghost Blogging Practices

	Always comes from the stated author (1) (*n*, %)	Sometimes comes from the stated author (2) (*n*, %)	Rarely comes from the stated author (3) (*n*, %)	Never comes from the stated author (4) (*n*, %)	M, SD
Ideas for the blog content:	18 27.7%	40 61.5%	5 7.7%	2 3.1%	1.86 0.68
Content approval for the blog:	55 84.6%	4 6.2%	5 7.7%	1 1.5%	1.26 0.67

Comments Section

Reasons for accepting ghost blogging. Most participants who expressed that undisclosed organizational ghost blogging is acceptable emphasized the importance of content approval by the stated author and explained that executives lack time and writing skills. For example, one participant wrote

> Even though executives can be competent as leaders of their respective organizations, it's common for them not to have the skill set or time to carefully plan and compose any public statement. … I'm sure each CEO does not have an expertise in each discipline and relies on his/her experts. Public relations should be treated in the same sense.

This quote also offers an explanation that public relations practitioners are specialists that a CEO should rely on, just as he or she relies on specialists from other departments.

Many participants who approved of ghost blogging compared it to speechwriting and other tactics: "Ghostblogging by specialized writers on behalf of executives is no different from speechwriting or article writing for executives. Executives cannot personally perform every function in an organization."

Some practitioners who approved of the practice focused on the importance of assisting with messaging:

> Quite frankly, sometimes it is the PR department that keeps the executive on track and on message. I've often reminded the executives what their company goals and objectives are and what the strategy is. WE are the lens that keeps the organization and the top executives focused.

In addition, some practitioners focused on the idea that the executive blog is really about the organization:

> I think the one thing that probably should have been and is not addressed here is the role of the CEO as the spokesperson for the company. … They owe it to their shareholders to put forth the best company image.

A couple practitioners explained that audiences are not being deceived because they should expect that professional communicators assist executives:

> All forms of executive-bylined organizational communication products are near-universally presumed to have been ghost written by some professional communicator, paid and charged to assist busy executives with writing chores so as to free these managers to lead their organizations, while also ensuring that public communications are timely, frequent, clear and compelling.

Reasons for rejecting ghost blogging. Most participants who rejected ghost blogging focused on transparency, integrity, and honesty as guiding values, and several mentioned that ghost blogging without disclosure was disingenuous:

> I believe that it should be transparent that the thoughts and ideas in the blog are those of the executive, but that executive may indeed rely on the professional communicators in the organization to assist in assuring clarity of those thoughts and ideas."

Another participant noted, "Integrity is the cornerstone of honest communication, and to essentially fabricate the source of a blog - or comments made on behalf of an individual - is deceit, plain and simple." Expressing concern that audiences were being deceived, another respondent commented, "I do think the public feels lied to, horrified sometimes to learn that most of what is presented is written/conceived by staff who live behind a curtain."

A small group of practitioners explained that ghost blogging is not an ideal practice because it is not as effective and because organizations face the risk that someone will expose the ghost blogging:

> I think that you lose something with the ghost-writing as far as how the exec relates to the employees. AS an employee I would appreciate and likely read the blog much more if I knew that it was actually written by the person in question.

Another practitioner explained, "I think this creates a risk for the individual or organization that is using a ghost blogger or ghost tweeter should this practice be discovered."

A handful of other practitioners focused on the idea that blogs are a relationship-building medium: "Social media is personal. Blogging should be done in the first person with the author clearly identified."

Conditions under which ghost blogging would be acceptable. Several practitioners weighed in on the conditions in which undisclosed organizational ghost blogging would be acceptable, which ranged from never accepting the practice to having the executives write the first draft or having practitioners write the first draft that the executive then edits. Some people also noted that ghost blogging is acceptable except for writing comments on other people's blogs. The following quote is an example of a comment from someone who believes that the executive should draft the blog: "At our firm, we insist that the author write the blog. We will provide guidance on direction and good grammar. We will track responses and ask for the appropriate response to be written by the client."

The role of public relations. Many practitioners discussed the role of public relations in the process of contributing to an executive organizational blog: "As advisors for tone and intent, appropriateness and policy, we perpetuate the conversation. As communication planners, we gather data to feed into our broader communication program."

Discussion

Results of the Research Questions

Based on the support of the large majority of participants (71.1%), there seems to be a general industry consensus in favor of undisclosed organizational ghost blogging, provided that the content comes from the executive and the executive provides content approval, although a substantial minority disagrees with this practice. When a similar question was asked that did not include the mitigating factors of content involvement and approval by the stated author, respondents were almost evenly divided in their opinions about whether organizational ghost blogging should be disclosed.

There is also a substantial difference in opinions about related practices, such as whether to disclose a public relations agency's assistance (more practitioners said that it does not need to be disclosed than those who stood by disclosure) and whether ghost blogging can be extended to ghost commenting on the stated author's blog or ghost commenting on other blogs, even when the content comes from the stated author and the stated author provides content approval. There was more support for ghost commenting on the stated author's own blog than support for ghost commenting on others' blogs. Practitioners might be less inclined to accept ghostwritten comments because responses to comments are central to the process of personally building relationships and because readers might be less likely to expect that even the comments have been ghostwritten.

We found interesting results about the second and third research questions. A practitioner's generation, work setting, and size of the organization did not play a role in the

degree to which he or she accepted ghost blogging. Although women were slightly more likely to accept ghost blogging, the result was too small to be an important difference. Thus, practitioner opinions about this issue do not vary across simple demographic categories and are, instead, a product of a complex approach to professional ethics. We did find, however, that people who engage in ghost blogging or who work for an organization that does are much more likely to find the practice to be acceptable, and people who think the practice is common are more likely to find it acceptable.

The final two research questions asked about the practices that practitioners follow for ghost blogging. To explore these two research questions, we narrowed down the sample to only participants who have organizational blogs that are ghostwritten. In the process of narrowing down the sample, we discovered that 41.6% of the respondents have blogs, and we learned that about half of the respondents' organizational blogs were ghostwritten (53.7%, n=65); however, a substantial number were not (38.8%, n=47).

Because we did not have a high number of respondents who engage in organizational ghost blogging, the sample was not large enough to generate meaningful insights about the extent to which the ideas for a blog come from the stated author and the extent to which content approval comes from the stated author. Nevertheless, the only academic study we could find about ghost blogging was a content analysis of 45 CEO blogs (Terilli & Arnorsdottir, 2008), and the current study contributes to preliminary research about ghost blogging practices by revealing the results of 65 organizational blogs that are ghostwritten without disclosure.

The results were not bleak, but there is room for improvement. The ideas for the blog content always came from the stated author for nearly a third of the blogs, and the blog content sometimes came from the stated author for more than half of the blogs. Combined, 89.2% of the respondents expressed that the content at least comes from the stated author some of the time. Even more importantly, content approval for the blog always came from the stated author for 84.6% of the respondents, and while it is good to see that the vast majority are doing this, it is concerning that six executive blogs are rarely or never approved by their stated authors. In addition to these research questions, the comments section of the blog provided insights about reasons for and against ghost blogging.

Reasons for and Against Ghost Blogging

This is the first academic study to comprehensively explore reasons for and against undisclosed organizational ghost blogging. Terilli and Arnorsdottir's (2008) study is the only published academic study that has mentioned the debate, and it provided only two reasons in favor of blogging (i.e., time and writing skills) and one argument against it (i.e., misleading audiences about a CEO's skills and a company's future). The parallels between the literature review (which was based on an educator's blog, practitioners' blogs, academic speechwriting literature, and Terilli and Arnorsdottir's study) and the comments section of this study suggest that the primary arguments on both sides of the debate have been captured by this study.

Many participants focused on executives' limited time and writing skills as reasons to support ghost blogging (see Sledzik, 2009; Subveri, 2010, for the use of these reasons for ghost blogging and see Auer, 1984; Einhorn, 1981; Riley & Brown, 1996, for the use of these reasons for speechwriting). Respondents also discussed how the blog was really about putting the best face on the organization, how practitioners often have a better idea than executives do of what the blog content should be, and the idea that practitioners are specialists that executives should rely on, just as they rely on other specialized departments (see Defren, 2010; Nerad, 2010, for the

use of these reasons for ghost blogging and see Einhorn, 1991, for the use of these reasons for speechwriting). Respondents offered different views as to whether audiences expect the stated author to have written the blog post, which reflects the online debate about this point (see Fleet, 2009, versus Nerad, 2010). Arguments against ghost blogging included the importance of transparency, integrity, and honesty, in addition to viewing blogging as a personal relationship-building channel (also see Fleet, 2009, and Harte, 2009, for these arguments). In addition, practitioners noted that ghost blogging was not as effective as having an executive write his or her own blog posts, and exposure of ghostwriting could result in a loss of trust (also see Fleet, 2009, and Harte, 2009, for these arguments). The only reason mentioned in the literature review that was not included in the comments section of this study is that undisclosed organizational ghost blogging could result in an incorrect assessment of a CEO's skills and a company's future (Terilli & Arnorsdottir, 2008).

Implications, Limitations, and Considerations

In the comments section, public relations practitioners frequently compared ghostwriting for blogs with ghostwriting for speeches; however, this comparison breaks down if content approval does not happen with each blog post. With speeches, an executive has reviewed the content by virtue of at least delivering it. The same control is not in place for ghost blogging, so it is up to practitioners to ensure that content approval always takes place. If an executive is traveling and does not have time for content approval, someone can update the blog to express the reason for the delay in posting content or, even better, a guest blogger can contribute a post to avoid disrupting the delivery of content.

This study lends empirical support to previous studies (e.g., Brinkmann, 2002) that have demonstrated that viewing a practice as commonplace influences whether the practice is viewed as ethical. The only logic behind this connection is that if a practice is commonplace, then perhaps the audience is aware of it and is therefore not deceived. Without audience awareness though, a practice is not ethical just because it is common.

Although there was a general consensus in favor of ghost blogging by the respondents (with a vocal minority opinion), it should be noted that because there is no sampling frame for randomly surveying the broad community of public relations practitioners, the findings cannot be generalized within a certain margin of error. Furthermore, because the results come from a sample of PRSA members, the results should only be seen as providing insight into the beliefs and practices of U.S. practitioners. More research is needed to explore this issue from the perspectives of practitioners from other countries, especially considering the global nature of large organizations.

Also, despite the general consensus in favor of ghost blogging, the question of whether the practice is ethical hinges upon whether readers find the practice to be acceptable and whether they expect an executive organizational blog to be ghostwritten (see Riley & Brown, 1996, for these points about ghostwriting speeches). This missing information would provide insight into whether practitioners' requirements for substantial completeness with regard to ghost blogging have been met just by having the content come from the stated author and by having the stated author provide content approval or whether a disclosure statement is needed about a public relations practitioner's assistance (see Rawlins, 2009 for a discussion of substantial completeness). Similarly, discovering this information would enable practitioners to know whether they are doing the right thing and whether dignity and respect are maintained for the

audiences, which are key questions in Bowen's (2005) Kantian model for ethical decision making.

Thus, future research needs to explore the opinions and expectations of people who read executive blogs to discover whether audiences are being deceived or not (see Einhorn, 1981, for a call for this type of research in the context of ghostwriting speeches). Given the research reported by Bernoff (2008) about the low trust audiences place in corporate blogs, audiences could very well expect that ghost blogging is occurring. Nevertheless, it should be noted that even if audiences are not deceived, the lack of a disclosure statement contributes to the current climate of eroded trust regarding the authenticity of executive blogs (see Bernoff, 2008). Radical transparency could be the solution to the problem identified by the Institute for Public Relations (2011) regarding the need to restore "reputation in an environment of extremely low trust" (para. 3). If radical transparency is not adopted, this study makes the point that it is imperative for the stated author to always provide content approval for each blog post, and the blog posts must reflect his or her views.

A pressing question for public relations practitioners to consider is how effective undisclosed ghost blogging is (a question raised by Paine, n.d.) and whether a ghostwritten blog could be more effective than it would otherwise be by including a disclosure statement like the ones modeled in the literature review by Fleet (2009) and Holtz (2011). Experimental design research is needed to discover the effectiveness of radical transparency by comparing respondents' reactions to a ghostwritten blog with a disclosure statement versus a ghostwritten blog without one.

Until an audience survey and experimental design research is accomplished, public relations practitioners can weigh the arguments for and against undisclosed organizational ghost blogging, and they consider the alternatives to this practice, which are offered in this study.

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Appendix: Survey Questions
The questions below were asked on the survey. People who worked for public relations agencies had slightly different wording on the questions seven and eight, which talked about agency help; these questions were asked from an agency perspective rather than a client perspective. The informed consent and screening question do not appear here.

1. Does your employer have at least one executive blog?

○ Yes

○ No

Skip logic: If no is selected, the survey jumps to question nine.

2. Are all of your organization's blogs *written* by their stated authors?

○ Yes

○ No

○ I don't know

Skip logic: If yes or I don't know is selected, the survey jumps to question nine.

3. Is there public disclosure that the executive blog(s) is *written* by someone other than the stated author?

○ Yes

○ No

○ I don't know

5. Content approval for the blog:

○ Always comes from the stated author

○ Sometimes comes from the stated author

○ Rarely comes from the stated author

○ Never comes from the stated author

○ I don't know

6. Ideas for the blog content:

○ Always come from the stated author

○ Sometimes come from the stated author

○ Rarely come from the stated author

○ Never come from the stated author

○ I don't know

7. Does a public relations agency help you with writing executive blog posts?

○ Yes

⭘ No

⭘ I don't know

Skip logic: If no is selected, the survey jumps to question nine.

8. Does the organization disclose the public relations agency's help in writing executive blog posts?

⭘ Yes

⭘ No

⭘ I don't know

Questions 9-17 had the following answer options: strongly disagree, disagree, neither disagree or agree, agree, and strongly agree.

9. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statement:

"I think it's *common* for an organization to have blogs that list executives as the author, even though they are really *written by someone else.*"

10. "I think it's *okay* for an organization to have blogs that list executives as authors, even though they are really *written by someone else* as long as the ideas come from the executives and they approve the message."

11. "I think it's *common* for an organization to not disclose a public relations agency's assistance in writing blog posts under the client's name."

12. "I think it's *okay* for an organization to not disclose a public relations agency's assistance in writing blog posts under a client's name."

13. "As standard practice, any ghostwriting of employer executive or client executive blogs should be publicly disclosed."

14. "I think it's common for an executive to have a staff member write comments in reply to readers' comments on the executive's blog without a disclosure statement that it is a staff member responding on behalf of the executive."

15. "I think it's *okay* for an executive to have a staff member write comments in reply to readers' comments on the executive's blog without a disclosure statement that it is a staff member responding on behalf of the executive, as long as the ideas come from the executive and the executive approves the message."

16. "I think it's *common* for an executive to have a staff member write comments in reply to *other people's blogs* without a disclosure statement that it is a staff member commenting on behalf of the executive."

17. "I think it's *okay* for an executive to have a staff member write comments in reply to *other people's blogs* without a disclosure statement that it is a staff member commenting on behalf of the executive, as long the ideas come from the executive and the executive approves the message."

18. In what segment of the public relations community do you practice?

- ○ Agency
- ○ Corporate
- ○ Government/Public Sector
- ○ Military
- ○ Nonprofit
- ○ NGO
- ○ Other

19. How many people does your organization employ?

- ○ 1-12
- ○ 13-50
- ○ 51-200
- ○ 201-1,000
- ○ Greater than 1,000

20. In what year were you born?

- ○ 1945 or earlier
- ○ 1946-1964
- ○ 1965 to 1981
- ○ 1982 or later

21. Please indicate your gender.

- ○ Male
- ○ Female

Thank you so much for your help.
Feel free to add additional comments about your opinions regarding ghost blogging.

Corporate Reputation: Is *Fortune* a Factor?

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Abstract

One of the most accepted measurements of *corporate reputation* is *Fortune* magazine's annual "Worlds Most Admired Companies" (MAC) list. Yet, some researchers have questioned the measurement tool's validity because of its reliance on financially-driven dimensions and its focus on a single stakeholder group. The purpose of this study is to evaluate the dimensions people perceive as important in determining a company's reputation, how those perceptions vary within a stakeholder group, and whether they correspond to the dimensions used by *Fortune* to determine which companies are the most admired. Using Q methodology, 27 participants were asked to sort the top 40 companies on *Fortune*'s 2011 MAC list from "most reputable" to "most disreputable." Two factors emerged from the results: a "Personal Experience Factor," whose participants perceived a company as being more reputable if they had positive, personal experiences with the company on a regular basis (e.g. Amazon or FedEx) and an "Icon Recognition Factor," whose participants placed more value on company longevity, success and symbolic image (e.g. Disney or General Electric). Both factors were then compared to *Fortune*'s list, redistributed to represent the "*Fortune* Factor." The results suggest that people from within the same stakeholder group construct the concept of corporate reputation differently and, consequently, disagree on the appropriate dimensions for measuring reputation in this context. In addition, the results support previous literature, indicating that *Fortune*'s MAC is not capturing a complete picture of a company's corporate reputation as defined by certain stakeholder groups. The results have implications for corporate communicators, public relations practitioners, and applied researchers who may still rely on financially-driven measurement tools like *Fortune's* MAC to help define their company/client's reputation. It also reinforces the importance of maintaining consistent dialogues will all stakeholder groups, knowing there are myriad of perceptions within and between each group. Additional research is suggested which would include additional stakeholders and further explore the commonalities among factors, specifically the top rankings of Apple and Google across all three.

Corporate reputation – companies devote vast resources to protect them, researchers study the effects on them, and crisis managers work diligently to rebuild them. But what dimensions determine whether a corporation's reputation is positive or negative and who makes that decision? Are some dimensions more important than others and is a correlation to financial variables important or off-base?

While there are numerous measurement tools used in the study of corporate reputation, *Fortune* magazine's annual listing of the World's Most Admired Companies (MAC) is the "most commonly used barometer" for measuring the concept (Kiousis, et al., 2007, p. 149). Some researchers, however, question the validity of the *Fortune* tool as a valid measurement of corporate reputation because of its reliance on financially-driven factors (Dowling, 2004; Fryxell & Wang, 1994; McGuire, Schneeweis, & Branch, 1990; and Mahon, 2002).

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the dimensions people perceive as important in determining a company's reputation, how those perceptions vary, and whether they correspond to the dimensions used by *Fortune* to determine which companies are the most admired.

Fortune's Most Admired Companies List

Fortune's MAC list is based on an annual survey, conducted in partnership with HayGroup, a management consulting firm that offers customer research as a service to its clients (HayGroup, 2011). The online survey is sent to "approximately 15,000 senior executives, outside directors, and industry analysts" (p. 1) from "eligible" companies.

Companies are deemed "eligible" based on industry groupings using the "*Fortune* 1000" and "*Fortune* Global 500" listings with limitations on how many companies from each industry can be included. In addition, U.S. criteria "have at least $1.6 billion in revenue and should rank among the top 10 largest in their respective industries" (p. 1). The dimensions measured by *Fortune*'s MAC survey include "innovation, financial soundness, employee talent, use of corporate assets, long-term investment value, social responsibility, quality of management, quality of products and services" (Hillebrand & Money, 2007).

Fortune's MAC list is widely publicized and distributed, gaining world-wide recognition for the list itself and the companies it represents. Companies view their inclusion on the list as a source of pride and often use it as an opportunity market their company and its products and services (Honeywell, 2011; Jeffries, 2011; FedEx, 2011).

Mixed Reviews of Fortune's MAC

Despite its popularity with the business community, *Fortune*'s MAC has been criticized by some researchers in the field of corporate reputation. These researchers believe the measurement tool is too reliant on financial performance (Dowling, 2004; Fryxell & Wang, 1990, 1994; McGuire, et al., 1990; and Mahon, 2002) and have done extensive research to document their concerns. For example, while Fryxell and Wang (1994) recognized a "corporate reputation element" in *Fortune*'s evaluation, they found that the measurements used were more determinant of how well a company was reaching its financial goals stating, "it seems highly unlikely that the *Fortune*'s expert raters adequately discriminate between financial and nonfinancial aspects of a firm's reputation so as to permit their valid measurement" (p. 11).

Dowling (2004) noted that he was unable to find any academic research that indicated that the predictors used by *Fortune* would "predict an independent measure of a company's reputation" (p. 197) and Mahon (2002) pointed out that having an assessment depend so much on financial performance negates its use as a measure of overall reputation. Finally, Brown and

Perry (1994) claimed that the "financial halo" must be removed from the *Fortune* listing before it can be used in other research and proposed a technique for "removing that halo to derive the underlying construct" (p. 1357).

On the other hand, Flanagan, O'Shaughnessy, and Palmer (2011) have attempted to replicate the Brown and Perry study and found that "the strong relationship between measures of financial performance and the *Fortune* rankings … is far weaker when more recent data are analyzed" (p. 10). They offer possible explanations for the change, citing as one the influx of multiple information sources, both traditional media and digital, in recent years as an influence on survey participant's opinions regarding a corporation's reputation.

Corporate Reputation Dimensions

It would be unfair to criticize the dimensions used by *Fortune* without acknowledging and exploring the myriad of dimensions used by other corporate reputation evaluation tools, of which there are several. Some of the more commonly used tools and their criteria for measuring corporate reputation follow.

The Reputation Institute (2010) uses multiple models, depending on the particular project, to measure corporate reputation. Their annual listing of corporations uses four indicators – trust, esteem, admiration, and "good feeling" – to evaluate and rank the country's top achievers of corporate reputation. Yet, the proprietary tool they use with clients, RepTrak, uses 23 performance values around seven dimensions – "products and services, innovation, workplace, governance, citizenship, leadership, and performance" (Reputation Institute, 2010, para. 4).

Walsh and Beatty (2007) tested a corporate reputation scale with five dimensions including "customer orientation, good employer, reliable and financially strong company, product and service quality, and social and environmental responsibility" (p. 127). And, Fombrun's "Reputation Quotient" uses six pillars of reputation: corporate appeal, products and services, financial performance, workplace environment, and social responsibility (Fombrun & Gardberg, 2000). In this model, he also takes into consideration that some of the pillars may be more important to some audiences.

Davies, Chun, Da Silva, and Roper's (2003) Corporate Personality Scale relies on how customers and employees, one internal and one external stakeholder group, view the "corporate character" of an organization. Their model has seven, personality-driven dimensions: agreeableness, enterprise, competence, chic, ruthlessness, machismo, and informality. This connection to personal characteristics is also found in Dutton, Dukerich and Harquail (2004) as he employs impression management to measure people's impressions of an organization. He says that "a person is strongly identified with an organization … when his or her self-concept has many of the same characteristics he or she believes define the organization as a social group" (p. 239).

The models become even more complex when other related, yet sometimes overlapping, concepts come into play. In a discussion of corporate reputation management, Coombs (2007) said, "Most of the information stakeholders collect about organization is derived from the news media" (p. 164). This would indicate that media coverage, either positive or negative, would have to be considered as a dimension of corporate reputation. And, in fact, Wartick (1992) looked at the effect of intense media coverage on changes in a corporation's reputation and noted some association between the two.

It is a bit disheartening to see the inconsistencies in dimensions being used by researchers across disciplines to measure the concept of corporate reputation, but it does lead one to believe

that, at a minimum, corporate reputation is multi-dimensional. This suggests that *Fortune*'s apparent focus on financially-driven dimensions may be a barrier to accurately measuring the concept.

Stakeholders

In addition to determining which dimensions should be included in the concept of corporate reputation, who makes the decision? Miriam Webster's online dictionary (stakeholder, 2010) defines *stakeholder* as "one that has a stake in an enterprise or one who is involved in or affected by a course of action." In the field of public relations, the stakeholders or publics, terms used interchangeably for the purpose of this paper, are generally understood to be the groups or subgroups with the potential to impact the corporation, either positively or negatively. In addition, these groups can be either internal or external and, depending on a number of factors, can differ in the amount of influence they have on the corporation at any given time or in any given situation.

This means there is a seemingly infinite number of groups or subgroups could be considered a public or stakeholder for any given corporation. They could include the most obvious of groups, such as a publicly traded corporation's institutional investors, or the most obscure of groups, such as a small group of advocates whose agenda doesn't appear to include items affiliated with the corporation or its policies.

Fortune's MAC reflects the results of a survey given to executive managers, outside directors, and industry analysts. What makes these stakeholder groups more important than others? As Mahon (2002) pointed out, the models used to measure corporate reputation not only vary in the dimensions they measure, they also vary significantly as to which of a corporation's stakeholder(s) are given this responsibility.

Fombrun (1996) takes an inclusive approach to this dilemma as he stated, "by 'reputation' I mean the net perceptions of a company's ability to meet the expectations of all its stakeholders (in Fombrun & Gardberg, 2000)." This inclusion of all potential stakeholders in the definition is ambitious if taken literally. Chun (2005) took a more conservative approach, suggesting that corporate reputation should be seen as a "summary view of the perceptions held by all relevant stakeholders of an organization" (p. 105). Of course, that begs the question as to who is relevant and whether that answer remains consistent over time.

Others seemed to focus on "a" single stakeholder without being specific (Wartick, 1992; Gotsi & Wilson, 2001; and Reputation Institute, 2010). Does this suggests that a corporation could have numerous and potentially divergent reputations at any given time, depending on which stakeholder's perception they are consulting or measuring?

Because *Fortune*'s MAC limits their stakeholder list to only senior executives, outside directors, and financial analysts (Mahon, 2002), some may argue that this list of group of stakeholders is too exclusive to get a true measure of corporate reputation. However, the lack of consensus on stakeholder importance among researchers clouds the issue and, once again, leaves the topic open for interpretation.

After reviewing the literature, the three research questions proposed for this study are as follows:

RQ1: Do people differ in their perceptions of what makes a company reputable?
RQ2: Which dimensions are most important to people in determining which companies are most reputable or most disreputable?

RQ3:   Do those dimensions match those used by *Fortune*'s MAC measurement tool?

Method

This study utilized Q methodology to evaluate the dimensions of corporate reputation used in the compilation of *Fortune*'s annual MAC listing. Q methodology is small group method used in the "systematic study of subjectivity" (Brown, 1993, p. 93). Using this methodology, the researcher offers participants a set subset (Q sample) of opinion-based statements (the concourse) and asks each participant to rank-order the items, based on their individual opinion, into a "Q-sort," a researcher-determined scale that runs along a continuum from "most" favorable to "most" unfavorable or some variation thereof. Each of the individual sorts are then correlated and factor analyzed to determine which individuals' subjective opinions are similar to those of another participant. Participants with similar opinion patterns, as defined by their Q sort, load together to form a group for the purpose of analysis called a "factor," Researcher then interpret each of the factors by examining the specific statements or pattern of statements that distinguish them from each other as well as those that are shared between or among the factors (Brown, 1993; Kinsey, 2011).

In this study, the Q sample was comprised of a concourse that included the top 40 companies on *Fortune* magazine's 2011 "Most Admired Companies" list ($N = 40$). Prior to providing the Q sample to participants, the companies were re-ordered alphabetically to avoid having participants intentionally sort them as they originally appeared on the list (Table 1).

A convenience, non-probability sample of participants ($n = 27$) were recruited from a large Northeastern university. The participants were recruited in-person from a graduate-level Q methodology research course and from students enrolled in either a media studies master's program or mass communications doctoral program. Sixty-three percent of the participants were female and 73 percent were between the ages of 18 and 34 with a total age range of 18-61. The Q sort was completed by participants over the course of two weeks either during a class period or in a quiet office provided for them at their convenience.

Participants were asked to sort the 40 companies to the following condition of instruction: "Sort the companies from those that you view as 'Most Reputable (+4)' to those that you view as 'Most Disreputable (-4)' " with the distribution frequencies presented in Table 2. They transposed their Q sort onto a score sheet (Appendix A), where they were asked to comment on their individual rationale for determining which companies to sort in the top two "most reputable" columns as well as the bottom two "most disreputable" columns. In addition, they were asked questions about their gender, age, personal influence level from *Fortune*'s MAC, and their most frequent source of business news.

The 27 Q sorts were input into PQMethod, a software program designed specifically for Q methodology data input and analysis. The data were correlated and factor analyzed using centroid extraction with varimax rotation (Schmolck, 2002). The Q sort values for each statement were produced and factor arrays were used to compare and interpret the factors (Table 3).

In a separate exercise, for purposes of comparing the resulting factors to *Fortune*'s list, *Fortune*'s top 40 companies (those used as the Q sample) were redistributed into the same frequency distribution table using their rank on the original list to create the "*Fortune* Factor."

Results

Two factors, representing 38 percent of the variance, emerged from the 27 Q sorts with 16 participants significantly loaded onto Factor A and 11 participants significantly loaded onto Factor B, two of the participants were confounded (loaded onto two factors) while two participants were did not load onto either factor. Factors A and B were correlated ($r = .40$), as were Factors B and the "*Fortune* Factor" ($r = .41$).but the observed differences in the two factors illustrate distinct differences in the perceptions of the respective participants and were considered to be worthy of discussion.

Consensus Items

Factors A and B had a total of six consensus items, items that scored the same across both factors. Three of the consensus items which fell at the top and/or bottom of both sorts. The first two consensus items of note are Apple and Google. These items were scored as the only two (+4) items in both sorts. While the prominence of these two companies on both factors is interesting, neither Factor A nor Factor B participants indicated that they scored these differently for any specific reason other than those stated for all positively scored items. Likewise, both factors scored Exxon Mobile as a (-4), which is consistent with each factor's rationalization of scoring companies with negative press or crisis history (to be discussed later) negatively. The complete list of consensus items included (scores in parentheses for Factor A and B, respectively):

Apple (4, 4)
Google (4, 4)
Exxon Mobile (-4, -4)
Johnson & Johnson (1, 1)
Nordstrom (1, 1)
Starbucks (2, 2)

These consensus items were considered as general similarities between factors and are consistent with the analysis of the individual factors, as well.

Factor A: Personal Experience

Factor A indicated a "personal experience" focus when asked to choose the most reputable companies. These participants appeared to score companies higher if they had positive, personal experiences with them on a regular basis. Their highest ranking companies are generally companies whose products are used for everyday activities and for which participants indicated (via the comments section) that they had good personal experience(s) or had received good customer service. For example, Factor A participants scored Amazon, FedEx, UPS, Intel, Netflix and Costco higher than participants in Factor B as demonstrated in their Q sorts (scores in parentheses for Factors A and B, respectively):

Amazon (3, 2)
FedEx (3, 0)
UPS (3, 0)
Intel (3, -1)
Netflix (2, 0)
Costco (2, -2)

Factor A participants also expressed this "personal experience" profile in their rationale for sorting companies positively. For example, one participant from Factor A said, "They have

amazing customer service and great prices," and another, "Procter and Gamble gives me coupons," and "Samsung made the phone that's lasted me four years and counting." The characteristics of the most reputable companies as scored by Factor A participants holds true for the top scoring consensus items, Apple and Google, as well.

Factor B: Icon Recognition

Factor B indicated a much stronger dependence on a company's longevity, perceived public image and societal impact when judging which companies were most reputable. Many of the companies scored highest by participants in Factor B are generally considered to be long-standing successful companies with names and logos that are instantly recognizable by a large portion of the population – iconic American companies. For example, Factor B participants scored Coca-Cola, Walt Disney, Nike, General Electric, and PepsiCo higher than participants in Factor A as demonstrated in their Q sorts (scores in parentheses for Factors A and B, respectively):

> Coca-Cola (3, -2)
> Walt Disney (3, 0)
> Nike (3, -3)
> General Electric (2, -2)
> PepsiCo (1, -2)

The participants from Factor B emphasized the iconic recognition in their comments, saying things like, "These are the most successful companies in my opinion," "I also did ones world renowned but included ones that are clean, successful & powerful," or "Widely known global companies with good image and cultural impact." The characteristics of the most reputable companies as scored by Factor B participants holds true for the top scoring consensus items, Apple and Google, as well.

Similarities at the Negative End of the Scale

While the differences are apparent between factors on the positive end of the sorts, the rationale used by participants of both Factor A and B for sorting items on the "most disreputable" end of the sort were relatively consistent – negative press, crisis history, or negative perceptions from others of the companies ethics, societal impact, or employee relations. This was evident with companies such as Wal-Mart, Toyota, Goldman Sachs, and J.P. Morgan Chase, all of which have been in the negative national spotlight for internal issues, customer-service problems, or a perceived involvement with the financial crisis.

It is interesting, however, that although still scored negatively, Factor B's respect for iconic companies still had some influence. For example, Factor B participants scored both Wal-Mart and McDonalds, arguably recognizable business icons, higher than did participants in Factor A as demonstrated in their Q sorts (scores in parentheses for Factors A and B, respectively):

> Wal-Mart (-4, -3)
> McDonalds (-3, -1)

This would seem to indicate that, even when Factor B participants have a more negative view of a company, the long-standing iconic standing may still have a positive influence.

Phantom Factor: Fortune

Assuming for purposes of discussion that the *Fortune* Factor is an accurate representation of how respondents on the annual *Fortune* survey would sort these companies in this Q study, there are considerable differences between the *Fortune* Factor and the other two.

Of the 15 companies the *Fortune* Factor would have sorted as (1, 2, or 3), only seven of them were sorted into positive columns by participants in Factor A and only eight of them were sorted into positive columns by participants in B. In addition, companies like Berkshire Hathaway and Wal-Mart, both of which are financially successful are on the neutral or negative end of the sort for participants in both Factor A and as demonstrated in their Q sorts (scores in parentheses for Factors A, B, and *Fortune* respectively):

Berkshire Hathaway (0, -2, 3)

Wal-Mart (-4, -3, 2)

While these results are hypothetical, it does suggest that the dimensions used by *Fortune*'s MAC measurement tool may not be consistent with people's perceptions of what constitutes corporate reputation. It is interesting to note, however, that the top scoring items (Apple and Google) for both Factors A and B were also the top scoring for the *Fortune* Factor, suggesting that these two companies embody the preferred characteristics for all three factors.

Conclusion/Discussion

The results of this study begin to provide answers to the research questions posed and offer some suggestions for future research.

RQ1:   Do people differ in their perceptions of what makes a company reputable?

The results indicate that people, perhaps even within the same stakeholder group, may perceive the dimensions that make up the concept of corporate reputation very differently. As discussed, the participants from Factor A appeared to be much more interested in customer service, quality products, and their own personal experience while the people in Factor B placed more value on company longevity, size and iconic status – the companies that fit their image of a successful, American company. From a corporate reputation standpoint, this speaks directly to the multiple stakeholders that could be considered to be important to an organization.

Not only would the participants in this study not be considered for inclusion in the *Fortune* MAC measurement tool (they are not senior executives, outside directors, or industry analysts), but other measurement models would probably place these study participants in the stakeholder category called "consumers" and the differences between factors would never be uncovered. In other words, when it comes to perceptions of what dimensions to consider when determining a company's reputation, there are differences both between and within seemingly important stakeholder groups.

RQ2:   Which dimensions are most important to people in determining which companies are most reputable or most disreputable?

As illustrated in the literature review, there are many dimensions that can be considered when defining the concept of corporate reputation and we see some of that variety reflected in this study. Some dimensions most commonly cited by participants commenting on this study were personal experience, customer service, quality products, longevity, pre-existing reputation or image, impact on society, crisis history, negative press exposure, and bad or unethical management practices. This vast discrepancy may be indicative of a bigger issue: that those who

measure corporate reputation try to dictate the dimensions to stakeholders rather than develop a method by which the stakeholders determine which dimensions are important to them. Is this an area where the stakeholders' subjectivity needs to be part of the equation?

RQ3:   Do those dimensions match those used by Fortune's MAC measurement tool?

The dimensions used by participants in both Factor A and Factor B were not financially based, with the possible exception of some who though that the more iconic companies were "successful." Of course, it would require more research to define what they meant by that particular term, which can also be interpreted in myriad of ways by different people. The only dimension where there was any overlap was with the Factor A participant's interest in quality products. This would seem to indicate, as the literature suggests, that the financially-driven *Fortune's* MAC evaluation tool is not a valid measurement of corporate reputation.

Limitations and Future Research

As is the issue with many university-based studies, the student population who participated in this research represented only two potential stakeholder groups (consumers/general public). Therefore, the number of dimensions identified for evaluating corporate reputation was limited. In the future, similar Q sorts could be conducted with other stakeholder groups including shareholders, competitors, employees, media and others to gather a more complete set of potential dimensions for consideration. By adding participants from other stakeholder groups, it is likely that additional factors would also emerge.

Although this limits the study's finding, the different factors that emerged within such a seemingly homogenous group of participants suggests that there is still a lot of work to be done if we are to develop an accurate tool for measuring corporate reputation. I would suggest that such a tool would need to be much more situation-specific and fluid than those readily available to practitioners today. Perhaps it would require that each valid stakeholder group be given the opportunity to determine for themselves what dimensions are most important in determining a company's corporate reputation given a set of specific circumstances. Future research could explore ways for multiple stakeholder groups to express the different perceptions of their members, both between and within groups, to practitioners in a timely manner, providing the practitioners with an accurate measurement of their organizations' true corporate reputation.

The emergence of two companies, Apple and Google, as the top scoring items in all three factors also suggests the need for further study. While it indicates that these companies might embody the preferred characteristics for all three factors, it also may imply that there are some shared characteristics among the different factors that have yet to be identified. Follow-up with participants in future studies may allow for more clarification and, perhaps provide insight into commonalities among stakeholder perceptions.

And, while this study doesn't provide a prescriptive format for practitioners today, it should at least have them question some of the conventional wisdom and demand that they continuously maintain consistent dialogues with all potential stakeholder groups, knowing there are a myriad of perceptions within each and every one.

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Table 1

Q sort sample items

Company	*Fortune* "Most Admired Companies" Rank	Q Sample Item #
Apple	1	4
Google	2	17
Berkshire Hathaway	3	5
Southwest Airlines	4	33
Procter & Gamble	5	30
Coca-Cola	6	10
Amazon.com	7	2
FedEx	8	14
Microsoft	9	24
McDonald's	10	23
Wal-Mart Stores	11	39
IBM	12	18
General Electric	13	15
Walt Disney	14	40
3M	15	1
Starbucks	16	34
Johnson & Johnson	17	21
Singapore Airlines	18	32
BMW	19	7
American Express	20	3
Nordstrom	21	28
Target	22	35
J.P. Morgan Chase	23	20
Nike	24	27
Goldman Sachs Group	25	16
PepsiCo	26	29
Caterpillar	27	8
Cisco Systems	28	9
Costco Wholesale	29	11
UPS	30	37
Nestlé	31	25
Intel	32	19
Toyota Motor	33	36
Exxon Mobil	34	13
Volkswagen	35	38
Best Buy	36	6
Marriott International	37	22
Samsung Electronics	38	31
Deere	39	12
Netflix	40	26

Table 2

Q sort distribution

	Most Disreputable								Most Reputable
Value	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4
Frequency	2	4	5	6	6	6	5	4	2

Table 3
Factor Q sort values for each statement & Factor arrays

No.	Company	Factor A	Factor B	"Phantom Factor" *Fortune's* MAC
1	3M	1	-1	1
2	Amazon.com	3	2	2
3	American Express	-2	-1	0
4	Apple	4	4	4
5	Berkshire Hathaway	0	-2	3
6	Best Buy	0	1	-3
7	BMW	2	3	0
8	Caterpillar	1	-3	-1
9	Cisco Systems	-1	-2	-1
10	Coca-Cola	-2	3	3
11	Costco Wholesale	2	-1	-1
12	Deere	0	-2	-4
13	Exxon Mobil	-4	-4	-2
14	FedEx	3	0	2
15	General Electric	-2	2	1
16	Goldman Sachs Group	-3	-4	-1
17	Google	4	4	4
18	IBM	1	-1	1
19	Intel	3	-1	-2
20	J.P. Morgan Chase	-3	-2	0
21	Johnson & Johnson	1	1	1
22	Marriott International	1	0	-3
23	McDonald's	-3	-1	2
24	Microsoft	-2	2	2
25	Nestlé	-1	0	-2
26	Netflix	2	0	-4
27	Nike	-3	3	-1
28	Nordstrom	1	1	0
29	PepsiCo	-2	1	-1
30	Procter & Gamble	-1	1	3
31	Samsung Electronics	-1	-3	-3
32	Singapore Airlines	-1	-2	0
33	Southwest Airlines	2	0	3
34	Starbucks	2	2	1
35	Target	0	2	0
36	Toyota Motor	-1	-3	-2
37	UPS	3	0	-2
38	Volkswagen	0	1	-3
39	Wal-Mart Stores	-4	-3	2
40	Walt Disney	0	3	1

Appendix A

SCORE SHEET FOR CORPORATE REPUTATION STUDY
(Write the in the number in the chart below to reflect your finished Q sort.)

Most Disreputable   **Most Reputable**

-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4

Comments on companies in columns +3 and +4 _____
_____
_____
_____

Comments on companies in columns -3 and -4 _____
_____
_____
_____

1. Please indicate your gender:
   ☐   Male
   ☐   Female
   ☐   Choose Not to Answer

2. Please indicated your age:
   ☐   18 – 24
   ☐   25 – 34
   ☐   35 - 44
   ☐   45 – 60
   ☐   61 or over

3. Even if it wasn't an option in this study, the company I most respect is …

   _____

4. Would you consider a company to be more or less reputable if it were listed as one of Fortune magazine's "Most Admired Companies?"
   ☐   More
   ☐   Less
   ☐   Wouldn't make a difference.

5. I get MOST of my business news from:
   (check the medium and list your source)
   ☐   Television _____
   ☐   Print _____
   ☐   Radio _____
   ☐   Internet _____
   ☐   Other _____
   ☐   I never pay attention to business news.

Courtier to the Academy: Edward L. Bernays'
Publishing in Academic Journals 1928-1947

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Abstract

Edward L. Bernays distinguished himself as public relations' first theorist in two early books, *Crystallizing Public Relations* and *Propaganda*. Reflecting his belief in the importance of the social sciences, and his own intellectual bent, Bernays also published more than a dozen scholarly articles in academic journals and edited volumes during the 20-year period from 1928 to 1947. These addressed propaganda, problems of the New Deal, public opinion, attitude polls, public morale during World War II, the state of American newspapers, and post-war social tensions and racial problems. These efforts promoted Bernays' burgeoning practice; generated recognition, implied endorsements and legitimacy for his ideas; demonstrated his penchant for power; reinforced his self-identity as an intellectual; stroked his sizeable ego; and helped establish public relations as a legitimate academic topic.

Edward L. Bernays was one of the earliest and best-known practitioners of publics relations and was later lionized as the "father of public relations" (Cutlip, 1994, pp. 214-224). Bernays and his business partner and wife, Doris Fleischman, coined the term "counsel on public relations" (Bernays, 1965, p. 290) and were largely responsible for popularizing the term *public relations* to describe the work variously known as *propaganda, publicity*, and *press agentry* -- terms alternatively used by Bernays at various times during his career to describe his work.

Bernays authored the first book that addressed the role of the "counsel on public relations" and arranged to teach the first university course with "public relations" in the title. Notably, Bernays did not write the first book about publicity or public relations per se,[1] nor was his New York University course class the first devoted to the PR-related techniques.[2] Although his pre-emptive claims about these accomplishments were based largely based on semantics, Bernays clearly deserves credit as public relations' first theorist. Although Ivy Lee had already used some of the nomenclature that Bernays adopted, had written a book that addressed public relations problems of business, and had been a guest lecturer at Columbia University,[3] it was Bernays who raised public relations' intellectual plane and popularized the term.

Cutlip (1994, p. 160) described Bernays as "public relations' most fabulous and fascinating individual, a man who was bright, articulate to excess, and most of all, an innovative thinker." Two other biographers described him as public relations' "foremost theorist" (Ewen, 1996, pp. 163, 170) and as "the profession's first philosopher and intellectual" (Tye, 1996).

Bernays earned his reputation as a thinker through the publication of some 15 books, 300 articles and 125 letters to the editor where he espoused his various ideas about public relations. Although his two principal early works, *Crystallizing Public Opinion* (Bernays, 1923) and

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[1] Public relations challenges confronting various industries previously had been addressed in pamphlets and monographs directed to officials in the legal (Eaton, 1882), telephone (Kerr, 1911)) and railroad (Lee, 1915) industries as well as chambers of commerce (Parcell, 1929-21a, b) and public schools (Carter & Thiesen, 1921; Hines, 1923). Meanwhile a Ph.D. dissertation on newspaper publicity for public schools already had been produced (Reynolds, 1922). Bernays demurely acknowledged this fact in his autobiography, noting that the term "public relations" simply was not widely used (Bernays, 1965, p. 776). The first full-length book with *public relations* in the title was *Public Relations. A Handbook of Publicity* (Long, 1924). Long explained that the public relations had recently come into use, noting "Public relations has become popular as a term (perhaps not chiefly) because it expresses a wider conception, but in the hope that a grander title may deflect the scrutiny and criticism which has been turned upon Publicity. The cloak will serve, however, only if its wearer bears up to it" (p. 2). Long defined public relations as the "the process of finding out, and of making known, the factors in an enterprise which are of public interest" (p. 4). *Crystallizing* was preceded by notable books on publicity (Buell & Wilder, 1923), propaganda (Creel, 1920), and public opinion (Lippmann, 1922). Lippmann's volume included a thoughtful, critical analysis of the role of the modern press agent (Hallahan, 2004).

[2] The first regular university course on publicity was taught at Illinois in 1920 (Cutlip, 1961; Hallahan, 2004). Bernays approached NYU journalism school director James M. Lee with the idea for the course, which had a small enrollment and for which he was paid $200. Goldman (1948, p. 16, footnote 48) cites correspondence from Lee to Bernays and from registrar Milton Loomis to Bernays.

[3] As early as 1916, Ivy Lee had suggested that publicity departments and publicity advisers had created a new profession. In a 1921 newsletter, Lee said about its practitioners, "They have to do with public relationships as lawyers do with legal relationships" (quoted by Cutlip, 1994, p. 178). Lee's definition of effective publicity incorporated both influencing the organization's actions and communicating about those actions. Lee spoke frequently before industry groups (Lee 1915, 1916) and addressed the journalism students and faculty at Columbia about in 1921. In 1924, he gave a series of talks at Harvard and spoke before the American Association of Teachers of Journalism (Lee 1925; Hallahan, 2012).

Propaganda (Bernays, 1928a) have been thoroughly critiqued elsewhere (Cutlip, 1994; Ewen, 1996; Goldman, 1948; St. John & Lamme, 2011; Tye, 1996), a lesser known aspect of Bernays' work was the series of more than a dozen major articles that appeared in scholarly journals during the period from 1928 to 1947. In these Bernays promoted himself, his ideas, and public relations itself.

Historian Goldman (1948) noted that Bernays "tirelessly talked and wrote about public relations before scholarly and non-scholarly audiences" and that "no activity of Bernays has been more persistent or skillful than his public relations for the public relations counsel" (Goldman, 1948, p. 21). Olasky (1984, p. 8) similarly described this activity as "seizing the academies" and argued that this was an important way Bernays differentiated himself from Ivy Lee and most of their peers, who had emerged from the pragmatic ranks of 19th-century journalists.

This historical review examines how Bernays reached out to members of the academy in such diverse fields as sociology, political science, statistics, marketing, journalism and religion and social work. Through his academic publications Bernays strived to influence the intellectual elite as well as to establish himself and his new discipline. This review concludes by addressing various issues pertaining to Bernays' publishing activities, including his motives, and by assessing his resulting contributions to the field.

Preparation for Academic Publishing

Bernays' forays into academic publishing are not surprising in light of his personal background and early career. Bernays grew up in an intellectual environment. His parents were educated Austrian immigrants, who required him to enroll in college and regularly engaged in conversations with friends around the dinner about the ideas of his famous uncle, his mother's brother, psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud (Goldman, 1948, p. 14). Bernays was a good pupil and had developed an interest in writing while the co-editor of a student newspaper, the *Echo*, at P.S. 184 in New York City. He later served on the staff of the *Cornell Countryman* (1910-1912), a magazine produced by agriculture majors at Cornell. Although he disavowed any interest in agriculture during and after college, Bernays told Cutlip in 1959 that he enjoyed journalism and communications. Regarding his science-oriented curriculum during his "barren years" at Cornell (Bernays, 1965), Bernays explained that his training "undoubtedly aided in the establishment of what I hope are analytical and logical approaches to my work" (Bernays quoted in Cutlip, 1994, p. 161).

Upon graduation, and after spending several months in Paris, Bernays was hired late in 1912 by former classmate Fred Robinson, who at age 22 had assumed publishing responsibilities for two medical journals owned by his father, a prominent New York physician. In his first job Bernays assisted in production, circulation, promotion and advertising solicitation for the *Medical Review of Reviews* and the *Dietetic and Hygienic Gazette* – an activity somewhat akin to academic publishing. But his stint in medical journalism was short-lived as Bernays was lured by the prospect of producing and promoting *Damaged Goods*, a Broadway play supported through a fund Bernays had created to promote public understanding of sexually transmitted disease (the play's theme and a topic closely aligned with the *Gazette*'s editorial focus). Thus he made the transition to working as a theatrical press agent for four years (Bernays, 1965, pp. 49-152).

At the end of 1917, Bernays joined the Foreign Press Bureau of the U.S. Committee on Public Information, the nation's war propaganda agency. As Bernays would famously explain, he soon realized how many of the techniques that had been used during the war – and his theatrical press-agentry experience – might be applied to business. After a brief stint conducting publicity

on a freelance basis, he opened his own agency in 1919—the nation's seventh firm (Cutlip, 1994, p. 160). He quickly acquired a number of major clients, and hired an assistant, Doris Fleischman, a friend from high school who was an assistant editor at the *New York Tribune.*

Early in his agency career, Bernays had a brief taste of the politics of academic book publishing with his well-intended effort to publish and promote the landmark work of his famous uncle. He received a copy of the book (delivered by Carl Byoir) while in Paris serving on the U.S. delegation to the Paris peace talks. In 1920, Bernays persuaded his biggest client, publisher Horace Liveright, to publish Freud's Introductory Lectures (written in German) as *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis.* Bernays' ostensible goal was to generate income for his uncle, who was in financial straits following the collapse of Austria's post-war economy. Coincidentally, the project could benefit his client. But Ernest Jones, Freud's protégé and representative in England objected. Freud also was displeased with Bernay's quickly arranged translation. Nonetheless, the publication proceeded -- complete with a foreword, arranged by Bernays and written by G. Stanley Hall, editor of the prestigious *American Journal of Psychology* (Bernays, 1965, pp. 252-276; Cutlip, 1994, pp. 171-176).[4] The effort undoubtedly exposed the young practitioner to the nuances and importance of academic publishing.

Bernays' memoirs suggest that during this period he reflected on his personal experiences, but reveal virtually no detail about how he came to appreciate the important role that social science could play in public relations – beyond his understanding of principles espoused by his famous uncle. He makes no references to the titles or kinds of books he read to acquire insights. He claimed he had not even heard of the term "public relations," despite the term having been used prominently in the public utilities industry since at least 1908 (Bernays, 1965, p. 194). He first described his business as "publicity direction" to avoid the "vagueness of the word 'publicity.'" Over time, he would focus his efforts on creating events and or "circumstances" from which favorable publicity would stem (p. 194). Meanwhile, the bread and butter of his business involved placing publicity stories in the press – tasks in which both he and Doris engaged in with vigor.

One book that Bernays clearly influenced Bernays' thinking was Walter Lippmann's landmark *Public Opinion* (1922; for discussion, see Ewen, 1996, pp. 162-166; Hallahan, 2004). The prophetic *New York World* editor had captured many key ideas that Bernays quickly saw could inform his work. Bernays seized upon the idea of publishing his own book to promote his practice, and again enticed client Horace Liveright to publish such a volume. "I believed it would itself be a sound public relations move for what we were doing," Bernays (1965, p. 291) admitted in his memoirs. Importantly, he astutely chose to focus on the loftier topic of *public opinion*, rather than a narrow professional focus dealing merely with publicity or

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[4] Soon thereafter Bernays' office became the U.S. headquarters for the International Psychoanalytic Publishing Co. of London and Vienna, and Bernays was paid a 15% commission to promote the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis in the United States.* As Cutlip notes, Bernays never really profited monetarily from his efforts to promote the Freudian theory of psychoanalysis, but accrued considerable personal attention through his association (Cutlip, 1994, p. 175). When an officially translated version was later published in the United States, the book was labeled as the "Authorized English Translation of the Revised Edition" (Freud, 1935). In the Preface to this English Edition, Ernest Jones apologized, writing "An American translation of the book has already appeared, but apart from its deficiencies of style, it contained so many serious falsities in translation … that it was decided to issue a fresh translation." Jones assured readers the new work was a faithful and exact rendering (Jones in Freud, 1935, p. 11). Bernays continued to be involved in promoting his uncle's publishing ventures until 1931 (Bernays, 1965, pp. 252-256; Cutlip, 1994, pp. 171-176).

communications (Bernays, 1965, p. 291). [5] *Crystallizing* was modeled much after Lippmann's work but was less dense. The first third of the book was an exposition of the idea of the public relations counsel where, among other things, Bernays established his idea that public relations was a two-way process where the public relations counsel as an independent objective adviser who (much like an academic researcher) interpreted the public to his client but also helped interpret his client to the public (Bernays, 1923, p. 57). The last third of the book was a description and analysis of the established communication media. Both sections relied heavily on the opinions of journalists, such as Lippmann, to support his arguments.

Few extant details shed light on how Bernays researched and developed the center third of the book, which articulated his ideas about the social psychological bases of his craft. Tedlow (1979) characterized the book as "a pastiche of sociological and psychological speculations and incidents from the author's young career" (p.43) that was "more reflective of his desires that the reality of his work at the time" (p.45). However, Tedlow suggests that, unlike Ivy Lee, Bernays was a genuine student of his sources (p. 43). Bernays drew heavily from Lippmann (1922) for the notion of stereotypes; from his uncle for ideas about symbols, instinct, drives and subconscious thought; and from popular sociological perspectives on group processes, including the instincts of the herd and the crowd. Bernays reflected the ideas of early social theorists Gustave LeBon and Fernand Tönnies, but cited their more contemporary disciples: William McDougall (1920), Everett Dean Martin (1920), and especially Wilfred Trotter (1919). (For other analyses, see Ewen, 1996; Goldman, 1948, p. 17; St. John & Lamme, 2011; Tye, 1996.)

Bernays revealed the book's purposes in the Acknowledgment: "to set down the broad principles that govern the new profession of public relations counsel" and to "stimulate a scientific attitude towards the study of public relations" (Bernays, 1923, pp. v-vi). In the text, he drew a clear comparison between the public relations counsel and the academic researcher: "The training of the public relations counsel permits him to step out of his own group to look at particular problem with the eyes of an impartial observer and to utilize his knowledge of the individual and the group mind to project the clients' point of view" (Bernays, 1923, p. 122).

'Manipulating Public Opinion': *American Journal of Sociology*

Bernays' first salvo into scholarly publishing was "Manipulating Public Opinion: The Why and the How," which appeared in the May 1928 issue of the *American Journal of Sociology*. Although much of Bernays' academic thinking was influenced by the psychoanalytic ideas of his uncle (who also addressed group dynamics), Bernays (1928b) focused his attention on the influence of groups, and especially group leaders, in the public opinion process. Thus the leading journal in the growing field of sociology was an appropriate publication venue. Details about how the piece came to print are not known.

Bernays built upon his ideas in *Crystallizing Public Opinion* by defining public opinion as the "thought of a society at a give time to a given object; broadly conceived, it is the power of the group to sway the larger public in its attitude." Bernays went on to unabashedly claim that public opinion could be manipulated, and that the means justified the ends in light of what could be accomplished. He explained, "… in teaching the public how to ask for what it wants the

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[5] *Crystallizing Public Opinion* was followed by several other notable books that addressed related topics (Dewey, 1927; Lasswell, 1927; Lee, 1925; Lippmann, 1925). These undoubtedly influenced Bernays' thinking although not cited.

manipulator is safeguarding the public against his own possible aggressiveness" (Bernays, 1928, p. 958)

Bernays cast his craft in noble terms, equating propaganda with education – albeit with different purposes. This was an idea repeated from *Crystallizing Public Opinion* (Bernays, 1923, p. 212). He described propaganda as "a species of education in that it presents new problems for study and consideration to the public, and it leaves it free to approve or reject them. … Honest education and honest propaganda have much in common. There is this dissimilarity: Education attempts to be disinterested; while propaganda is frankly partisan" (Bernays, 1928, p. 959).

Admitting that the techniques of measuring and recording human relations had not been perfected, Bernays explained that advertising could avail itself of yardsticks used in experimental psychology. However, specialists in swaying public opinion needed to rely on "introspective psychology" (Bernays, 1928b, p. 960). Clearly drawing upon the influence of his famous uncle, Bernays explained the specialist in swaying public opinion "… knows in general the basic emotions and desires of the public he intends to reach, and their prevalence and intensity." He went on to explain, "Analysis is the first step in dealing with a problem that concerns the public. He [the public opinion specialist] employs the technique of statistics, field-surveying, and the various methods of eliciting facts and opinions in examining both the public and the idea or product he seeks to propagandize" (p. 961).

Bernays seemed to suggest that public relations was more of an *art* than a *science* – and demanded special talents that only a few possessed (such as him). He explained that diagnostic ability "… is perhaps a greater essential in manipulating public opinion effectively today than it will be later, when the technique has been more scientifically developed" (p. 961).

Bernays argued that the creation of circumstances that brought groups together – especially key influentials – was critical. "Ideas and situations must be made impressive and dramatic in order to overcome the inertia of established traditions and prejudices," wrote Bernays (1928b, p. 958). Later, he explained that attitudes were shaped by circumstance and that the public relations counsel could create circumstance by creating dramatic moments that captured the public's attention – a process he later described as "continuous interpretation" or "dramatic high-spotting" (Bernays, 1928b, p. 961; see also Bernays, 1923, p. 51; Ewen, 1996; p. 167; Flynn, 1932).

Much of the *AJS* article recounted how Bernays had created dramatic events for clients. Most notably (and appropriate for the audience), Bernays illustrated the principle by telling how the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People planned its first major conference in the Deep South in 1920 and purposefully juxtaposed blacks and whites from the South and North on the same platform to express the same point of view. Bernays referred to these Southern gentlemen and Northern activists as "stereotypes for ideas that carried weight all over the country" (Bernays, 1928b, p. 962; see also Bernays, 1965, pp. 208-216).[6]

Bernays provided other examples, but deftly avoided any mention that the NAACP and the other examples were his own clients. These included his creation of events to promote traditional women's millinery, Lithuanian silk fabric, panatropes, salad dressings, and hand soap.

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[6] He explained that press coverage of the NAACP convention awakened interest throughout the country. Meanwhile editorials in Southern newspapers showed that the cause had become important as evidenced by the participation by southern leaders. Moreover, the event naturally gave the Association substantial weapons with which to appeal to prospective supporters through reports, letters and other mailings. Underscoring the potentially valuable use of such propaganda, Bernays added, "Who can tell what homes, what smoking-rooms in Pullman cars and hotels, what schoolrooms, what churches, what Rotary and Kiwanis clubs responded to the keynote by these men and women speaking in Atlanta."

Other examples were Bernay's effort to humanize President Calvin Coolidge by inviting actors and actresses to breakfast at the White House and to overcome public prejudices against margarine by securing endorsements from experts in the areas of medicine, hygiene and dietetics.

Propaganda and the Debate in the Forum

Little evidence suggests that the *AJS* article generated much response. Indeed, its greatest importance might be that it provided conceptual ideas and content for Bernay's second major book, published later in the same year. *Propaganda* (Bernays, 1928b) was an expanded compendium of articles that had appeared in about half-dozen publications, including *The Bookman, The Delineator, Advertising and Selling,* and *The Independent.* (Bernays, 1928, acknowledgment; Bernays, 1927a, 1928c, d, e). St. John and Lamme (2011, pp. 228-230) suggest the book was, in part, a response to publication of Lasswell's *Propaganda Technique in the World War* (1927), which had shown that propaganda had been insidiously effective. Bernays wanted to provide a more pro-social justification for public relations.

Despite this intent, *Propaganda* generated considerable controversy, based on Bernays' decidedly undemocratic premise that propaganda was vital because it strived to create order out of chaos in society. The book began, "The conscious and intelligent manipulation of organized habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in democratic society. Those who manipulate this unseen mechanism of society constitute an invisible government which is the true ruling power of our country" (Bernays, 1928b, p. 9).

Bernays defined the topic of the book as the "mechanism by which ideas are disseminated on a large scale" and defended use of the term "propaganda" while acknowledging its unpleasant connotations. According to Bernays, "Modern propaganda is a consistent, enduring effort to create or shape events to influence the relations of the public to an enterprise, idea or group." (p. 25). He added, "Yet whether, in any instance, propaganda is good or bad depends upon the merit of the cause urged, and the correctness of the information published" (p. 20).

Ideas from the *ASJ* article provided grist for the chapter on "The New Propagandists" and, along with *Crystallizing Public Opinion*, was the basis for much of "The Psychology of Public Relations." The latter chapter emphasized the importance of groups and group endorsements, clichés and stereotypes, and created "circumstances" (pp. 47-61). The case study involving the NAACP was highlighted in the chapter on "Propaganda in the Social Services," but was relegated to the back of the volume, which are targeted largely to business and political leaders.

Bernays shared Lippmann's (1922, 1925) elitist approach. He wrote:

But clearly it is the intelligent minorities which need to make use of propaganda continuously and systematically. In the active proselytizing minorities in whom selfish interests and public interests coincide lie the progress and development of America. Only through the active energy of the intelligent few can the public at large become aware of and act upon new ideas.

Small groups of persons can, and do, make the rest of us think what they please about a given subject. But there are usually proponents and opponents of every propaganda, both of whom are equally eager to convince the majority (Bernays, 1928b, p. 31).

Unlike the largely positive public response to *Crystallizing*, responses to *Propaganda* were sharply negative. Olasky summarized the public response as one of alarm and chronicled the litany of critics (Olasky, 1984, pp. 3-5). Cutlip echoed Olasky's assessment, explaining Bernays' ideas were inept and ill-timed in light of the public outrage over the then-recent propaganda campaigns by public utilities companies (Cutlip, 1994, pp. 183-184). Cutlip's bottom line: *Propaganda* confused rather than clarified public understanding of public relations. In his autobiography Bernays dismissed reaction to the book and cited diverse reviews from the *Saturday Review of Literature* and the radical publication *New Masses*. He opined that these reflected "the thinking of that time" (Bernays, 1965, p. 294). Later in his same memoirs, Bernays defended his approach against what he termed the "misjudgments and misunderstandings by critics." He suggested that public response eventually improved (Bernays, 1965, pp. 775-783).

Bernays was prompted to defend the book in article in *The Independent* newsweekly (Bernays, 1928d). Meanwhile, within the academy, sociologist E.T. Hiller (1933, p. 621) "such widespread efforts to manipulate opinion constitute a financial burden, a version of intellectual candor, and a menace to political sanity" (cited in Olasky, 1984, p. 5). Most notable was the public a point-counterpoint debate that appeared in the March 1929 issue of a leading opinion magazine which billed itself as the "magazine of controversy." In *The Forum* Bernays defended his argument about the value of propaganda against Everett Dean Martin (Bernays, 1929; Martin1929a, 1929b). Martin was a social psychologist, who Bernays had cited in *Crystallizing* (Martin, 1920). Martin was then director of the People's Institute at New York's Cooper Union (Simpson, 1929; also Martin, 1924, 1926). Peculiarly, Bernays dismissed Martin in his memoirs as "publicist, who ran the Cooper Union forums" (Bernays, 1965, p. 294). The exchange proved to be the first of two scholarly published debates between Bernays and critics. Bernays would address the question again a decade later in the same publication (Bernays, 1938d).

Martin argued that propaganda had made people into puppets manipulated by propagandists. Although he lauded propaganda's ability to increase people's knowledge, Martin squarely confuted Bernays' argument equating propaganda and education. "Propaganda is not the same as public instruction. It is never disinterested information," wrote Martin (1929a, p. 142). Martin contended that even good ends may not justify the means, and that propaganda's effect was to make "these irresponsible and unknown persons the real rulers in American democracy" (p. 143). Propaganda increased the susceptibility of the public to slogans, catchwords and vulgarly stated half-truths. Martin dismissed Bernays' argument that techniques similar to those developed in the war could be applied by intelligent persons to problems of peace, retorting "Not even Machiavelli quite dared to propose such a procedure" (p. 143). Martin said the effects were to only encourage conformity to herd opinion, intellectual shoddiness, and superficial cleverness. (p. 144). Propaganda also could lead to the downfall of democracy and a loss of liberty because of its "alliance between the passions of the mobs and the ambitions of 'the intelligent few'" (Martin, 1929a, p. 145).

Naturally, Bernays railed at Martin's claims, suggesting it was simply an example of what Bernays said the public had come to regard as "impropaganda" – a term he had concocted the previous year (Bernays, 1928c) and would refer to frequently over the coming decades. "He voices the opinion of a section of the intelligent public which knows a little about propaganda, but knows more about what propagandists against propaganda believe it to be. This sweeping emotional belief is expressed in a series of unsubstantiated statements" (Bernays, 1929, p. 146).

Bernays argued that propaganda increases general knowledge and "tends to keep open an arena in public life in which the battle of truth may be fairly fought." Arguing that propaganda had

existed since Adam and Eve, and has been responsible for much of America's progress, Bernays suggested its strongest criticism was related to the business activities of propagandists and rejected the illogical argument that propaganda was vicious just "because certain quacks use propaganda to further their anti-social schemes." Instead, the ambitious businessman is successful because his private interest coincides with the public's interest. "And the mere fact that propaganda may have behind it a personal, self-interested or ulterior motive does not preclude the possibility that the final end accomplished may not coincide with some great public good" (p. 147).

According to Bernays, the public was protected from excesses because "the person who directs propaganda has himself insured the public against his own dominance, because he has developed a technique which is available to his opponent as well as to himself." Thus all factions can make themselves heard, which might be one of propaganda's great social advantages. Indeed, propaganda has "made vocal scores of minority groups of all factions."

Bernays rejected Martin's contention that propagandists operate irresponsibly behind-the-scenes and are unknown to the public. "He works on behalf of the leaders of public opinion, and he must adopt the same point of view as the man who accepts his services. Thus though the propagandist may remain in the background, the man or the group or the cause to which he devotes himself becomes known to the public, and these the public not only can but does hold responsible whenever propaganda is used for anti-social ends" (p. 148).

Bernays repeated his contention that propaganda should not be confused with press notices. Rather propaganda's most important function was to *modify the actions of an individual or a group to conform to some definite end desired* [emphasis added]. With the rise of mass media, public opinion had become vastly more important than ever before, and experts in public opinion came forward to give advice in this important field. Confuting Martin's contention to the contrary, Bernays argued a propagandist can function only when his first step is a search for the truth and he discovers the intrinsic value of the ideas he is to espouse. (p. 148)

In a rebuttal, Martin rejected Bernays' examples from history, his claim that public would hold the propagandist's client responsible, and the argument that propaganda encourages minority views while it strives to marshal the largest majority possible in society. Instead, Martin argued that small businesses and unpopular causes often lack the required resources and are "unable to compete for a hearing with forces organized on a nation-wide scale." Martin pointed out that he had not lodged his severest criticism against the use of propaganda in business. Instead, Martin's larger concern was propaganda's cultural consequences (Martin, 1929b, p. 149).

'Molding Public Opinion' and 'Engineering Consent' in *the Annals*

Possibly reeling from critics' response to *Propaganda,* but largely due to client commitments and the need to focus on business as the Depression began, Bernays' involvement with the academy went on hiatus from 1929 until 1933,[7] when he gave two talks before academic groups. Both related to public relations aspects of New Deal programs (for details about Bernays' government consulting activities, see Bernays, 1965, pp. 461-476, 550-551).

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[7] Prior to the stock market crash, Bernays' business was running at full throttle, and he staged two of his most famous events in 1929: the "Torches of Freedom" parade and the "Golden Jubilee of Light." When the Depression began, he found himself heavily involved in consulting with the government and various corporate clients as they dealt with the economic downturn. However, by the midpoint of the Depression, Bernays noted that businesses came to recognize the importance of public opinion and restoring economic confidence (Bernays, 1947, p. 148).

In 1933 Bernays spoke at a New York City dinner meeting of the American Statistical Association devoted to the impact of the National Recovery Act (NRA) on retail prices. King (1933) summarized the meeting in notes appearing in the *Journal of the American Statistical Association*. In his talk titled "The Molding of Public Opinion," Bernays explained that the government was engaged in a propaganda campaign to engage support. He admonished the statistical forecasters in the room that they needed to take such efforts into consideration in making their calculations. Indeed, propaganda efforts could result in swings in consumer demand that favored one product or segment of the economy over another. Bernays told the group that the successful propagandist needed to take into account the "basic impulses and prejudices of the population or else he will meet with little success." Successful propaganda involved endorsement from the leaders of social groups, the use of catchy phrases, and the use of many types of media to influence public opinion (King, 1933, pp. 441-442; Bernays, 1933).

Then in December, 1934, ostensibly based on his consulting work with the federal government, Bernays was invited to speak at the annual meeting American Political Science Association. He was a discussion leader at a roundtable panel on the "Public Relations of National Administrative Agencies." Participants included four academicians and directors of public relations from four federal agencies.[8] In his autobiography Bernays recounted that at the meeting he proposed creation of a secretary of public relations in President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's cabinet (Bernays, 1965, p. 781). Bernays later described the astonishment of *TIME* magazine at the idea and quoted the magazine as saying, "No academician, rotund press agent Edward L. Bernays appeared before the American Political Science Association to the present the most bizarre idea of the week" (Bernays, 1965, p. 781; Recovery: from study windows, 1935).[9]

About the same time Bernays resumed writing scholarly articles, beginning with the first of two articles to appear in *The Annals of the Academy of Political and Social Science*, a journal that melded scholarly interests in public policy with social scientific research. "Molding Public Opinion" made its way into publication in a special May 1935 number devoted to pressure groups and propaganda (Bernays, 1935a). Bernays was a logical expert to be invited to submit a article. Compared with his use of the term "manipulating" and "propaganda," Bernays' choice of "molding" was quite subdued. Once again, he promoted the "counsel on public relations" as a new type of technician upon whose advice many individuals and groups relied (Bernays, 1935a, p. 82). Interestingly, he continued to make second references to himself as the "propagandist," and reminded readers that propaganda can be used for either constructive or destructive purposes.

Bernays used both the terms "campaign" and "program" to define PR activities. He explained that a campaign must take into consideration four elements: the group relationships of society (based on the notions of "classified" or segmented publics that could be reached through

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[8] The focus of the conference was on government's role in national recovery and reconstruction. Attendance at the roundtable was undoubtedly small since it was one of 7 concurrent sessions at a conference with only 310 registrants. The APSA published the agenda (Ogg, 1935), but no proceedings. The agenda shows that Bernays also was a discussion leader for a roundtable on "The Technique of Commissions of Inquiry."

[9] According to Bernays, the critical need was for a Cabinet-level official who would serve as an unbiased channel through whom the President could learn of the changing wishes of the American people. The secretary would be neither a propagandist nor a censor, but would be involved in "explanation and interpretation" and would examine policies and policy statements for contradictions and inconsistencies. Separately, Bernays authored an article in *Current Controversy*, a political periodical, in November (Bernays, 1935b). The idea received fairly widespread attention from academics such as Herring, (1936) but was dismissed later by Eleanor Roosevelt (1946).

group leaders); the dominant instincts (motivations) of people; symbols; and the media through which facts and points of view reach the public. Drawing upon ideas he first outlined in a 1927 description of the work of the public relations counsel (Bernays, 1927b; see also Fleishman, 1928), Bernays identified four steps essential to formulate a program: formulation of objectives, analysis of public attitudes, the study of analysis (identifying organizational actions that are consistent, overt and in the public interest over time), and the use of media to dramatize ideas (Bernays, 1935a, pp. 85-87). [10]

"Molding" was mostly a rehash of earlier ideas and generated little attention. Such was not the case 12 years later with Bernays' second article in *The Annals* (Bernays, 1947a).[11] It was here that Bernays' first fully explicated the idea of the "engineering of consent " – an idea that he introduced as early as 1940 in presentations and articles directed to professional groups (Bernays, 1940a, b; Bernays 1942, p. 241). "Engineering consent" generated rancor on par with Bernays' unfortunate use of "manipulating" and "propaganda" (Cutlip, 1994, p. 196). However, Ewen (1996, pp. 373-380) suggested that the piece provided a revealing look at the ideas that have informed both political and economic power public relations practice today.

Bernays' choice of "engineering" reflected a modernist faith in science and technology and the attendant importance of method and precision -- approaches that ostensibly would garner legitimacy and respect for the emerging practice among social scientists. "The phrase quite simply means the use of an engineering approach -- that is, action based only on thorough knowledge of the situation and on the application of scientific principles and tried practices to the task of getting people to support ideas and programs" he explained (Bernays, 1947a, p. 114).

Again, like "propaganda," Bernays made it clear that such "engineering" was a tool to be used by leaders and experts. According to Bernays, leadership in the world required mastering the techniques of communication to overcome geographical distance and social stratification. "Such leaders, with the aid of technicians in the field who have specialized in utilizing the channels of communication, have been able to accomplish purposefully and scientifically what we have termed "the engineering of consent" (p. 114). He justified such an approach by arguing engineering is "the very essence of the democratic process – the freedom to persuade and suggest" and that engineering was necessary in a nation with powerful media that had become a "small room in which a single whisper is magnified thousands of times."

Bernays repeated the importance of studying human behavior and noted that the engineering of consent "should be based theoretically and practically on the complete understanding of those whom it attempts to win over." When used for social purposes, such engineering made a valuable contribution to the efficient functioning of society.[12]

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[10] Trade associations had placed the subject of public relations high on their convention programs following a loss of prestige during Depression (Childs 1965, p. 279). Bernays had written an article for *Economic Forum* on how to restore public confidence (Bernays, 1936; also cited in Washburn, 1937, p. 96). The editors also produced a 42-page promotional brochure, "Growth of a Sound Idea: Public Relation and American Industry"

[11] Bernays confused the 1935 and 1947 articles in his autobiography, suggesting that "Engineering of Consent" appeared in 1935 (Bernays, 1965, p. 781). Cutlip (1994, p. 186) apparently relied on Bernays' recollection, shortened the name of the journal and included a quote not found in the 1947 article.

[12] Ewen (1996) explains Bernays' justification of the engineering concept by noting that the headstrong public recognized by other theorists of his time, such as John Dewey and Elmo Roper, was absent in Bernays' mind. "There was no bargaining table, there was no factitiousness; there were 'only open doors to the public mind.' … His public was essentially visceral. It was not a subject, but an object, a thing that could be known and, once known, managed. The capacity to think was not a quality of those who were situated in the receiving end of Bernays' engineered public communications. Thought would only be a hindrance" (Ewen, 1996, p. 379).

Bernays used this 1947 platform, to expand upon his ideas about program planning from 1935 – how engineering was accomplished. Key components included the calculation of resources, acquiring a thorough knowledge of the subject, determination of objectives, and research to learn why and how the public acts, both individually and as a group. Importantly, this entailed public opinion research. The next steps included establishment of themes, timing strategy, and the organization of resources. Tactics involved "how the themes are to be disseminated over the idea carriers, the networks of communication."

In his summary, Bernays contended "… if the plans are well formulated and the proper use is made of them, the ideas conveyed by the words will become part and parcel of the words themselves. When the public is convinced of the soundness of an idea, it will proceed to action" (Bernays, 1947a, p. 120).

Aligning with Princeton Pollsters: *Public Opinion Quarterly*

During the period of 1933-1934, Bernays cultivated a relationship with Professor Harwood L. Childs at Princeton. The details about how the relationship began are unknown. [13] In 1934 Childs, a public opinion research pioneer, published his 105-page *A Reference Guide to the Study of Opinion*. In the book's acknowledgments, Childs (1934) singled out Bernays as "among those whose genius enables them to bridge the chasm between the laboratories of academic endeavor and the world of practice" (Childs, 1934). Bernays was credited with suggestion that led to the publication of the book, "along with practical aid which is gratefully acknowledged." The exact nature of Bernays' involvement is not known, but his financial support is suggested by Child's reference to "practical support" and the fact Bernays wrote the book's short Preface, where Bernays lamented the time lag between the discovery of scientific facts and their usage by the world-at-large. Bernays lauded Princeton's intellectual leadership for developing and distributing important facts related to public opinion management (Bernays in Preface to Childs, 1934). Notably, the book was sprinkled with a half-dozen references each to *Crystallizing* and *Propaganda*.

Childs was instrumental in the creation of *Public Opinion Quarterly*. This is the way that Bernays explains his own role in creation of the journal during this period:

> I now proposed to Harwood L. Childs of Princeton University that a serious periodical about public opinion and public relations should be published. He enthusiastically embraced the idea and invited me to be one of the editors of *Public Opinion Quarterly*. His chief, DeWitt Clinton Poole, director of the Princeton School of Public Affairs, was

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[13] Bernays' first mention of Childs in his memoirs is a reference to calling Childs regarding research on behalf of a brewing client (Bernays, 1965, p. 592). He also mentions the publication of the 1934 *Reference Guide* in the litany publications during the 1930s and 1940s in which he gained mention (p. 779). Bernays included Professor and Mrs. Childs among a long list of notables entertained in their home (p. 806). The two men appeared on a 1937 American Town Meeting of the Air radio broadcast on the NBC Blue Network under the auspices of the League for Political Education (American Town Meeting of the Air, 1937).[13] In the broadcast, Bernays continued his plea for the societal value of propaganda. "Propaganda is the voice of the people in the democracy of today because it gives people an opportunity to present their points of view. … Propaganda provides an open forum for the people in which opposing ideas are presented for the judgment of the people" (Quoted from Public *Relations…* (1951, p. 33, see also Larson, 1978). Childs told readers of the June 28, 1937 issue of *Business Week* that all businesses should learn about public relations. Childs later cited Bernays' role as a leading proponent of propaganda and praised Bernays for grasping the importance of group leaders and that publicity is only one aspect of influence (Childs, 1940; 1965, pp. 276-278).

> looking for money from David Sarnoff at RCA to subsidize the magazine. Sarnoff was displeased because Philco, my client, was attacking his radio patent pool. He said he would not play if I became an editor. Poole succumbed to the pressure (Bernays, 1965, p. 781).

Whether this account is fully accurate is questionable in light of Bernays' selective memory and tendency to enlarge upon his accomplishments.[14]

Bernays wrote in his autobiography that Childs asked him to write "Recent Trends in Public Relations Activities" for *POQ's* inaugural issue -- the first of three *POQ* articles by Bernays during this period. The brief article was part of a round-up series on the various aspects of public opinion practice – a format that Bernays had come to appreciate back at the *Medical Reviews of Reviews* (Bernays, 1965, pp. 53-60)[15] Bernays explained in the article that "… public relations as I had defined it enlarged its activities throughout the Depression because business realized it must not only sell its products or services but must explain its contribution to society. The Depression had made the public sensitive to everything a corporation did (Bernays, 1965, p. 781).

Indeed, Bernays argued that businesses had neglected many important phases of their existence: conducting private business in the public interest, adapting to changes in the public interest, selling the importance of business to the Americans, and using public relations techniques to accomplish those goals (p. 149). Important to his effort, he made it a point to allude to the attention paid to "the problem of public relations, with reference to propaganda" by the American Political Science Association as well as programs at the University of Virginia (Bernays, 1936b) and Bucknell University. He also reminded readers that discussions in the lay, financial and trade press had focused interest in working with public opinion (p. 150). Without referencing his own efforts to encourage businesses to instill public confidence in business (see footnote 10), he concluded by saying "And American industry today is devoting more of its time and energies to the carrying out of policies which recognize public relations activities as one of the basic and most important factors in management" (p. 151).[16]

In 1937, Bernays also made a second appearance before the American Statistical Association as part of a panel presentation on "Public Opinion and Public Relations." Other panelists were pollsters Stuart A. Rice of the Central Statistical Board and George Gallup, then of the American Institute of Public Opinion. Bernays' topic was the same as the panel name, but

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[14] Childs, who became *POQ*'s first managing editor, recounted the efforts to organize the magazine as beginning with a small dinner party in October 1935. Bernays might have attended. Not surprisingly, given the tensions described by Bernays, Child's history makes no mention of who originated the idea (Childs, 1957). Bernays is not mentioned in the most recent recap of the founding of *POQ* (Presser, 2011).

[15] Bernays boasts he was involved in creating the symposium or round-up article format while at the *Medical Review of Reviews* where experts on various topics were asked to respond to questions or comments on current topics: 'As far as I know, the *Review* was the first magazine to do this." Bernays also noted "I recognized the power of the symposium in affecting people's attitudes and action. It assumed an important role later in my own work" (Bernays, 1965, pp. 51, 52).

[16] Bernays later spoke before the 1938-1939 Forum Series at Cooper Union in New York on the topic of private interest and public responsibility (Bernays 1939a). Excerpts of his remarks appeared as a short commentary in *The Management Review* (Bernays, 1939b). He observed that business was beginning to recognize the need for objectivity and the importance of integrating itself better in society. "Today there is no private business. All business is public business," he opined (p. 110). He stressed the important of measuring and sampling leaders of public opinion and then conforming in advance to the needs and desires of the public (p. 111).

no proceeding or summary of the remarks was produced (Bernays, 1965, p. 781; American Statistical Association, 1937).[17]

Eight years lapsed before Bernays published his second and third articles in *POQ*, then working with managing editor Professor Eric F. Goldman.[18]

"Attitudes Polls—Servants or Masters?" was hardly a puff piece, and Bernay's purpose for publishing the article is not readily evident. The article was an unfettered attack on the misuse of public opinion polls and rankled a number of leading pollsters. In the short abstract, the editors wrote, "Of course, some of the POQ editors dissent with equal vigor, and the next issue of the QUARTERLY will discuss the question further." Bernays leveled his attack at the outset by stating many polls were dishonestly conducted, inaccurately taken and unintelligently interpreted. Bernays might have been frustrated because so many clients and others had become dependent on quantitative analysis – the science of public opinion – versus the qualitative, artful kind of analysis in which he excelled, using his introspective or psychoanalytic approach.

Bernays decried leaders' reliance on polls as if they were "the voice of God and the will of the people," and sided with Harvard's Pendleton Herring (1945),[19] who had recently chided mechanistic polls in an article in the *American Political Science Review*. Herring had argued that political opinions were not merely counters in the game of politics and that votes were not merely statistical data for tabulation. Public opinion required a holistic approach. In particular, Bernays quoted Herring's statement that "We need to know much more about the inner psychological well springs of thought and emotion and the influence of environment on the developing personality" (Herring, 1945, p. 761).

"Attitude polls often lull legislators and business men into the belief that they are safe from public disapproval when quantitative percentage corroborates their own point of view … They do not consider the passive or hidden points of view as important," Bernays warned. But all too often the result was an explosion. According to Bernays, polls discouraged the use of sound democratic methods of reaching important decisions, inhibited leaders from independent thinking, and enabled the tyranny of the majority to throttle progressive minority ideas (Bernays, 1945, pp. 266-266a). He compared public opinion to an iceberg, where expressed attitudes represented only the visible portion while the submerged base was potentially more dangerous.

Among various flaws of polls, Bernays drew on psychoanalytic concepts to argue that unconscious thoughts affected answers and that poll answers are often rationalizations. He noted that people are sometimes ashamed to reveal the real reasons for their actions or might think their explanations are frivolous, selfish or would generate ridicule. People also were neurotic. Bernays wrote, "For any number of reasons – glandular, psychological, social – we may avoid a considered answer on the spur of the moment" (Bernays, 1945, p. 268a). Bernays' remedy was two-fold: license pollsters and educate the public and political leaders so "Polls then will fill a sound democratic purpose of helping make decisions represent the accommodation of many viewpoints, rather than a majority opinion overwhelming all other points of view" (p. 268b).

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[17] Presumably this is the ASA meeting referenced in his autobiography by Bernays (1965, p. 781).

[18] Goldman was a professor at Princeton and became managing editor in 1944. He later became a distinguished 20th century historian and president of the American Historians Association. As a young scholar, Goldman authored *Two-Way Street, The Emergence of the Public Relations Counsel* in 1948. Bernays is believed to have paid Goldman to write the short history in which he and Ivy Lee are prominently featured and to have underwritten the cost of printing the book. Bernays carried on correspondence with Goldman from 1946 to 1950 (Bernays, 1965, p. 777; Butler, 1996).

[19] Notably, Herring was the moderator of the roundtable discussion in which Bernays participated at the 1934 meeting of the American Political Science Association.

In the following issue, three prominent pollsters rebutted Bernays' arguments (Field, Lazarsfeld, Robinson & Bernays, 1945-46). Harry H. Field argued potentially anything can be a dangerous weapon if misused—including freedom of the press and speech and the democratic process itself. He cited studies showing that the great majority of Americans weren't influenced by polls because they don't read them. He offered Bernays "felicitations" for his purpose, but pointed out the National Research Council had already taken steps in the direction Bernays recommended. Paul F. Lazarsfeld contended there is no contradiction between paying attention to polls and carrying through with one's own conviction. Lazarsfeld might have nailed problem on the head with this swipe against Bernays: "Could there be an understandable tendency among public relations counselors [sic] to pit their charismatic insight into a social situation against the evidence of cold figures, which every well-trained social scientist would be able to collect at considerably lower remuneration?" (p. 405). Claude Robinson suggested most pollsters would concur with Bernays – but that Bernays had stated his case in extremes without objective evidence. "Does Bernays feel that democracy is best served when the public knows the facts, or when there is public ignorance which enables the leader to propagandize his following?" (p. 407).

Bernays attempted to placate his critics by noting that he was gratified that three pollsters agree with some of his recommendations. Bernays refuted Field's claim by contending that leaders read polls even though the public might not. Similarly, he rejected the claim that the various polls in elections serve as a check-and-balance on their accuracy because many polls outside the electoral arena offer no such cross-protections. Finally, he repeated his argument that with polls the voice of the majority all too often is heeded to the exclusion of minority opinion and to the detriment of democratic processes. He concluded by citing the editorial support expressed by five newspapers from across the country in response to his original article, which obviously he had distributed widely (pp. 408-410).[20]

Analyzing War Propaganda in *Journal of Marketing* and Calling for a Concerted Morale Effort *in Public Policy*

By 1940, Bernays had been become increasingly concerned about the prospect that the United States would be drawn into war. After all, his native Austria had been occupied by the Nazis in 1938, forcing his uncle to leave for London (Bernays, 1965, p. 276). Public concerns about the prospect of war also were on the rise (Bernays, 1965, pp. 601-603). Based on his work for the Committee on Public Information, and insights gained during 20 years of practice, Bernays initiated his own campaign to urge Americans to "Speak up for Democracy." The anchor was a workbook authored by Bernays and published by Viking Press (Bernays, 1940).[21]

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[20] In his memoirs, Bernays tried to put a positive spin on the response: "The discussion that followed developed better knowledge and understanding of the uses and abuses of polls" (Bernays, 1965, p. 795). Perhaps it's not surprising that Bernays would never publish again in *POQ*, despite it being the principal journal that addressed public relations topics prior to the creation of *Public Relations Journal* in 1945. From 1937 to the 1970s, POQ published 73 articles with public relations in the title (Podnar & Golob, 2009, p. 59). No mention of Bernays was found in the 20-year retrospective by Childs (1957), and the duty of addressing public relations in the special anniversary issue went to practitioner Stephen Fitzgerald (1957).

[21] The book was designed to be a practical "how-to" plan of action for Americans with authoritative answers to the question "What I can do to help?" The cover billed author Bernays as "America's foremost counsel on public relations." Bernays' autobiography details the initial problems with sending the booklet through the mails and the positive public and media response to the booklet and to a long-copy ad on the same topic (Bernays, 1965, pp. 602-605. The Veterans of Foreign Wars adopted the initiative as a radio campaign and in ads and articles in its membership magazine (Bernays, 1940e).The book later was reprinted for Appreciate America, Inc., a private group

Bernays recalled in his memoirs being invited by the *Harvard Guardian* to participate in a midwinter conference about propaganda at Winthrop House in Cambridge in December 1939.[22] Bernays also took his concerns to a conference sponsored by the Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Virginia where he gave a talk on "Fighting the Fifth Column in America" which was published as a pamphlet (Bernays, 1940d)**.** He proposed carrying on campaigns of education to stress the democratic way of life and to expand present governmental agencies and methods to enforce existing and new laws. Among his other suggestions were a publicity campaign to expose registered propaganda agents and the passage of laws to curb organizations receiving money from foreign governments to conduct subversive propaganda campaigns in the country (Bernays, 1965, p. 605).

Bernays also read a paper at a New York meeting of the American Marketing Association in Fall 1941—before Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor. "The Marketing of National Policies: A Study of War Propaganda" was published soon thereafter in the *Journal of Marketing* (Bernays, 1942a). About half the paper – five typeset pages – was a scholarly historical review of propaganda activities by the German, British and American governments during World War I and an analysis of subsequent activities. He explained:

> Since 1917 we know much more about the working of the human mind. We know that acceptance of ideas comes through feeling, reason, custom, authority, persuasion and factual evidence. Industries and governments call upon advisers on public opinion. We use measurement techniques to determine how far private interest conforms to public desires. A baker now only bakes the bread he knows his public will buy. On the other hand, organized persuasion often changes attitudes of the public and leads it to new actions (Bernays, 1942a, p. 241)

At this juncture, Bernays' injected the idea that "All these factors – and the experience of the Great War – led to the engineering approach to the problem – "the engineering of consent in a democracy." This was actually the first reference to the "engineering of consent" in an academic journal, but was only mentioned in passing in four short paragraphs. Bernays argued "This engineering approach to public opinion should be applied in a democratic way to U.S. wartime pursuits as it is to peacetime pursuits." (p. 241).

In calling for Americans to speak up for democracy,[23] Bernays argued, "There is urgency and need—and we have the country with us. Now we can plan. All of us can help build this morale through effective marketing policies" (p. 243). He outlined a three-pronged, unified attack that included creating a psychological general staff to advise the federal government on all major questions of morale, a program to strengthen public faith in democracy, and an effort to

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of organizations supporting the war effort. Bernays launched a similar program as the U.S. entered the Korean War in 1951 (Bernays, 1965, p. 785).

[22] Bernays noted that other participants included Gordon W Allport, Heinrich Bruening, Robert S. Lynd, Hans Kohn, I.A. Richards and William S. Paley. "This was recognition that public relations had a distinct contribution to the national well-being (Bernays, 1965, p. 782). Transcripts are not available, but attributions are cited in two works listed in *Public Relations*….(1951, p. 68). Bernays also promoted the value of wartime propaganda in other venues, such as Dryer's edited volume on *Radio in Wartime* (Bernays, 1942b) and in several broadcasts for the Institute for Education in Radio (MacLatchy, 1942).

[23] The published article makes no specific reference to Bernays' campaign then under way. However, the campaign was probably referenced in the actual presentation. Bernays might have omitted it from the submission to the journal, or any reference was deleted by the editors in light of the subsequent declaration of war.

strengthen democracy itself by assuring that democratic processes work. "Experts, including marketing men, have laid a sound basis for a scientific approach to the problem of psychological warfare in the crisis we face today. The Nazis have translated this knowledge into action for their own evil purposes. America should not, cannot wait. She must apply today what she already knows towards meeting the problems she faces" (p.244).

Bernays shared much the same message with political thought leaders in "The Integration of Morale" which was published in *Public Policy,* the yearbook published by the Graduate School of Public Administration (predecessor to the Kennedy School of Government) at Harvard (Bernays, 1942c). Bernays' article was part of a section devoted to "War Morale and Civil Liberties" and was published alongside contributions from notable scholars such as Gordon W. Allport, David Riesman and Alan Burr Overstreet.

Bernays' repeated his call for a trifecta to make American's war morale impregnable, but re-ordered and reframed the elements to include activities aimed at speaking up for democracy, strengthening democracy itself, and a morale commission to give counsel and advice to government (Bernays, 1942c, p.18). He described morale as the nation's first line of defense and suggested that morale is to the mind what physical conditioning is to the body. Noting that the American had already committed themselves to the war effort, Bernays pleaded that government now needed to provide the psychological defenses required for psychological and physical security. These democratic activities included persuasion, suggestion, education and – above all – truth.

At the time the U.S. had no equivalent to the Committee on Public Information established during World War I; the Office of War Information would not be established until June 1942. Bernays contended the need for unified action was urgent; a laissez-faire attitude would be costly. He cited the fragmented nature of the general public, the public's emotional vulnerability to psychological and economic insecurity, the public's tendency to become diverted, the threats posed by psychological warfare, the failure of the public school system to stress democratic loyalties, and America's recent history of isolationism and noninterference.

Bernays called on the government to recruit technicians from the social sciences, sociology, psychology, ethnology, adult education, economics, the army, the navy, public opinion, communication, and public relations. More importantly, Bernays argued "There ought to be a master plan of psychological approaches just as there is a physical plan for physical defenses. A psychological general staff would advise on methods and procedures to meet the national goals that have been set up by the government. It would be essentially, not a policy-making agency, but an advisory body helping to translate policy in practice efficiently and democratically." Importantly, this would not merely be a propaganda or publicity bureau, but a planning, strategy and advisory body (Bernays, 1942c, pp. 26-27).

Bernays then used the opportunity to again promote his notion of engineering consent. "It presupposes a knowledge of the social sciences and an experience of working on an engineering approach the leadership of public opinion in a democracy." According to Bernays, the approach involved a chosen leader systematically gaining the consent of his followers to his program through truth – by education, persuasion and suggestion, not through threat, intimidation or brutality (Bernays, 1942b, p. 31). Planning was necessary if work is to proceed on an organized basis to maintain and strengthen national morale.

Courting Newspapers and Educators in *Journalism Quarterly*

World War II had yet concluded when Bernays reached out to another segment of the academic community: journalism educators. "The Press Must Act to Meet Postwar

Responsibility," appeared in the June 1944 issue of *Journalism Quarterly* and was based on an April speech before the National Newspaper Promotion Association under the title "Public Relations for the American Daily Newspaper." [24]

In what was probably his most empirical published work, Bernays recounted the results from a survey he had conducted of 169 newspapers publishers regarding their editorial platforms. He also reported findings from survey by *Fortune* (a client) about consumer media use and trust. He also summarized findings about prospective post-war citizen concerns based on surveys conducted by Princeton's Office of Opinion Research for The National Planning Association and by the by Roper Organization for *American Mercury.*

Bernays wrote there was a lack of focus on national concerns in the editorial platforms of the newspapers he surveyed. Meanwhile, citizens were concerned about newspapers' accuracy and trustworthiness and said they felt a disconnect between newspaper coverage and their concerns. Bernays called for newspapers to re-examine their public relations. More specifically, newspapers should 1) focus on national and international goals, 2) promote local social goals, 3) both adhere to and promote their editorial platforms, 4) lead crusades for worthwhile causes, and 5) convince the public that they are truthful and accurate, especially on topics where fairness matters. In a familiar refrain, Bernays suggested a solution:

> This can be done through what is known as the "engineering of consent," using public relations procedures employed today by all kinds of groups, to gain greater acceptance from the public. This activity covers a knowledge of maladjustments with the public and their elimination; of objectives, strategy, timing, planning, organization, and the use of tactics through every channel of approach to win the public over (Bernays, 1944, pp. 128-129.)

Bernays closed by arguing that democracy needs a free and independent press but that that the press "must give serious thought to the situation in which it finds itself—and act to change it, in its own and the public interest" (p. 129).

In the introduction to a follow-up article published the following year, *JQ*'s editor Ralph D. Casey described the original article as "frank and enlightening." Bernays (1945) then explained that reprints of the original article had been sent to "a number of leading publishers and editors of daily newspapers, and to educators, business men, and professional men." According to Bernays, all but one respondent supported the position he had taken in the article. *JQ*'s editor asked Bernays to abstract some of the 500 comments received. The resulting article was composed entirely of excerpts of the responses. These were organized in 9 categories, ending – not surprisingly – with comments about the value of public relations for newspapers. [25]

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[24] In his memoirs, Bernays notes that he appeared at three annual conventions of the NPNA, which occurred after the spoke before the New York State Publishers Association and he had "provided them with a program which helped gain acceptance for public relations among newspapers" (Bernays, 1965, p. 795).

[25] The only articles categorized as dealing with public relations prior to Bernays' entry dealt with public relations and state government (late 1937) and public relations on an army base (1942). Bernays' two pieces are categorized under press performance, despite the public relations aspects addressed. Bernays never published any other article in the journal; *JQ* published only 14 articles classified under "public relations" from 1924 to 1963 (Nixon, 1964).

Addressing Post-War Social Tensions, Race Relations

Although most of Bernays' promotional and academic publishing activities addressed matters pertaining to business or government, late in this period Bernays tackled how public relations might be applied to problems of social cooperation and race relations in two conferences attended by academicians, religious leaders and social advocates. The results were chapters in two published books of proceedings.

"The Public Relations Counsel and Group Understanding" was presented in 1945 at the Bridges to Cultural Understanding symposium sponsored by the nonprofit Conference on Science, Philosophy and Religion and Their Relations to the Democratic Way of Life, Inc.[26] Bernays (1947b) provided a quite humanistic perspective on communication. He explained that although groups rely on systems of communications to talk with one another, little information was available on the semantic and psychological aspects of the process (p. 101). He then briefly summarized research by scholars such as D.T. Burlingham, C.K. Ogden and Edward Sapir and cited work at Ohio State, Harvard, Columbia, Princeton and the University of Denver (p.102). Bernays lamented, "These studies have been mainly on the theoretical side. But there has been a large gap between theories and their use. Many findings are never brought to the attention of those who might use them …." (Bernays, 1947b, p. 102).

Drawing parallels with academic researchers, Bernays cited his own activities:

> The task of the public relations counsel has been to develop theories of study, analyses of attitudes and customs, and to break down false semantic conceptions, substituting more accurate and understandable word practices. He developed the practical application side by side with the theoretical background. He has found, and proved, there can be no honesty in the use of words without split-hair accuracy.

Predating modern notions about message framing (Hallahan, 2011), Bernays compared the use of the terms "open shop" and "closed shop" to differentiate businesses with non-union versus unionized workers. According to Bernays, the public relations counsel strives to integrate groups and thus "has a strong social responsibility to and must have the knowledge and ability and judgment to determine what, in our society, is likely to work for the common good." (p. 103).

Playing on the theme of the conference, Bernays argued that the public relations builds *cultural bridges* [emphasis added] through techniques of *social engineering* [emphasis added] -- a variation on his "engineering" metaphor. He reiterated the close connection between the social sciences and public relations this way:

> Acts are more important than words in any effort of persuasion. An institution or corporation must act correctly in order to produce a good effect. Words can, at best, be a correct commentary on the deed. This program of Public Relations is the effort to apply sociology to everyday problems. Science, education and industry are part of this broad social pattern and can function only if they are an understandable and knowledgeable part of the whole (Bernays, 1947b, pp.105-106).

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[26] Because of a variety of factors, publication of the proceedings was delayed for two years, thus the later citation date. In his memoirs, Bernays (1965, p. 783) only briefly mentions this conference, along with a talk before a Chicago meeting of Methodist bishops and a conference at Jewish Theological Seminary (which might actually be the chapter published by the Institute for Religious and Social Studies). Bernays provides no comment or context about these events, other than to say that public relations had become well established by 1945.

Bernays joined the post-World War II debate about the growing social divisions that plagued the country based on race and religion, when he appeared on a program sponsored by the Institute for Religious and Social Studies (1947). In "What Business Can Do" to address the country's social problems, Bernays (1947c) recounted his relevant counseling experience, including his initial representation of the NAACP in the 1920s. He argued that the press, church and government – institutions addressed by the other speakers on the panel -- were hampered by the public's psychological and economic insecurities created by the end of WWII (p. 139).

Bernays challenged the American business leader "in his own enlightened self-interest" to assume responsibility in this situation. He contended "the public felt that business should have assumed leadership in preventing such occurrences" (pp. 139-140). According to Bernays, business possessed highly effective tools for mass persuasion. Bernays again exhibited his elitist perspective by calling on investment bankers and the heads of large corporations to exercise leverage by a) exerting economic pressures, b) marshalling the force and power of their millions of workers, and c) setting precedents and serving as examples for small businessmen (p. 141).

Discussion

During the two decades covered in this review, Edward Bernays compiled an impressive list of more than a dozen academic/scholarly citations. Despite his foibles and his critics,[27] Bernays' forays into academia might be one of his important legacies. Boorstin (1962, p. 278) called Bernays' writings "among the most sophisticated, philosophically self-conscious and literate works on public relations." As Cole (2007) notes, "He was known as a publicist but he demanded to be thought of as social scientist who used applied research to alter the behavior of the individuals, enterprises and sometimes even the industries for which he worked, as well as the audiences on which his clients depended."

Interestingly, while he used academic publications to promote the idea of "counsel on public relations," Bernays never used any academic platform to promote the superiority of "public relations counsel" vis-à-vis other terms, such as *publicity* for his work. His goals were loftier, so lowering to petty professional debates contributed nothing to positioning his practice as a distinct, worthy or noble endeavor. Meanwhile Bernays still talked about himself as a "propagandist" for many years and later touted himself as "U.S. Publicist No. 1" – a distinction applied to him by TIME magazine in 1938 (Education: Propaganda battle, 1938; for examples see the cover of Bernays, 1945c and the dust jacket for *Public Relations….,* 1951).

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[27] Importantly, Bernays' application of the term "public relations" hardly meets the romanticized notion of relationship building and harmonization sometimes found in the field today. Whereas Ivy Lee has been criticized for his focus on "publicity," Lee's concept was very much in synch with Bernays. Both recognized that than organization's actions were just as important as its words. Lee believed in people and their ability to make judgments given facts (Hallahan, 2002; Hiebert, 1966). By contrast, Bernays was more exploitive and sought compliance by the masses, Although Bernays thought public relations techniques – whether called propaganda or public relations – could be applied for good, he clearly believed these were tools to be entrusted to clients and practitioners (the "invisible government") with the intelligence and power to manipulate, propagate, mold or engineer public opinion. A derivative benefit of this study is to recognize how much this control theme permeated Bernays' thinking over the years.

Impact on Academia and Practice.

As a master press agent who represented both the publisher and author, Bernays artfully secured reviews that heaped praise upon *Crystallizing Public Relations* in 1923. Bernays recalled in his memoirs that "acceptance see-sawed" and that he was not aware of any immediate change in the nomenclature used to describe press agentry or publicity (Bernays, 1965, p. 292-293). However, Long (1924) published a book entitled *Public Relations* the following year, and Bernays was listed almost immediately in a publicity references list published by the Russell Sage Foundation (Routzahn & Routzahn, 1924).

It was largely through his academic publishing efforts, his additional books, and the resulting press attention (not his behind-the-scenes works for clients) that Bernays gained visibility and made his mark within the academy and society. Pimlott noted that "Bernays… impressed some of the social thinkers of the 1920s and the 1930s because he seemed to be a fascinating man of ideas as well as practice." According to the British observer, Bernays writings "stood alone among works dealing specifically with public relations in having any influence outside the narrow public relations world or much influence within it" (Pimlott, 1951, p. 11)

During the 1930s and 1940s, at least a half-dozen social scientists acknowledged the role of public relations in public opinion and cited Bernays specifically – a fact proudly recounted by Bernays in his memoirs (Bernays, 1986, p. 786; See: Barnes, 1940, pp. 636-637; Brucker, 1949, p. 145; Childs, 1940, 1965. p. 31, 276-278; Lasswell, 1935; Lasswell, Casey & Swain, 1935; Smith, 1940, pp. 16, 116). While most were brief mentions or citations, longer expositions were often more analytical (and critical) in describing the impact of the public relations counsel on society (e.g. Doob, 1935, pp. 191-205). Bernays' works later would make their way onto bibliographic reference lists pertaining to public opinion (e.g. Radvanyl, 1948).

Critics relish in pointing out that Joseph Goebbels, the German Reich Minister of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda, owned a copy of *Crystallizing Public Opinion* in his library (Beck, 2011a, b; Tye, p. 111). Yet Bernays also influenced the authors of books directed to ordinary clients and practitioners. Washburn's (1937) book on press-agentry acknowledged the growing acceptance of the term "public relations counsel," which he described as "second cousin" of the flamboyant press agent of the day (Washburn, 1937, p. 94). Notably he cited Bernays' "Molding Public Opinion" in concluding his profile about Bernays (Washburn, 1937, p. 104). Although many competitors who wrote their own books conspicuously failed to make any mention of Bernays (such as Batchelor, 1938, Harlow, 1942), others also acknowledged Bernays' prominence (Harral, 1942, pp. 241, 261; Reck, 1946; Wright, 1939) or eventually cited his ideas (Cutlip & Center, 1952; Fine, 1943; Harlow & Black, 1947, 1952; Hutchison, 1941; Lesly, 1950; Sills & Lesly, 1945; Wright, 1939). At the end of the period covered in this study, the founders of *PR News* observed that Bernays generated more debate than any other practitioner then working the field. "Instead of recognizing public relations as a practical part of business management which every executive should study and use, Bernays proceeded on the theory that there were a few initiated specialists competent to practice public relations and it was a mysterious ritual apart from management itself." This mystique took years to overcome (Griswold & Griswold, 1948, p. 8).

Multi-Disciplinary Interests.

A key aspect of Bernays' academic publishing is its diversity – Bernays reached out to academics in a variety of disciplines: sociology, political science, public opinion research,

statistics, marketing, journalism and even religion and social work. Beyond his own reading, he had no particular training in any of these disciplines.

Interestingly, although psychoanalytic ideas were heavily represented in some of his early works, Bernays never cited Freud or any of his disciplines by name in any of the works (also noted by St. John & Lamme, 2011, p. 234, note 1). Psychology also was notably absent from the academic communities where he sought speaking or publication opportunities. Perhaps Bernays recognized that psychoanalytic concepts were not fully accepted by experimental and other empirically oriented psychologists. Or he felt uncomfortable because of his relationship to his famous uncle. He also might have feared being seen as exploiting his family relationship, especially after the controversy over the publication of Freud's book. Perhaps he felt unqualified. In any case, he had been mocked mercilessly in the popular press for his association with Freud.[28]

Question of Collaboration.

Also of particular interest is the degree to which the ideas that Bernays espoused in his academic publications were exclusively his or represented the collaborative efforts of his often under-recognized business partner and wife, Doris E. Fleischman. Several researchers have chronicled the critical role Fleischman played in their consulting business and the development of public relations counseling (Henry, 1997, 2007, 2009, 2012a; Lamme 2007). Although Fleishman used her expert copywriting, editing and placement skills in the beginning, her role expanded to be a strategist over the years (Henry, 1999)

Bernays and Fleischman operated their business as a partnership; Bernays freely explained that both he and Fleischman coined the term "counsel on public relations," that the two worked equally hard to make their practice a success. The two of them worked together on virtually all campaigns—with only a few limited exceptions (Bernays, 1965; Henry, 1998, pp. 11, 23; Raymond [aka Bernays], 1927; see also Cutlip, 1994, p. 178, Goldman, 1948, p. 18). Fleischman later gave full credit to Bernays for his several "firsts" and expressed proper wifely pride. Fleischman gives no direct indication of any collaboration on any of his academic works, noting in her memoirs that "Eddie dictated chapters of his book" (D.E. Bernays, 1955, p. 178).

Whereas Bernays was the pontificating dreamer and thinker, Fleischman was the pragmatist who undoubtedly helped focus many of his ideas. In an early published profile of his wife, written using a pseudonym, Bernays extolled her professional virtues (Raymond, 1927). She was the superior writer and editor. Her courses at Barnard were in physical and experimental (versus clinical) psychology and "unfortunately, had nothing to do with emotions or neuroses" (D.E. Bernays, 1955, p. 168). About her initial involvement, she would later write only "I knew something about Eddie's novel ideas and methods" (p. 170). However, she was an exceptional judge of human character by all accounts. Bernays praised her skills and called her his own

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[28] Pringle (1930) characterized Bernays as a "mass psychologist": "What he does is create demand by molding the public mind. He creates desire for specified goods and services. It is not often that mass psychology fails to find a solution" (also cited in Cutlip, 1994, p. 171). Flynn (1932) suggested that while Bernays was not a practicing psychoanalyst, "he is a psychoanalyst just the same, for he deals with the science of unconscious processes" (see also Olasky, 1984, pp. 9-10; Tye, 1996, pp. 107-108). *Time* (the humor magazine the preceded the newsweekly) published a sharp diatribe on both Ivy Lee and Bernays, and noted Bernays "probably made more money out of psychoanalysis than all Vienna ever saw (Untrammeled press, 1933, p. 12). Kennedy (1938, p. 40) described Bernays as the most successful practitioner of his craft "who can talk to his clients about human psychology with an expansiveness that would convince you of what he is, the nephew of Sigmund Freud: When he comes back for an encore you're puzzled as to whether or not he isn't Freud's uncle."

George Gallup – a reference to the pioneer pollster because of her ability to anticipate how new ideas would be accepted. Fleishman's daughter later wrote that Doris "never read anything but books that threw light on the management of group dynamics" (A. Bernays, 1997; cited in Henry, 1998, p. 19).

Henry (1999, p. 105) opines "There is no doubt that Fleischman helped him gain this influence, worked successfully with clients and, when he was writing *Crystallizing Public Opinion*, formed its ideas" (Henry, 1999, p. 104). In a footnote, the author cites Bernays' 1971 oral history where he references "our book." She adds. "My own conclusion, based on knowledge of their relationship in 1921 and 1922, is that they discussed much that went into Crystallizing as he wrote it, and that she helped a great deal in forming its key ideas (Henry, 1999, p. 110, fn110).

How much the couple continued to collaborate on Bernays' big ideas over the years is open to speculation, especially as their business and family life together evolved. Lamme (2007) points out that distinguishing Bernays' ideas from Fleishman's ideas is hard. The researcher notes that Fleishman wrote in unpublished notes for her book, "I'm not as dedicated to improving the world through public relations as Eddie." Lamme called for further research about the distinctions between the ideas of the two (Lamme, 2007, p. 99).[29] Interestingly, their daughter, Anna Bernays (1997), provided a quite disparaging characterization of her father and the couple's relationship. At minimum, Fleishman and other staff members (of which there were as many as 30 people at one time), facilitated Bernay's activities – through research, copy preparation and editing and arrangements for presentations, publications and reprints. This support was critical. One thing is certain, however: Academicians were no more accepting of women than businessmen at the time; thus Fleishman would have difficulty being recognized as a co-author, even if it such an option were considered.

Integration of Academic Articles with Other Publishing Activities

Another insightful question deals with how Bernays' various academic publishing initiatives fit with his other publicity/publishing activities.

As suggested earlier, academic publications played pivotal roles in Bernay's ability to create several of his major works. The *American Journal of Sociology* piece provided much of the conceptual framework for *Propaganda* in 1928. The book also incorporated material that had been published, for largely promotional purposes, in a half-dozen other publications. In a similar way, *The Annals* article in 1947 codified ideas for Bernays' (1952) *Public Relations* textbook and provided much of the blueprint for how he and his contributors suggested a public relations campaign should be conducted in his edited volume, *The Engineering of Consent* (Bernays, 1955; see Tilson, Grunig, Moss & Jackson, 2001). His textbook also had been largely expanded from 20-page monograph on *Public Relations* (Bernays, 1945d), which in turn drew heavily from a four-stage outline of public relations history that appeared in an article in *Saturday Review* (Bernays, 1941c).

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[29] The possible synergistic influence of Fleischman and Bernays on each another's ideas might be best evidenced by comparing their companion volumes on careers for men (Bernays, 1927b) and careers for women (Fleishman, 1928). The chapters are parallel in structure and content, although their regimens for practicing public relations were somewhat altered, and the second volume cross cites the first. A careful reading of the narrative and phrasing suggests involvement by the same author-editor. If this were their common practice for business activities generally, it might also have applied to Bernays' academic works.

Importantly, many of his academic endeavors themselves evolved out of attempts to develop and popularize ideas in popular and special-interest publications or activities. A 1927 ad in *Editor & Publisher* (reproduced in Cutlip, 1994, p. 181) cogently summarized Bernay's ideas about the role of the public relations counsel and soon made their way into *Propaganda.* Bernay's had formulated his ideas about stoking home-front morale in his "Speak up for Democracy" campaign (Bernays, 1940) before they made their way into *the Journal of Marketing* and *Public Policy*. In probably the best example, the "engineering of consent" actually evolved over at least a 7-year period before being fully explicated in *The Annals* (Bernays, 1947a). The engineering construct can be traced to promotional articles in periodicals serving the printing trades and public utilities industries (Bernays, 1940a, b), then made its way into the *Journal of Marketing* (Bernays, 1942a), *Public Policy* (Bernays 1942b), *Journalism Quarterly* (1944) and the Bridges symposium (Bernays, 1947b).

Bernays' academic publishing efforts were not distinct or separate activities. Instead, they were part of a seamless stream of ideas and in the form of presentations and publications promoting his consultancy and principles of public relations. Ideas were reiterated, revised, recycled and reused. (To illustrate, a reader can trace familiar themes through articles in professional and popular publications: see Bernays, 1936c, d; 1938a-d, 1939a, b; 1941a-c, and 1947d, e). This integration was facilitated by the fact that scholarly publications at the time were not particularly sophisticated or insular. In sharp contrast to today, few publications featured sophisticated statistical analyses, dense literature reviews, or the incessant cross-referencing common today. Most were highly readable, relied on simple footnotes, and placed on premium on *ideas* – all factors that allowed a working practitioner like Bernays to receive consideration.

Motives for Courting the Academy.

Bernays' academic pursuits consumed an enormous amount of time and effort, and his motivation for becoming so deeply engrained in academia is a complex question. At least six possible explanations are possible:

First, a simple explanation is that it was good for business – academic publishing could generate referrals. But Bernays had access to and regularly tapped many more potentially lucrative venues where he could gain visibility and solicit business through publicity. He also sponsored occasional issue-oriented advertising. His first article in the *American Journal of Sociology*, only obliquely showcased client work. The most blatant example of business development was the *Journalism Quarterly* article, of which portions might have been more logically placed in *Printer's Ink* or *Editor & Publisher*. However, both trade publications had run vindictive campaigns against Bernays and other "space-grabber" publicists over the years (Bernays, 1965, pp. 288, 289, 293, 294, 375, 401,459,780, 795). In at least two instances, Bernays widely circulated the texts of academic journal articles – in *POQ* and *JQ* -- to important thought leaders and potential clients. Thus reprints and press reports were essential tools used to extend exposure.

A second motivation involved application of one his fundamental promotional strategies: to gain recognition and to get *others* -- respected, independent third-party influentials -- to endorse ideas, thus providing much-needed legitimacy. Presentations and publications were events that created the "circumstances" that he thought were essential for shaping public opinion. In his memoirs, Bernays acknowledged the impetus he accrued from publicity (e.g. Bernays, 1965, p. 778). Cole (2007, p. 27) observed that as theorist, "he -- and is ideas – were represented in the court of public opinion by an even better propagandist and publicist—Edward L. Bernays."

A third motivation was Bernay's self-identification as an intellectual, based in part in his family heritage, his brief involvement in medical journalism, and his role in publishing his uncle's first American book. In *Crystallizing*, *Propaganda* and *The Forum*, he equated public relations and education. He would later argue in his textbook that the engineering of consent often supplements the educational process – and would retain its value even if the general level of public knowledge and understanding in society were raised (Bernays, 1952, p.160). As early as 1930, press profiles characterized Bernays in the role of the professor, such as Pringle's (1930) observation that Bernays had reduced the "jovial occupation of press agent to a science."[30] Biographer Tye notes:

> Bernays loved to be written about in such sweeping terms. He loved to be a thought of as an esteemed theorist in the mold of his revered uncle, a practitioner of the social sciences as well as of PR. And he loved spending time with scholars and editors of academic journals. All that, he hoped, would help extinguish the image of public relations men as crude or smarmy and would put him at the center of a new field that, as he said, was a tasteful blend of art and science (Tye, 1996, pp. 107-108).[31]

A fourth closely aligned explanation is that the academy represented the intellectual elite in society – and allowed Bernays to align himself with powerful people who constituted a part of his "invisible government" in society. Ewen (1966, p. 166) argues that Bernays loved regimenting the public mind and acting as the "invisible wire puller." Hardly a populist, it could be argued that Bernays saw propagandists and public relations counselors as instruments of power – if not for practitioners themselves, at least for the clients who hired them About his elitist approach, Olasky (1984, p. 8) observed

> Bernays was one of the first to realize fully that American 20th century liberalism would increasingly be based on social control posing as democracy, and would be desperate to learn all the opportunities for social control it could. Thus his 1928 article in *The American Journal of Sociology*. Thus his candor in *Propaganda*."

Ewen similarly pointed out how this same dark side emerged in "The Engineering of Consent." Ewen contends that Bernays didn't think of the expansion of the Bill of Rights as an opportunity to enhance public dialogue, but instead as an extension of a right of persuasion. "Rather, he stated it was a prerogative permitting those who understood – and had access to – the cognitive

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[30] Flynn (1932, p. 563) observed that while Bernays was not a psychoanalyst, "he is a psychoanalyst just the same, for he deals with the science of unconscious mental processes" and "is engaged in releasing (and directing) the suppressed desires of the crowd." According to Flynn, Bernays even looked the part of academic: "Bernays remains singularly free from swank and make-up. Small of stature, careless in his dress, not always newly shaved, he resembles rather a diminutive, absent-minded professor than the alert businessman" (p. 566). Similarly, Parrish (1934, p. 26) explained, "Mr. Bernays reminds one more of a professor than a business man."

[31] Bernays made appearances at other academic organizations and schools -- the University of Hawaii, the Missouri School of Journalism, Teachers College of Columbia University and Tobé-Cobrun School (Bernays, 1965, p. 784). He authored the entry on public relations in a special four-volume set of *Encyclopedia Britannica* (Bernays, 1947f), served as guest editor a special issue of *Saturday Review* (devoted to propaganda and censorship (Bernays, 1941c; 1965, p. 294). Academic pursuits filled much of Bernays' time in retirement, when Doris and he moved to Cambridge, Massachusetts (Henry, 1998, 2012b).

highways of the modern media system to guide the view of the population at large. … To Bernays' pragmatic way of thinking, the modern infrastructure of communication disclosed – in its labyrinthine details—the intermediaries through which power would be effectively exercised in contemporary society" (Ewen, 1996, pp. 373-380; quotes at pp. 375, 376).[32]

A fifth possible reason involves pure self-aggrandizement – Bernays had a tremendous ego.[33] Tye (1996) notes that Bernays loved being center stage, even though he admonished colleagues to operate in the background (p. 111) and provides the example of how a jealous Bernays attempted to short-circuit publication of J.A.R. Pimlott's (1951) study of American public relations simply because it might distract attention from his forthcoming book (p. 109). Raucher described Bernays as "an aggressively self-confident man, as sure about the social value of public relations work as he was about his own contributions to that field" (Raucher, 1968, p. 103). Cutlip (1994) chided Bernays for being a "braggart." Indeed, his daughter, Anna, shed light on this unflattering aspect of Bernay's personality when she observed that Doris Fleischman didn't get more acknowledgment for her role in the business because Bernays didn't want her to get the credit (cited in Henry, 1999, p. 104). "Bernays was an exceedingly strong, assertive, dynamic person who loved his work and loved being recognized for it," Henry notes. "He very consciously promoted not only his client but himself, while even as he was selling himself, he was selling the new field of public relations." As he put it, his goal was to make the name "Bernays" synonymous with advice on public relations (Bernays, cited in Henry, 1999, p. 104).[34]

A sixth and final explanation is simply that Bernays genuinely felt that public relations was an applied social science that was naturally aligned with the work of academicians – and thus deserved their serious attention. Although Bernays acknowledged that people often conceal their own motives from themselves (Bernays, 1928b, p. 52), evidence for this rationale is found in his autobiography, where Bernays wrote about his first academic article on "Manipulating Public Opinion" in the *American Journal of Sociology*:

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[32] Bernays might have taken this quest for power to extremes in two political promotions undertaken during World War II. For example, Bernays sponsored a series of ads in *The Nation* and *The New Republic* in 1944 themed "Plain Talk to Liberals." The ads provided opinions and advice on various pressing social problems of the day, all of which would be addressed with a public relations solution. The ads were later turned into a book, but Tye (1996, p. 105) described the endeavor was a shameless solicitation for business that failed to endear him to anyone. In a similar manner, Bernays launched an effort to drum up public support for the Dumbarton Oaks accords at the end of World War II – an effort reminiscent of his trip to the Paris peace conference. An anchor of the effort was a book similar to *Speak Up for Democracy*, entitled: *Take Your Place at the Peace Table* (Bernays, 1945). A cover blurb explained "America's No. 1 publicist tells how you can help win the peace." While the goal was admirable, Bernays was criticized roundly for his tactics. A review in the *American Political Science Review* noted, "The author presumably intends only welfare and happiness for humanity, but his methods are largely identical with those portrayed in Chapters VI and XI of *Mein Kampf*" (Potter, 1945; see also Tye, 1996, p. 106.)

[33] This ego was evident late in Bernays' life when he described the large bookcases in his Cambridge home as his "ego wall" (Henry, 2012b) and his telephone answering machine message invited callers to leave a message for "Dr. Bernays" (Ewen, 1996, p. 8).

[34] Support of education might have explained Bernays' financial involvement in the books by Childs (1934) and Goldman (1948). However, ego undoubtedly led to the subsidized publication of an authorless hard-copy book with abstracts of writings by and about him (*Public Relations…,* 1951). An updated version containing sections on both Bernays and Fleischman was produced a quarter century later by the same publisher and contained 774 pages (Larson, 1978).

I felt elated in 1927 [presumably year accepted for publication] when we penetrated academic walls, an area with which public relations, I felt, had potentially close ties. … The title [of the article] sounds unfortunate today, but it came out before Hitler and Mussolini gave the words bad overtones. Only the brashness of youth could explain the optimistic use of so baleful a word as "manipulating." Despite the title, or maybe because of it, public relations became a subject of interest in social-science circles" (Bernays, 1965, p. 294).

Bernays earnestly wanted to advance public relations and PR education. Although it could be argued that their companion volumes about careers for men (Bernays, 1927b) and women (Fleischman, 1928) were largely efforts to give credence to public relations by juxtaposing it to other, far better-known and established careers. Bernays and Fleischman also produced various books and articles on public relations careers through the years (Bernays, 1934, 1937, 1945e, 1947, 1961) and provided various forms of other support for public relations education beginning in the 1930s. [35] Education-related endeavors also consumed a large portion of his time during retirement (Bernays, 1986; Henry, 1998), including an article and a book review in *Public Relations Review* (Bernays, 1974, 1990). Tedlow (1979, p. 39) observed that while Ivy Lee was tongued-tied when asked to explain his field, Bernays "sailed forth in books, articles and speeches" to define public relations, outline its methods and suggest a code of ethics."

Implications for Contemporary Public Relations Scholarship
Bernays' effort to establish public relations as a topic worthy of consideration by the academy clearly is an important part of the field's intellectual history. To the degree Bernays made important inroads, public relations scholars today remain indebted to him. Bernays clearly helped situate public relations on the intellectual maps of the social sciences and communications.

If for no other reason, Bernays deserves plaudits for his prolific publishing record over a 20-year period – a record that would compare favorably with many scholars in the field today. His works included more than a dozen journal articles and conference proceedings, two major books, the first two career guides that highlighted public relations, a textbook, and an edited volume detailing strategy and tactics. He also published popular works that educated business people and others, and undertook various initiatives to advance public relations education.

Bernays can be credited with publishing the first scholarly article involving public relations in 1928. Perhaps, if in only an indirect way, he played some role in establishing *Public Opinion Quarterly*, one of the world's notable communications journals and the first scholarly publications to regularly address public relations topics.

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[35] Bernays and Fleischman (1937) compiled *Universities—Pathfinders in Public Opinion*, a special report that listed 31 universities with courses in public relations or aligned subjects. In the 1940s, Bernays provided fellowships at NYU, Western Reserve and Columbia, and donated $1,000 to create a book collection named after him at the New York Public Library. He was quoted in *Advertising Age* that he hoped "that from the studies of the men and women holding these fellowships will come 'a body of interpretive material' which will help orient public relations thinking of the men in charge of our destinies in the postwar period" Other activities included a freedom of the press competition for newspapers whose judges were nominated by acknowledgeable educators and a competition for encourage schools to teach democracy (This business of ours, 1944). The Edward L. Bernays Foundation was founded in 1946 to conduct research into phases of human relations and later distributed a variety of small grants (Henry, 1998, pp. 17-18).

Bernays especially advanced the field by recognizing and promoting the relevance of behavioral theory. Importantly, he engaged primarily in the *scholarship of integration* versus the *scholarship of discovery* (Boyer, 1990), although Bernays (and his staff) undoubtedly engaged in primary research on behalf of clients. No single work was extraordinary (even for the time) in terms of length nor depth – and most were modest by today's standards. Yet, these represented an important beginning for the field.

Moreover, Bernays envisioned how public relations and scholars might join to together to address some the nation's most pressing social problems – such as morale on the home front, inter-group tensions, and race relations.

Bernays clearly saw the linkages between the interests of academics and public relations practice. Regrettably this multidisciplinary perspective is sorely missed in today's all-too specialized, insular world of public relations scholarship. Researchers today would benefit from following Bernays' example of making connections to researchers in multiple disciplines and to address practical social problems. In a similar way, the public relations field would benefit from encouraging more cooperation and engagement by working practitioners. Bernays' exemplary role as a *practitioner* involved in the academy might be his most important legacy.

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Shared Values:
An Examination of the Codes of Ethics
of Mass Media-related Associations

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Abstract

Journalism, advertising, public relations and marketing all have a role in supporting a free and responsible press in the United States and, beyond that, each has a profound influence on society in general. Yet the four industries are often seen to be adversaries, or at least at cross-purposes. In this research, the goal is to examine if the values held by these four media-related industries, as represented by their codes of ethics, do vary. This research fills a gap because previous studies have been limited to outside the United States, to one profession (such as news) or to a singular topic (moonlighting).

Introduction

The mass media and its related partners and supporters in the United States have a profound effect on every aspect of daily life. Journalism, advertising, public relations and marketing especially play a significant role in sustaining a free and responsible news media. Weakness in one damages all. Yet the four industries are often seen to be adversaries, or at least at cross-purposes. In this research, the goal was to examine if the values held by these four media-related industries, as represented by their codes of ethics, are indeed different and competitive.

Background: Codes of Ethics

Nearly every professional group involved in working with or for the mass media currently maintains its own code of ethics.

During the early 1900s, the mass media of newspapers and magazines were greatly expanding. Parallel to this was the rapid growth of the practices of journalism, advertising and public relations, along with the emergence of their related professional associations. In terms of public relations, one common purpose of these early attempts to organize was to "promote high standards and ethical conduct, often defined in a member code of ethics" (Henderson, 2010, p. 363.) For example, because anyone could refer to herself or himself as a public relations expert, those who sought to elevate the practice to a professional status -- still a sought-after goal today -- joined together to form organizations such as the National Association of Accredited Publicity Directors, Inc. and the Institute for Public Relations, both of which quickly established ethical standards. Other organizations of the time followed suit, such as the American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE) and the American Association of Advertising Agencies, both of which created codes for their members in 1924, and the Society of Professional Journalists, whose code was written in 1926,

Over the years, many of the codes have been revised or modernized. Other recent organizations have added their codes, such as the Society for News Design (SND) code established in 2006. Frequently, new attempts to write codes do not start from scratch, but instead are based upon that of a similar organization.

Review of the Literature

The current research is original in that it examines codes of ethics from a spectrum of organizations representing media and media-related professions within the United States. Previous studies have been limited to one profession (such as news), to a single topic, or to organizations outside the United States,

Tiina Laitila (1995) reviewed 31 codes of ethics from 29 European countries. She found 13 main themes she grouped under two functions: to demonstrate accountability and to protect journalistic integrity. The 13 main themes, in turn, were comprised of 61 principles. The principles were quite varied, and none appeared in every code. The five most frequent principles revealed were: truthfulness, honesty, accuracy of information; correction of errors; prohibition of discrimination; respect for privacy; and prohibition against accepting bribes. These appeared in 87 to 90 percent of the codes.

Kai Hafez (2002) compared 33 journalism codes from European and Islamic countries using national codes written by independent professional bodies of journalism, rather than codes written by governments or for a specific publication. He examined differences and similarities in specific categories: Truth and Objectivity; Privacy and Publicness; Internationalism; Tradition,

Mores and Religion; and Freedom. This was accomplished by pulling key words and phrases from the codes. He found that truth, accuracy and objectivity, as well as privacy for the private citizen, were common threads, while there were differences in the areas of mores and religions. However, just because support for freedom of journalists was stated, Hafez found it did not necessarily reflect their actual working conditions (Hafez, 2002).

Himelboim and Limor (2011) sought to determine what the media itself considered to be their role in society. A total of 242 codes in 94 countries were selected from a range of organizations including news councils and newspaper chains. The results were analyzed based on two criteria: geopolitical status and type of organization creating the code. The researchers found that the most common obligations to society were distributing information and commitment to social interest. In reporting their research, Himelboim and Limor cited similar findings found by Bruun in 1979 and Jones in 1980. Bruun studied 59 codes of UNESCO (United National Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization) members; the three most common issues were truth, professional discretion, and the objectives of mass communication. Jones examined 50 codes and found integrity, truth and objectivity to be the common denominators.

Additional studies focused on a single aspect of codes, including news leaks, moonlighting, and violent images. Son (2002) analyzed 47 codes of ethics, the majority from individual newspapers, to study leaks. Although none of the codes mentioned leaks specifically, Son determined some guidelines were provided via mentions of anonymous and confidential sources plus journalistic independence. Limor and Himelboim (2006) studied 242 codes of ethics from press councils, media conglomerates, media organizations and professional organizations in 94 countries focusing on their treatment of moonlighting. They concluded that only about one-half of the codes mentioned moonlighting and that most did not provide clear guidelines   Keith, Schwalbe and Silcock (2006) examined 47 journalism ethics codes from professional organizations, media corporations and news outlets to determine what issues they addressed regarding photography, video or other types of images. They also looked for guidelines regarding images of violence or tragedy. In 35 codes, they found five major themes that actually addressed images. These included that both digitally altering news images and staging news images are deceptive practices; extra care should be taken when images of tragedy or violence are used; photographers should not deceive others about who they are, and images should be "accurate, complete, contextualized, and fair" (p. 252).

Methodology

The purpose of this research was to examines codes that represent the values of journalism, public relations, advertising, and marketing, four industries that are sometimes seen as at cross-purposes, but are each relevant to the operation of a democracy. The Codes of Ethics that were used in this study were determined using several criteria.

In the first phase, 41 codes were initially selected and reviewed. Only codes of ethics sponsored by professional associations were considered because codes were sought that applied to a larger collection of practitioners than just those who work for one publication or one chain. Professional associations represent a broader spectrum of practitioners who had already come to a consensus as to what issues were important to be included in a code and which stand should be taken on each. Therefore, codes of ethics from individual businesses such as Reuters, the E.W. Scripps Co., and the Gannett Company were rejected. The one exception is the Associated Press Managing Editors code because members of this group are employed by several newspapers with

various owners. In addition, only those associations whose membership is nationally based were used; regional associations were eliminated.

In the second phase, the 41 codes were reduced to 19. Reasons for excluding the other 22 are listed below:

1. The codes were directed primarily at the duties, rights, and/or privileges of board members.

2. The codes were derived from other codes. For example, the Southern Public Relations Federation code is identical to the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) code; the Florida Public Relations Association and the Texas Public Relations Association codes are both derived from the North American Public Relations Council code. A bloggers' code offered by CyberJournalist.Net is a modification of the SPJ code.

3. The codes were written for a specialty area with limited applications. For example, the Society of American Business Editors and Writers code states "Do not take advantage of inside information for personal gain", an issue of limited concern across all professions. The Religion Communicators Council code includes references to faith groups in six of its 22 statements. The Association of Health Care Journalists code (which acknowledges that the group "embraces" the SPJ code of ethics) has 14 statements specific to its field, such as describing sick people as victims or the usage of words such as cure, miracle, or breakthrough. The National Investor Relations Institute code refers to investor relations in five of its 12 statements

4. The codes were limited to one topic. For example, the American Society of Magazine Editors code is targeted specifically at editorial-advertising conflicts.

5. The codes were for organizations based primarily outside the United States, which included the International Public Relations Association and the Canadian Public Relations Society. It is interesting to note, nonetheless, that the CPRS code uses much of the language contained in the pre-2000 code of PRSA.

The remaining 19 codes that comprised the final sample were judged to be representative, although not a random sample. Codes from advertising, public relations, photography,[1] marketing and news organzations formed the core; in addition, newer groups, such as online news, interactive advertising, and word-of-mouth marketing, were also included for comparison.

Both the 1984 American Advertising Federation "Advertising Ethics and Principles" and the 2011 Institute for Advertising Ethics "Principles and Practices for Advertising Ethics" were included. The Institute for Advertising Ethics (IAE) is administered by the American Advertising Federation (AAF) in partnership with the Reynolds Journalism Institute and the Missouri School of Journalism. It was created in 2010, and released its Principles in April 2011.

The Uniform Code of Ethics of the North American Public Relations Council was included even though the Council no longer exists. The NAPRC consisted of the presidents of a number of United States public relations organizations plus CPRS. Its purpose was to find ways the organizations could work together for the betterment of the profession. According to Jay Rayburn, NAPRC 1995 chair, NAPRC disbanded in 1998 when its members joined other public relations leaders to form the Universal Accreditation Board. The NAPRC Uniform Code of Ethics was included here because it is still used as a model for other public relations organizations, such as the Religion Communicators Council.

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[1] Photography was added as a separate group rather than continuing to list it under journalism because of the multiple roles of photographers beyond news.

The codes used, plus information about them, are listed in the following table.[2]

Table 1. Organizations Used.

Name of Organization	Title	Structure	Adopted	Profession
National Press Photographers Association	Code of Ethics	16 Statements	Modernized In 2004	Photography
Radio Television Digital News Association	Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct	Six Headings: Public Trust, Truth, Fairness, Integrity, Independence, Accountability	2000	Radio/TV /Digital
Society of Professional Journalists	Code of Ethics	Four Areas: Seek Truth and Report It, Minimize Harm, Act Independently, Be Accountable	1926, last revision 1996	News
American Society of Newspaper Editors	Statement of Principles	Six Articles: Responsibility, Freedom of the Press, Independence, Truth and Accuracy, Impartiality, Fair Play	1922, revised in 1975	News
American Association of Advertising Agencies	Standards of Practice	Narrative	1924, revised 1990, 2011	Advertising Agencies
International Association of Business Communicators	Code of Ethics for Professional Communicators	12 Articles		Public Relations, Photography, other communicators
Associated Press Managing Editors	Statement of Ethical Principles	Four Headings: Responsibility, Accuracy, Integrity, Independence	Revision adopted 1994	News
American Society of Media Photographers	Member Code of Ethics	Three Headings: Responsibility to Colleagues and the Profession, Responsibility to Subjects, Responsibility to Clients		Photography
Institute for Advertising Ethics	Principles and Practices	Eight Principles plus commentary	Created 2011	Advertising

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[2] As can be seen from Table 1, various terms were used in addition to "code of ethics", such as Statement of Principles, Principles and Practices, etc. Throughout this paper, all these documents are referred to generically as codes.

American Advertising Federation	Advertising Ethics and Principles	Eight Headings: Truth, Substantiation, Comparisons, Bait Advertising, Guarantees and Warranties, Price Claims, Testimonials, Taste and Decency	Adopted 1984	Advertising
American Marketing Association	Ethical Norms and Values for Marketers	Three Headings: Ethical Norms, Ethical Values (Honesty, Responsibility, Fairness, Respect, Transparency, Citizenship), Implementation	Relaunch 2004	Marketing
Society for News Design	Code of Ethics	Five Headings: Accuracy, Honesty, Fairness, Inclusiveness, Courage	Adopted 2006	Design
North American Public Relations Council	Uniform Code of Ethics	14 Statements	Drafted 1987-88	Public Relations
Public Relations Society of America	Code of Ethics Provisions	6 Code Provisions: Free Flow of Information, Competition, Disclosure of Information, Safeguarding Confidences, Conflicts of Interest, Enhancing the Profession	Revised 2000	Public Relations
Online News Association	Our Values	Five Headings: Editorial Integrity, Editorial Independence, Journalistic Excellence, Freedom of Expression, Freedom of Access		Online
Council of Public Relations Firms	Code of Ethics	Topics: Clients, Public and Media, Employees, Partners and Vendors	Revised 2009	Public Relations Agencies
Word of Mouth Marketing Association	Code of Ethics and Standards of Conduct	8 Standards	Updated 2009	Word of mouth and social media
Interactive Advertising Bureau	Privacy Principles			Online advertising
Direct Marketing Association	Member Principles	10 Statements	Revised 2011	Marketing

This research presented many challenges. One was the fact that the various codes differed a great deal in terms of structure. Some were composed of a series of brief, self-contained individual statements, such as: ''Conduct his/her professional life in accord with the public

interest" (NAPRC).[3] Others included more complicated provisions or articles such as the following from ASNE:

"*ARTICLE IV* - Truth and Accuracy. Good faith with the reader is the foundation of good journalism. Every effort must be made to assure that the news content is accurate, free from bias and in context, and that all sides are presented fairly. Editorials, analytical articles and commentary should be held to the same standards of accuracy with respect to facts as news reports. Significant errors of fact, as well as errors of omission, should be corrected promptly and prominently."

A second challenge was that the codes ranged from a general guideline to extremely detailed. The code of the National Federation of Press Women, which includes members in advertising, public relations, journalism and other communication fields, is only 130 words.[4] The Direct Marketing Association's Guidelines for Ethical Business Practice run 46 pages, and include 61 articles falling under 11 areas such as "Sweepstakes" and "Telephone Marketing to Landline & Wireless Devices." For this study, the DMA's 10 Member Principles were used instead because they more closely resemble a code of ethics.

The DMA situation illustrates a third challenge: what should be used as the code of ethics. The Online News Association added a Conflict-of-Interest policy in 2004 for its directors, employees, and volunteers, as well as a code of ethics for these people. The ONA Values statement, found in its Mission, was used instead because it addressed members, not employees, etc. All the documents used are listed in Table 1.

A final challenge was that different words/phrases were used to express essentially the same thought. For example, the National Press Photographers Association (NPPA) urged members to "be comprehensive" and later to "recommend alternatives to shallow or rushed opportunities." The AAF code states "Advertising of guarantees and warranties shall be explicit, with sufficient information" and later "Advertising shall tell the truth and shall reveal significant facts, the omission of which would mislead the public." On the other hand, the same word or term could refer to a different concept depending on its context, so simply using a computer word search was ineffective for the purposes of this research. Therefore, to facilitate analysis and comparison, each code was broken down into individual aspects regarding ethical conduct. Two examples follow.

The PRSA code provision regarding Free Flow of Information states: "Protecting and advancing the free flow of accurate and truthful information is essential to serving the public interest and contributing to informed decision making in a democratic society." It was divided into these aspects:

- o   Free flow of information
- o   Accuracy
- o   Truth
- o   Serve the public interest
- o   Informed decision-making

The NPPA code statement "Be accurate and comprehensive in the representation of subjects" yielded:

- o   Be accurate

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[3] Segments from the codes of ethics are frequently quoted throughout this paper. The original codes were all obtained from websites, the addresses of which can be found in the List of References.

[4] The NFPW code was considered in the original group of 41; it was eliminated because the language was considered to be too general.

o   Comprehensive

Then, these various aspects were put into clusters, or categories, that represented a broader concept. For example, 22 aspects were all grouped together under the general category of Truth.

Results and Discussion

In dissecting these codes, similar individual phrases or ideas, here called aspects, were grouped together. Six umbrella clusters emerged representing areas or categories of commonality. Not every code included a reference to each of the six categories; however, organizations representing at least two of the professions addressed each.

1. Commitment to Truth
2. Commitment to Acting in the Public Interest and to Democracy
3. Commitment to Diversity
4. Confidential Information
5. Conflict of Interest
6. Gifts and Bribes

The 19 codes yielded a total of 499 aspects; however, some were duplicates within the same code.

Category: Commitment to Truth.

The predominant shared value across all codes and all professions was a Commitment to Truth. This is consistent with previous studies cited earlier, including Laitila (1995), and Hafez (2002). As can be seen in Table 2, every code and every profession contained a reference to one or more of the aspects that comprised Commitment to Truth.

In this study, the concept of Truth was broadly defined with a total of 22 aspects. What it means to be truthful may seem obvious. However, in the various codes, many different factors were presented that could influence whether or not a person or message can be judged to be truthful beyond the straightforward statement in the American Marketing Association (AMA) code: "Strive to be truthful in all situations and at all times."

Be honest/Do not lie, Seek/Tell the truth, Tell the whole truth/context, and Strive for accuracy. [5] All codes across all professions included some type of statement advocating that their members tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth such as "advertisers shall tell the truth" from the American Advertising Federation (AAF) code and "Seek truth and report it," (SPJ). The aspect "Tell the whole truth" includes references to putting information into context, including all information, and not omitting information. An example is "guard against oversimplification of issues or events" from the Radio-Television-Digital News Association (RTDNA) code.

When used by news groups, not omitting information generally referred to news story content; when used by advertising groups, it referred to advertising claims; and when used by marketing, the reference was to information regarding guarantees and warrantees.

Avoid errors and Correct errors. "Avoid errors" is another way to say "Strive for Accuracy." Some codes specifically emphasize that it is best not to make errors at all: "Advertising shall refrain from making false, misleading, or unsubstantiated statements or claims" (AAF) and "Professional electronic journalists should not report anything known to be

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[5] Although these four aspects certainly overlap, they all were cited here in an attempt to be as true to the language of the individual codes as possible.

false," (RTDNA). However, more than half instead address what should be done when an error is made, which is to correct the error. More detailed advice was correct errors quickly and place corrections as prominently as the errors.

Table 2. Commitment to Truth

Aspect	AAF	IAE	AAAA	SPJ	ASNE	RTD	APME	PRSA	NAPRC	IABC	CPRF	AMA	NPPA	ASMP	SND	ONA	WOM	IAB	DMA
Be honest/Do not lie			x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x		x
Seek/Tell the Truth	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x			x			x	
Tell the whole truth/Context	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x				x	x	x					x
Strive for accuracy	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x			x
Avoid errors	x				x			x				x			x				
Correct errors			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x					x				
Free flow of information		x						x	x	x			x						
Identify sources	x	x	x	x	x	x				x	x						x		
Identify sponsors								x	x		x								
Advocacy/News				x	x	x	x												
Advertising/News		x		x			x												
Paid/Independent editorial																x			
Staged events/alter events				x		x							x						
Plagiarism/Copyright				x		x	x		x	x	x	x			x	x			
Exaggerate claims/results			x					x	x					x					
Manipulate images				x		x							x	x					
Fairness /balance					x	x	x			x		x			x		x		
Independence					x	x	x												
Bias				x	x	x	x						x						
Timely										x									
How information will be used																		x	
Objectivity, impartial						x	x												

Free flow of information. The term "Free flow of information" was present in the codes of three of the public relations organizations; practitioners are urged to keep communication channels open with the news media, the public, and government entities. Truth cannot be determined if information is not available, and that is acknowledged in these codes. Disrupting the free flow of information is also discussed under the next category, "Public Trust."

Identify sources and Identify sponsors. Knowing the source of information or the sponsor of activities or campaigns can provide a perspective necessary if the consumer is to assess the information correctly. Identify Sources tended to appear in the news organizations codes, while Identify Sponsors occurred in those of public relations.

When news organizations refer to identifying sources, they are typically referring to a news source and commonly include a guideline as to when the use of confidential sources is appropriate (RTDNA, SPJ, ASNE). In public relations, identifying sources means that practitioners must "Identify the sources and purposes of all information disseminated to the public " from the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) code and "sources of communications and sponsors of activities will not be concealed" from the Council of Public Relations Firms (CPRF) code. The public relations groups PRSA and NAPRC also advocate identifying sponsors, especially in relation to the unethical practice of using front groups. In advertising, the reference is to the use of testimonials which must be the authentic opinion of the person (AAAA and AAF); testimonials should not be faked. The newer Word-of-Mouth Marketing Association (WOMMA) uses similar provisions to guarantee that touters make "meaningful disclosures of their relationships or identities with consumers in relation to the marketing initiatives that could influence a consumer's purchasing decisions."

Labeling news, advertising, and opinion/editorial. Making sure consumers are aware whether content is advertising, news, or opinion is advocated by only news organizations, which is logical because they are the gatekeepers. The RTDNA code states "Clearly label opinion and commentary"; SPJ states "Distinguish between advocacy and newsreporting" and "Distinguish news from advertising and shun hybrids that blur the line between the two"; ASNE "demands a clear distinction for the reader between news reports and opinions"; and APME states "Editorials and expressions of personal opinion by reporters and editors should be clearly labeled. Advertising should be differentiated from news."

Similarly, the Online News Association (ONA), established in 1999, addresses the special circumstances of its industry, that is, the ease in which information can be linked and combined seamlessly. The code states "the distinction between news and other information must always be clear so that individuals can readily distinguish independent editorial information from paid promotional information and other non-news."

Staged and Reenacted Events. Only the news/news photography groups of SPJ, RTD and NPPA address the ethics of covering a staged event and the ethics of reenacting a news event for the cameras. The NPPA code states "Resist being manipulated by staged photo opportunities" and "While photographing subjects, do not intentionally contribute to, alter, or seek to alter or influence events"; RTDNA states professional journalists will not "present images or sounds that are reenacted without informing the public"; SPJ states "Avoid misleading re-enactments or staged news events. If re-enactment is necessary to tell a story, label it."

Plagiarism. Avoiding plagiarism and giving credit for ideas is an aspect that appears frequently across many, but not all, codes and is advocated by news, marketing, advertising and public relations organizations. There is little variety in the wording of this aspect in the news codes; most are quite direct as in the RTDNA code which says "journalists should not

plagiarize." Others in public relations and marketing focus more on giving credit "for ideas and services provided by others," (CPRF). ASMP and SND both also specifically advocate that copyrights be honored.

Exaggerate claims or results. In advertising, this refers to exaggeration in the advertising message or claim, that is, "We will not knowingly create advertising that contains false or misleading statements or exaggerations, visual or verbal" (AAAA). In public relations, this aspect is relevant to a public relations person making promises not within his power to keep, such as guaranteeing a new product will be covered on the front page of the Wall Street Journal. The NAPRC code states a member shall "not guarantee the achievement or specific results beyond the member's direct control" while PRSA states "A member shall accurately define what public relations activities can accomplish."

Manipulate images. NPPA cautions against manipulating images if they "can mislead viewers or misrepresent subjects," and SPJ, RTNDA, and the American Society of Media Photographers (ASMP) include much the same wording, although SPJ also includes "Image enhancement for technical clarity is always permissible."

Fairness/Balance. This aspect is predominantly addressed by news organizations, which is logical as public relations professionals are expected to be advocates for their client. However, IABC does add, when referring to being "sensitive to cultural values and beliefs" that professional communicators "engage in fair and balanced communication activities that foster and encourage mutual understanding." Fairness is one of the AMA code's Ethical Values, citing the need "to balance justly the needs of the buyer with the interests of the seller." The actions listed under Fairness include avoiding false promotions, rejecting manipulative sales tactics and bait-and-switch, and protecting private information, among others.

Objectivity and Impartiality. Closely tied to fairness and balance, this aspect was included to be true to the wording of the codes. The RTDNA code states "present the news fairly and impartially" and under Integrity, the APME code includes "The newspaper should strive for impartial treatment of issues".

Independence. This is another aspect only mentioned in news organizations. It was included here because journalists must be independent in order to pursue and tell the truth. "Independence" figures prominently in three codes: in ASNE, where it is one of only six articles, RTNDA where it is one of six headings, and Associated Press Managing Editors (APME), where it is one of four major headings.

Bias. References to bias, found only in news and press photography organizations, are made both in terms of bias in general when presenting the news, and in particular personal biases. ASNE urges journalists to be "free from bias"; under the Accuracy heading, APME states "The newspaper should guard against inaccuracies, carelessness, bias or distortion through emphasis, omission, or technological manipulation"; RTNDA states "present analytical reporting based on professional perspective, not personal bias"; and NPPA states "Recognize and work to avoid presenting one's own biases in the work"; and the SPJ code says journalists must "Examine their own cultural values and avoid imposing those values on others".

Timely. The IABC code is the only one that specifically called attention to the need for "timely" communication.

Use of information. The Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB) code was the only one that specifically addressed how information will be used, and the right of the consumer to know that. This refers to consumer information collected and sold, for example, to another company for a mailing list.

Category: Commitment to Public Interest and to Democracy

The American Medical Association, the American Bar Association, and similar professional groups acknowledge their members' obligation to work in the public interest, and this also proved to be true with the organizations studied here. Like the first category, this concept was also broadly defined with 20 aspects included, discussed in detail below.

Table 3. Commitment to Public Interest and to Democracy

Aspect	AAF	IAE	AAAA	SPJ	ASNE	RTD	APME	PRSA	NAPR	IABC	CPRF	AMA	NPPA	ASMP	SND	ONA	WOM	IAB	DMA
Serve public interest/trust		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x			x	
Citizenship												x							x
Obey laws of land		x	x						x	x		x			x		x		x
Act with integrity						x	x	x	x							x			
Public business in open				x		x	x						x						
Support constitution				x	x	x	x		x	x						x			
Public's right to be informed				x															
Informed decision making						x		x									x	x	
Open communication								x										x	
Unpopular views													x						
Oppose censorship													x						
Freedom of Expression																x			
Taste and Decency	x		x	x	x	x	x	x							x				
Treatment of subjects/victims				x	x								x		x				
Minimize Harm				x									x		x				
Vulnerable subjects		x		x						x	x	x							
Children		x		x		x													
Criminal rights				x	x														
Listen to/Respond to complaints				x		x						x			x			x	x
Deny favored treatment				x	x	x							x		x				

Public Trust. Two news groups acknowledged their obligation to the Public Trust. The RTDNA code states "Public Trust. Professional electronic journalists should recognize that their first obligation is to the public" and "Professional electronic journalists should: Understand that any commitment other than service to the public undermines trust and credibility." The ASNE code states "Newspapermen and women who abuse the power of their professional role for selfish motives or unworthy purposes are faithless to that public trust."

The marketing groups use the term "citizenship" and address wide-ranging topics, such as fair trade, which are relevant to their profession. The explanation of Citizenship, one of the six Ethical Values of the AMA code, is "to fulfill the economic, legal, philanthropic and societal responsibilities that serve stakeholders. To this end, we will: Strive to protect the ecological environment in the execution of marketing campaigns; Give back to the community through volunteerism and charitable donations; Contribute to the overall betterment of marketing and its reputation; Urge supply chain members to ensure that trade is fair for all participants, including producers in developing countries." The Responsibility Value adds "Acknowledge the social obligations to stakeholders that come with increased marketing and economic power." The DMA code uses similar language with "a member is committed to customer satisfaction, good corporate citizenship, and responsible environmental, community and financial stewardship."

Law of the Land. Organizations cannot honor the public trust if they do not obey laws and regulations; codes related to advertising, marketing and public relations reaffirm this.

The AAAA code requires "supporting and obeying the laws and legal regulations pertaining to advertising". Three marketing groups state similar guidelines: the AMA notes marketers must adhere "to all applicable laws and regulations in the choices we make"; WOMMA states in Standard 4 -- Compliance with FTC Guides: A WOMMA member shall comply with the Guides Concerning Use of Endorsements and Testimonials in Advertising promulgated by the FTC;" and the Direct Marketing Association (DMA) code states a DMA member "follows the spirit and letter of the law as well as DMA's Guidelines."

The IABC is similar, stating "Professional communicators obey laws and public policies governing their professional activities and are sensitive to the spirit of all laws and regulations and, should any law or public policy be violated, for whatever reason, act promptly to correct the situation."

Public interest. Closely allied to the concept of maintaining Public Trust is acting in the Public Interest, a term that appears in two codes of news and public relations. The APME code states that, in regard to a newspaper, "Editorially, it should advocate needed reform and innovation in the public interest." The NAPRC code says a member shall "Conduct his/her professional life in accord with the public interest" and "Exemplify high standards of honesty and integrity while carrying out dual obligations to a client or employer and to the democratic process."

The code of a photographer's organization, ASMP, is narrower and protects client interest: "Conduct oneself in a professional manner and represent a client's best interests within the limits of one's professional responsibilities" and "Give due consideration to the client's interests before licensing subsequent uses."

Public's business conducted in the open. In acting in the public interest, several codes from news groups also address their duty to ensure the public's business is conducted in the open, often in reference to open meeting and open records laws. The language is similar in all five codes where this issue is covered: RTDNA code states "Fight to ensure that the public's business is conducted in public"; SPJ states "Recognize a special obligation to ensure that the

public's business is conducted in the open and that government records are open to inspection"; APME states "The newspaper should fight vigorously for public access to news of government through open meetings and records" and ASNE states "Journalists must be constantly alert to see that the public's business is conducted in public." The fifth code, that of a news photographers group (NPPA), says "Strive to ensure that the public's business is conducted in public. Defend the rights of access for all journalists."

First amendment. The duty to ensure the public's business is conducted in the open is one responsibility that comes with the special privileges granted to the news media under the First Amendment. The codes of news groups that refer specifically to first amendment rights include: "The newspaper should uphold the right of free speech and freedom of the press and should respect the individual's right to privacy" (APME); "Defend the rights of the free press for all journalists, recognizing that any professional or government licensing of all journalists is a violation of that freedom" (RTDNA); "Freedom of the press belongs to the people. It must be defended against encroachment or assault from any quarter, public or private" (ASNE). In addition, the IABC code notes "Professional communicators understand and support the principles of free speech, freedom of assembly, and access to an open marketplace of ideas." Other codes, including SPJ, NAPRC, and ONA, mention a duty to support the constitution.

Informed Public and Informed Decision-Making. The role of informing or educating the public was included under this category because only an informed public can make rationale decisions.[6] Its importance was indicated by both the frequency with which it appeared in the codes, and by the range of codes, although it should be noted the information needs may differ across the professions. For example, news groups were obviously referring to their special role in society. The RTDNA code states "Provide a full range of information to enable the public to make enlightened decisions"; the ASNE codes states "The primary purpose of gathering and distributing news and opinion is to serve the general welfare by informing the people and enabling them to make judgments on the issues of the time"; SPJ states "Support the open exchange of views, even views they find repugnant" and APME states The newspaper "should provide a forum for the exchange of comment and criticism, especially when such comment is opposed to its editorial positions." A media photographer group states simply "Oppose censorship" (ASMP).

The Online News Association (ONA) addresses its own unique situation, both in terms of consumers having access to the information its members provide (access to the internet) and its members having access to information sources. The code notes under <u>Freedom of Expression</u>: "The ubiquity and global reach of information published on the Internet offers new information and education resources to a worldwide audience, access to which must be unrestricted" and under <u>Freedom of Access.</u> "News organizations reporting on the Internet must be afforded access to information and events equal to that enjoyed by other news organizations in order to further freedom of information."

Public relations groups focus more on making sure that information is not blocked or kept from the public, which is logical as a common perception public relations has to face is that public relations people seek to hide or limit information. The IABC code states professional communicators foster "the free flow of essential information in accord with the public interest." The NAPRC code states a member shall "deal fairly with the public . . . giving due respect to the ideal of free inquiry and to the opinions of others" and a member shall "Not engage in any

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[6] The Table above indicates several separate aspects related to this role; again although some may seem repetitive, the language of various codes was retained.

practice that has the purpose of corrupting the integrity of the channels of communication or in the process of government." The PRSA code language is quite similar: "Open communication fosters informed decision making in a democratic society" and "Protecting and advancing the free flow of accurate and truthful information is essential to serving the public interest and contributing to informed decision making in a democratic society."

The interactive-advertising and direct marketing codes, however, focus more on information that consumers need, information regarding the consumers, and, conversely, unwanted communication sent to consumers. The IAB code, under the heading Companies should educate consumers about the benefits of interactive advertising, states "Businesses that collect or use information about individual consumers for interactive advertising purposes should continue to enhance and communicate that value proposition to consumers." The DMA codes states a DMA member "Provides information on its policies about the transfer of personally identifiable information for marketing purposes" and Honors requests "not to have personally identifiable information transferred for marketing purposes" and "not to receive future solicitations from its organization."

Several of the aspects that referred to how the media and related organizations should ideally function were also included in this category as they were judged to be necessary to operating in the public interest. These broadly included using good taste, responding to complaints, handling subjects, and denying favored treatment. They are discussed below.

Decency and Good Taste. This aspect was quite easy to identify as the terminology was consistent. The news codes included "Show good taste. Avoid pandering to lurid curiosity" (SPJ); Journalists should "observe the common standards of decency" (ASNE); and "The good newspaper is . . . decent" (APME).

Two advertising codes also address decency and good taste: members will not knowingly create advertising with "Statements, suggestions or picture offensive to public decency" and "We agree not to recommend to an advertiser, and to discourage the use of, advertising that is in poor or questionable taste" (AAAA); under Taste and Decency - "Advertising shall be free of statements, illustrations, or implications which are offensive to good taste or public decency" (AAF).

Treatment of subjects and victims. The news groups address how to treat subjects of the news in general, with specific guidelines regarding those who did not seek the limelight, those accused of criminal and other acts, and vulnerable populations. The SPJ code gives the most detailed guidelines in this area. Under the heading Minimize Harm, it states

"Ethical journalists treat sources, subjects and colleagues as human beings deserving of respect. Journalists should: Show compassion for those who may be affected adversely by news coverage. Use special sensitivity when dealing with children and inexperienced sources or subjects. Be sensitive when seeking or using interviews or photographs of those affected by tragedy or grief. Recognize that gathering and reporting information may cause harm or discomfort. Pursuit of the news is not a license for arrogance. Recognize that private people have a greater right to control information about themselves than do public officials and others who seek power, influence or attention. Only an overriding public need can justify intrusion into anyone's privacy."

It later continues "Be cautious about identifying juvenile suspects or victims of sex crimes. Be judicious about naming criminal suspects before the formal filing of charges.

Balance a criminal suspect's fair trial rights with the public's right to be informed."

The RTDNA code is quite similar. It includes "Professional electronic journalists should: Treat all subjects of news coverage with respect and dignity, showing particular compassion to victims of crime or tragedy. Exercise special care when children are involved in a story and give children greater privacy protection than adults" and "Refrain from contacting participants in violent situations while the situation is in progress." The ASNE code states: "Journalists should respect the rights of people involved in the news. . . Persons publicly accused should be given the earliest opportunity to respond."

The news designer group (SND) states: "We recognize that our work can have great impact on the subjects we cover and therefore we must respectfully balance that against the public's need to know. Even when it is impossible to avoid harm in the pursuit of truth telling, we will work hard to minimize that harm."

Two photographer groups also offer guidance on how to deal with subjects. The ASMP code states "Respect the privacy and property rights of one's subjects" and NPPA states "Treat all subjects with respect and dignity. Give special consideration to vulnerable subjects and compassion to victims of crime and tragedy. Intrude on private moments of grief only when the public has an overriding and justifiable need to see" and "Strive to be unobtrusive and humble in dealing with subjects."

Two marketing groups specifically mention vulnerable publics. The AMA code states marketers will "Recognize our special commitments to vulnerable market segments such as children, seniors, the economically impoverished, market illiterates and other who may be substantially disadvantaged." In Standard 8 -- Compliance with media-specific rules, the WOMMA code states "A WOMMA member shall comply with existing media-specific rules regarding marketing to children."

Respond to complaints. Groups representing marketers and advertisers, designers, and journalists all have codes urging members to respond to complaints.

The IAB code states "Consumers should have a readily accessible means to express concerns and complaints regarding adherence to these principles and businesses should respond appropriately" and DMA states a DMA member "Responds to inquiries and complaints in a constructive, timely way."

The news groups are RTDNA, whose code states "Respond to public concerns. Investigate complaints"; and SPJ with "Encourage the public to voice grievances against the news media." The Society of News Designers includes "We will listen to our critics."

Deny favored treatment. Two news groups refer specifically to favored treatment: SPJ with "Deny favored treatment to advertisers and special interests and resist their pressure to influence news coverage" and APME with the newspaper "should not give favored news treatment to advertisers or special-interest groups."

Journalism only. To protect the public, several codes also address two issues of significance primarily to journalists, both of which involve how the news media operate. One is the use of surreptitious newsgathering techniques, and the other is explaining how the news media make decisions.

The SPJ codes states "Avoid undercover or other surreptitious methods of gathering information except when traditional open methods will not yield information vital to the public. Use of such methods should be explained as part of the story." The RTDNA code states: "Use surreptitious newsgathering techniques, including hidden cameras or microphones, only if there is no other way to obtain stories of significant public importance and only if the technique is

explained to the audience."

      Acknowledging the importance of the public's understanding how the news media makes news decisions, the SPJ code states "Clarify and explain news coverage and invite dialogue with the public over journalistic conduct"; RTDNA states "Explain journalistic processes to the public, especially when practices spark questions or controversy" and SND states: "We embrace the value of transparency, disclosing the thinking behind key decisions -- from a credit line up to an editor's note on the front page."

Category: Commitment to Diversity

      The category of diversity is represented by aspects such as avoiding stereotyping, embracing diversity in news coverage and in hiring, and reflecting the diversity of the community. While the category was only discussed in half of the codes, it did appear in groups representing five professions, which is why it is included here.

Table 4. Commitment to Diversity.

Aspect	AAF	IAE	AAAA	SPJ	ASNE	RTD	APME	PRSA	NAPRC	IABC	CPRF	AMA	NPPA	ASMP	SND	ONA	WOM	IAB	DMA
Stereotyping				x		x						x	x		x				
Embrace diversity				x											x				
Diversity of viewpoints				x									x		x				
Unpopular views													x						
Diversity of community						x									x				
Cultural values										x		x							
Reflect community							x								x				
Vulnerable markets												x							
Inclusiveness															x				
Employee pool							x				x				x				
Voice to all				x															

      The category appears most often in the news organizations. The SPJ code covers four aspects: "Tell the story of the diversity and magnitude of the human experience boldly, even when it is *unpopular* to do so"; "Avoid *stereotyping* by race, gender, age, religion, ethnicity, geography, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance or social status;" and "Give voice to the voiceless, official and unofficial sources of information can be equally valid." The RTDNA code includes: "Recognize that service in the public interest creates an obligation to reflect diversity of the community"; "Seek to understand the diversity of their community and

inform the public without bias or stereotype"; and "Present a diversity of expression, opinions, and ideas in context." The APME code notes "The newspaper should . . . reasonably reflect, in staffing and coverage, its diverse constituencies."

The news designer and photographer groups caution against stereotyping while also advocating for diversity. The SND code says "We will avoid stereotypes in reporting, editing, presentation, and hiring. Diversity, broadly defined, will be a hallmark of our work" and "We accept the responsibility to understand our communities and to overcome bias with coverage that is representative of the constituent groups in the community. Over time, many groups, lifestyles, and backgrounds should see themselves and their values represented in the news." The NPPA code states "Avoid stereotyping individuals and groups" and "Seek a diversity of viewpoints and work to show unpopular or unnoticed points of view."

One marketing and two public relations groups also provide guidelines. The AMA code states "Value individual differences and avoid stereotyping customers or depicting demographic groups (e.g. gender, race, sexual orientation) in a negative or dehumanizing way" and "Make every effort to understand and respectfully treat buyers, suppliers, intermediaries and distributors from all cultures." The IABC code states "Professional communicators are sensitive to cultural values and beliefs" while the CPRF focuses on hiring: "Members will adopt policies that assure equal opportunity for all job candidates without regard to race, color, religion, natural origin, sex, sexual orientation, age, veteran status, disability or any other basis prohibited."

Category: Confidentiality

References to confidentiality vary according to the nature of the information being protected. The concern of news groups is respecting confidential news sources and is usually accompanied by guidelines regarding when to use them. The concern of public relations groups is respecting the confidentiality of information that may be received from clients, employees, or employers. Marketing and advertising codes focus on protecting information gathered about customers.

The news groups urge their members to keep their promise when assuring a source his name will be kept confidential: "Pledges of confidentiality to news sources must be honored at all costs and therefore should not be given lightly" (ASNE); "Journalists should keep all commitments to protect a confidential source" (RTDNA); and "When it is necessary to protect the confidentiality of a source, the reason should be explained" (APME). Both SPJ and APME also urge members to "keep promises".

All four of the public relations codes studied here cover the topic of confidentiality. One of the six provisions in the PRSA code is Safeguarding Confidences with the Core Principle of this provision being "Client trust requires appropriate protection of confidential and private information," and the Intent being "To protect the privacy rights of clients, organizations, and individuals by safeguarding confidential information." The Guidelines include "A member shall: Safeguard the confidences and privacy rights of present, former, and prospective clients and employees" and "Protect privileged, confidential, or insider information gained from a client or organization." Other public relations codes are similar: "Scrupulously safeguard the confidences and privacy right of present, former and prospective clients or employers" (NAPRC); "Professional communicators protect confidential information and, at the same time, comply with all legal requirements for the disclosure of information affecting the welfare of others" and "Professional communicators do not use confidential information gained as a result of professional activities for personal benefit" (IABC); and "Council firms and their employees will

respect client confidences and the privacy of client employees" (CPRS).

Table 5. Regarding Confidential Information, Keeping Confidences.

Aspect	AAF	IAE	AAAA	SPJ	ASNE	RTD	APME	PRSA	NAPRC	IABC	CPRF	AMA	NPPA	ASMP	SND	ONA	WOM	IAB	DMA
Safeguard confidences								x		x									
Safeguard confidences of clients								x			x			x					
Safeguard confidences of employees								x											
Protect privileged information								x											
Protect confidential information								x	x	x									
Using confidential info for gain										x									
Safeguard news sources																			
Keep promise to confidential source					x	x	x												
Protect confidential information (customer)												x						x	x
Safeguard privacy		x						x			x							x	

The code of a photographer's group resembles those of marketing and advertising more than news groups in that the emphasis is on confidential information gathered about a consumer, especially personal data. These references include: "Protect a client's confidential information" (ASMP); "Seek to protect the private information of customers, employees and partners" (AMA); and "A DMA Member maintains appropriate security policies and practices to safeguard information" (DMA).

The interactive advertising group goes into more detail, as it more frequently makes use of customer data: "In the online environment, consumers visiting a particular Web site should be provided meaningful notice of the types of individual information collected for interactive

advertising purposes, the technologies employed to collect such information and How such information is used, including that other companies operate on the site and may collect such information." About security, the code adds "Any company that maintains information for purposes of interactive advertising should provide reasonable security for that data. . . . Companies should require that business partners who collect or use such data on the company's behalf also adopt appropriate information security procedures" (IAB).

Category: Conflicts of Interest

The ideal is that all conflicts of interest should be avoided, and even the appearance of a conflict. If they cannot be avoided, then conflicts must be disclosed to all affected parties. In addition, professionals are encouraged to avoid placing themselves in compromising situations; discussions of conflicts of interest are often closely tied to concerns about compromising integrity or the appearance of impropriety. While this category is not referenced in the majority of the codes, it does occur in both public relations and news codes.

Table 6. Regarding Conflict of Interests.

Aspect	AAF	IAE	AAAA	SPJ	ASNE	RTD	APME	PRSA	NAPRC	IABC	CPRF	AMA	NPPA	ASMP	SND	ONA	WOM	IAB	DMA
Avoid actual conflicts/obligations				x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x							
Disclose conflicts				x			x	x	x										
Avoid compromising situations													x						
Conflicts, real or perceived				x	x	x	x	x											
Consent - Written or expressed									x	x	x								
Financial conflict of interest							x												
Disclose relationships																	x		
Compromise integrity				x	x	x													

All of the news organization codes are rigid in terms of conflicts of interest except for the SPJ code which, like the public relations codes, does not prohibit all conflicts as long as there is full disclosure. The news codes tend to cover the topic in great detail.

For example, Article III - Independence of the ASNE code contains: "Journalists must avoid impropriety and the appearance of impropriety as well as any conflict of interest or the appearance of conflict. They should neither accept anything nor pursue any activity that might compromise or seem to compromise their integrity." The RTDNA code is similar: "Professional

electronic journalists should present the news with integrity and decency, avoiding real or perceived conflicts of interest"; professional electronic journalists should not "engage in activities that may compromise their integrity or independence."

References to conflict of interest occur in both the Integrity and Independence sections of the APME code, and this code also addresses very specific circumstances such as personal involvement and finances. Under Integrity, the code states "The Newspaper should report the news . . .mindful of the need to disclose potential conflicts". Several items are included under Independence, including: "The newspaper and its staff should be free of obligations to news sources and newsmakers. Even the appearance of obligation or conflict of interest should be avoided"; "Journalists are encouraged to be involved in their communities, to the extent that such activities do not create conflicts of interest. Involvement in politics, demonstrations and social causes that would cause a conflict of interest, or the appearance of such a conflict, should be avoided"; and "Financial investments of staff members or other outside business interests that could create the impression of a conflict of interest should be avoided."

Like APME, the NPPA code also addresses community involvement, etc.: "Avoid political, civic and business involvements or other employment that compromise or give the appearance of compromising one's own journalistic independence."

SPJ and the public relations codes require full disclosure in instances when conflicts of interest exist. The SPJ code states that journalists should do the following: "Avoid conflicts of interest, real or perceived; Remain free of associations and activities that may compromise integrity or damage credibility; Disclose unavoidable conflicts."

One of the six provisions in the PRSA code is devoted to Conflicts of Interest. The Core Principle is "Avoiding real, potential or perceived conflicts of interest builds the trust of clients, employers, and the publics" and the Intent is "To earn trust and mutual respect with clients or employers. To build trust with the public by avoiding or ending situations that put one's personal or professional interests in conflict with society's interests." The Guidelines include the following:
"A member shall: Act in the best interests of the client or employer, even subordinating the member's personal interests; Avoid actions and circumstances that may appear to compromise good business judgment or create a conflict between personal and professional interests; Disclose promptly any existing or potential conflict of interest to affected clients or organizations; Encourage clients and customers to determine if a conflict exists after notifying all affected parties."[7]

Three other public relations organizations echo the call for full disclosure. The NAPRC code cautions members should: "Not represent conflicting or competing interests without the express consent of those concerned, given after full disclosure of the facts" and later "Not place himself/herself in a position where the member's personal interest is or may be in conflict with an obligation to an employer or client or others without full disclosure of such interests to all involved." The IABC code states professional communicators "do not represent conflicting or competing interests without written consent of those involved"; CPRF states "Members will avoid representing any conflicting client interests without the expressed approval of those concerned." Note IABC is the only code to require written consent.

The AMA and WOMMA codes are written in a different context, focused on sales transactions. "Avoid knowing participation in conflicts of interest" comes under the Fairness

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[7] It should be noted that, under this Provision, an example of Improper Conduct includes reference to financial interests, but is not addressed specifically within the code.

section of the AMA code, which advises "balance justly the needs of the buyer with interests of the seller." Standard 1 of the WOMMA code states "A WOMMA member shall require their representatives to make meaningful disclosure of their relationships or identities with consumers in relation to the marketing initiatives that could influence a consumer's purchasing decisions."

Category: Giving and Receiving Gifts
　　　　Many of the codes address either taking or giving gifts, which is used broadly here to include kickbacks, money or other compensation in addition to receiving favors or favored treatment. This category also includes paying news sources for news and bidding for news.
　　　　Table #7 represents the codes that address gifts.

Table 7. Policies Regarding Gifts and Bribes.

Aspect	AAF	IAE	AAAA	SPJ	ASNE	RTD	APME	PRSA	NAPRC	IABC	CPRF	AMA	NPPA	ASMP	SND	ONA	WOM	IAB	DMA
Giving gifts				x				x						x			x		
Receiving gifts				x		x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x			x		
Paying news sources						x							x						
Bidding for news				x															

　　　　The news organizations in general forbid giving or receiving any gifts. Under the Integrity heading, the RTDNA code instructs "Professional electronic journalists should not: Pay news sources who have a vested interest in the story" or "accept gifts, favors, or compensation from those who might seek to influence coverage." Under the Independence heading, it states "Professional journalists should: Resist those who would seek to buy or politically influence news content."
　　　　SPJ says "Refuse gifts, favors, fees, free travel and special treatment," and "Be wary of sources offering information for favors or money, and bidding for news." SPJ is the only code to specifically mention bidding for news. Under Independence, APME states "Newspapers should accept nothing of value from news sources or others outside the profession. Gifts and free or reduced-rate travel, entertainment products and lodging should not be accepted. Expenses in connection with news reporting should be paid by the newspaper. Special favors and special treatment for members of the press should be avoided."
　　　　Both photographer groups resemble the news groups' stand. ASMP states "Never offer or accept bribes, kickbacks, or other improper inducements."   NPPA states "Do not pay sources or subjects or reward them materially for information or participation" and "Do not accept gifts, favors, or compensation from those who might see to influence coverage."
　　　　The public relations codes allow gifts with various precautions and caveats. The PRSA code allows the giving and receiving of gifts as long as they are "nominal, legal, and infrequent" when working with the media, government officials, and the public. The NAPRC and IABC codes require disclosure. NAPRC states a member shall "Not accept fees, commissions, gifts, or

any other consideration from anyone except clients or employers for whom services are performed without their express consent, given after a full disclosure of the facts." IABC states "Professional communicators do not accept undisclosed gifts or payments for professional services from anyone other than a client or employer." The CPRF code addresses a specific situation; member firms will not "solicit or accept kickbacks or under-the-table payments in connection with business development efforts."

In the case of the Word-of-Mouth Marketing Association, its code says people making favorable comments about a product, service, or organization should be identified as having received any promotional consideration. It states in *Standard 2* – Disclosure of consideration or compensation received: "A WOMMA member shall require their representatives to disclose meaningfully and prominently all forms of consideration or compensation they received from the member, marketer or sponsor of the product or service. In other words, WOMMA members shall not engage in marketing practices where the marketer/sponsor or its representative provides goods, services, or compensation to the consumer (or communicator) as consideration for recommendations, reviews, or endorsements, unless full, meaningful, and prominent disclosure is provided."

Conclusions and Commentary

All of the 499 aspects that the 19 codes were dissected into did not fit into the six categories discussed here. Many aspects were very specific and stood alone, such as "Stories should not be written or edited primarily for the purpose of winning awards and prizes" from APME; and "Accurately represent to client the existence of model and property releases for photographs" from ASMP. Other aspects reoccurred in very small numbers. Although a few codes addressed the rights of the accused, the RTDNA and SPJ codes were the only ones to refer to the right to a fair trial.

A large number of aspects that dealt with upholding the code were not considered here either. There were many statements such as found in the NPPA code: "Strive by example and influence to maintain the spirit and high standards expressed in this code" or the PRSA code: "Report practices not in compliance with the Code."

Overall, no outright conflict could be found among these codes, that is, a situation where statements from two codes were in direct opposition. Indeed, much agreement was found, as indicated by the six categories discussed above. It is heartening to note that news, advertising, marketing and public relations all call for a commitment to truth, and all recognize their obligations to the public interest and public trust.

Differences can be found only if defined by what aspects were ignored, were not addressed in a code. For example, news groups (including news photography) caution about covering staged events or re-staging news events, while none of the public relations codes do so. Should they? Public relations frequently involves staging events, if that term is meant to encompass events such as political rallies, university commencements, or gallery openings. The news group codes ask their members to avoid being manipulated or misled by staged events, so the question appears to be one that is pertinent to all news coverage: Is this newsworthy? Journalists should not be covering staged events that are not newsworthy, and public relations practitioners should not expect them to do so.

The category Conflicts of Interest demonstrated two different approaches. News groups in general preferred that all conflicts of interest be avoided, while public relations groups took the position that conflicts will occur, and the way they should be handled is through full

disclosure. Again, the difference seems rationale. A reporter would not be assigned to cover his brother's criminal trial. However, in the public relations world, it would not be unusual for a practitioner at an agency, for example, to have a relationship (friend, neighbor, relative) with at least one competitor of the agency's clients. As long as all parties are informed and are agreeable, the conflict is judged to be acceptable.

In the matter of gifts, the news groups again appear to be much more stringent, disallowing all gifts. The public relations guides allow gifts that are nominal, legal and infrequent. Thus, may a public relations practitioner pay for a journalist's cup of coffee, or steak dinner, or weekend in Aruba? According to the news groups, the answer to all is no, while the public relations groups would allow the coffee.

As complicated as the relationships discussed here are, new media and new tools are likely to make them more so. A study of online newspaper editors in 2001 found that the immediacy of publication could cause ethical dilemmas, as could small staff. About one-fourth reported that their news editorial online staff members also wrote and designed ads for online, calling into question possible breaks in the traditional wall separating news and advertising. Nearly one-third of the respondents said that online newspaper journalists are "not as likely to follow traditional journalism ethics/standards as are their traditional print colleagues" (Arant and Anderson, p. 64). The researchers concluded "Leaders in the news industry must discuss and come to some consensus on an array of general issues, including staffing and ethical decision-making" (p. 68). Today the Online News Association provides guidelines for its members.

Recently, the ethical standards that bloggers should follow have been frequently and vigorously discussed. Among the issues: Are all bloggers journalists, and therefore obligated to abide by journalistic standards? Should bloggers disclose gifts received from those mentioned in their blogs? May bloggers be hired to cover events, such as trade shows, by one of the participants?

Two thoughts spring to mind from this research. One is what a wonderful world it would be if all professionals followed all these codes. Another is, is this all much ado about nothing? Even if the codes are ignored, none of the sponsoring organizations can inflict punishment beyond taking away membership. None, for example, is able to disbar or defrock a member, as can be done to an attorney or priest. None can take away a license to practice.

But codes are important for a variety of reasons. Codes serve as a "crucial accountability tool" (Whitehouse, 2010, p. 313) and they can provide guidance even if there is no punishment for failing to follow them. "A journalist can claim to be making a decision based on gut instinct, but that gut instinct may be greatly informed by ethical codes" (p. 314). Elliott-Boyle maintains that the process itself of writing (or, presumably, revising) codes is "intellectually healthy because it constitutes critical analysis of the profession by its practitioners" (Elliott-Boyle,1985, p. 22) Codes can "help journalists abstract and articulate these 'understood' conventions of the business. Those who engage in abstracting or analyzing the conventions become more sophisticated practitioners as they do the analytic, critical work of developing and justifying criteria for judging some behaviors acceptable and others not" (p. 25). In other words, just contemplating what constitutes ethical behavior is helpful. And with the rapidly-changing face of all media, this seems to be an especially important time for its partners to share ethical values in working together for the public good.

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Codes cited in this research can be found on the following websites:

American Advertising Federation
http://www.aaf.org/default.asp?id=1236

American Association of Advertising Agencies
http://www.aaaa.org/about/association/pages/standardsofpractice.aspx

American Marketing Association
http://www.marketingpower.com/AboutAMA/Pages/Statement%20of%20Ethics.aspx

American Society of Newspaper Editors
http://asne.org/kiosk/archive/principl.htm

American Society of Media Photographers
http://asmp.org/articles/member-code-ethics.html

Associated Press Managing Editors
http://www.apme.com/?page=EthicsStatement

Council of Public Relations Firms
http://prfirms.org/join/the-council-of-pr-firms-code-of-ethics

Direct Marketing Association
http://www.the-dma.org/cgi/disppressrelease?article=656

Institute for Advertising Ethics

http://www.aaf.org/default.asp?id=1236
Interactive Advertising Bureau
http://www.iab.net/iab_products_and_industry_services/508676/1464
International Association of Business Communicators
http://www.iabc.com/about/code.htm
National Press Photographers Association
http://www.nppa.org/professional_development/business_practices/ethics.html
North American Public Relations Council
http://nspra.org/code-ethics (the National School Public Relations Association website)
Online News Association
http://journalists.org/about/mission/
Public Relations Society of America
http://www.prsa.org/AboutPRSA/Ethics
Radio-Television-Digital News Association
http://www.rtnda.org/pages/media_items/code-of-ethics-and-professional-conduct48.php
Society for News Design
http://www.snd.org/about/code-of-ethics/
Society of Professional Journalists
http://www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp
Word of Mouth Marketing Association
http://womma.org/ethics/code/

The following is the key for all Tables 2-7.

AAF	American Advertising Federation
IAE	Institute of Advertising Ethics
AAAA	American Association of Advertising Agencies
SPJ	Society of Professional Journalists
ASNE	American Society of Newspaper Editors
RTD	Radio Television Digital News Association
APME	Associated Press Managing Editors
PRSA	Public Relations Society of America
NAPRC	North American Public Relations Council
IABC	International Association of Business Communicators
CPRC	Council of Public Relations Firms
AMA	American Marketing Association
NPPA	National Press Photographers Association
ASMP	American Society of Media Photographers
SND	Society for News Design
ONA	Online News Association
WOMMA	Word-of-Mouth Marketing Association
IAB	Interactive Advertising Bureau
DMA	Direct Marketing Association

Who Should Tell What Story?:
An Interplay of Spokesperson Type and Storytelling Style
of the Organizational Human Voice in the Social Media Context

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Abstract

The current paper examined the effect of narrative PR statements provided in the social media on relational outcomes. A 2 (story type: narrative vs. non-narrative) X 2 (type of spokesperson: CEO vs. spokesperson) X 2 (multiple messages) mixed subject experiment was conducted with 259 college students. As a result, our data showed a significant effect of narrative tone in organizational statements. Perceived level of conversational voice and relational outcomes were higher when Facebook statements are written in narrative tone compared to non-narrative tone. Also, message credibility positively predicts perceived conversational human voice and positive relational outcomes toward an organization. Findings of this paper provide implications for public relations practitioners and scholars in seeking to develop and sustain favorable organization-public relationships in social media platforms.

Introduction

Nowadays, it seems impossible to execute effective public relations without online media (Newsome, Turk, & Kruckeberg, 2000). This is particularly true during a crisis. The literature on crisis communication is rich with studies about how social media provide an efficient way to reach the public. Taylor and Kent (2007) emphasized the importance of incorporating the internet and using corporate websites in crisis communication. For instance, companies like Taco Bell and Microsoft used social media, such as Twitter and Facebook, during times of crisis (Kelleher & Miller, 2006; Kim, Hong, & Cameron, 2011). Crisis communication literature with social media related studies provides empirical suggestions for organizations to help minimize the impact of a crisis. As a way to influence public perception of the crisis, and to answer questions from publics and customers, companies like Taco Bell or Microsoft use social media in crisis situations (Kelleher & Miller, 2006; Kim, Hong, & Cameron, 2011). Taylor and Kent (2007) initially explored how the Internet and corporate websites are used in times of crisis and emphasized the importance of incorporating websites in crisis communication efforts.

Social networking sites are trusted media platforms where people like to talk about brands and products (Jasen, 2009). Thus, Schultz and colleagues (2011) suggested that social media are more effective than traditional media in crisis communication. In their study, respondents who read Twitter messages showed less intention to boycott the organization than respondents who read newspaper (Schultz et al, 2011). Despite these trends in research, many organizations have practical difficulty in communicating interactively with online publics. This is due to the fact that less is known about how an organization processes and delivers responsive messages, as most crisis communication research focuses on crisis response strategies (Waters, Burnett, Lamm, & Lucas, 2009). Schultz, Utz, and Goritz (2011) also argued that relatively scant attention has been paid to the effect of social media from a reciprocal perspective.

Organizations should use social media in order to communicate with publics, to generate mutual benefits for organizations and publics, and to build a meaningful relationship with publics. In particular, organizations in crisis should continue to employ open communication practices during crisis situations and consider online channels as tools for disseminating official messages (Sweetser & Metzgar, 2007). Kent and Taylor (1998) also stated how the use of technology influences organization-public relationships as the Internet helps public relations practitioners build human relationships.

PR practitioners must not only understand key publics' attitudes, but also needs to be aware of the role of relational expectations in relationship-building in order to achieve the goal of mutual benefits through desirable relationships with publics (Bruning, 2002). Understanding the type of relationship that exists between the organization and key public members helps PR practitioners tailor relational messages (Bruning, 2002). With online environments providing limitless opportunities for reciprocal communication, building relationships with publics are integral to organizations (Yang & Lim, 2009). Strategic online communication helps cultivate relationships with key publics (Kent & Taylor, 1998). When it comes to communication characteristics, Kerkhof and colleagues (2011) emphasized that it is important for PR practitioners to humanize stories rather than sell the contents. By humanizing the story of the organization, practitioners can build organization-public relationships effectively.

The current investigation responds to the need for an application of social networking PR management. An interview with corporate executives showed that organizations use social media to engage in important conversations and to enhance understanding of publics as well as customers (DiStaso, McCorkindale, & Wright, 2011). From a relational perspective, Kelleher

and Miller (2006) proposed that the use of *conversational voice* is an appropriate relational maintenance strategy in online platforms. A study found that respondents communicating in organizational blogs generate increasing perceived human voice that leads to increased trust, satisfaction, commitment, and control mutuality (Kelleher, 2009).

Although there has been an increase in the number of studies testing the influence of conversational human voice on positive relational outcomes, what might affect the impact of conversational human voice remains unknown. Thus, it is important to empirically explore how public relations practitioners can use organizational human voice (Kelleher, 2009; Kelleher & Miller, 2006; Yang & Lim, 2009). To supplement this gap, the current paper conducted an experiment to test the impact of various types of organizational human voice on building better relationships. Moreover, in tailoring public relations message, the organization should estimate the public's expectations toward the humanistic voice in order to preserve relational outcomes.

Schultz and colleagues (2011) proposed that the effects of medium are stronger than that of the message as social media users frequently share crisis information. For example, Facebook has received extensive attention in crisis communication literature (Kim et al., 2011; Waters et al., 2009; Wright & Hinson, 2009). Due to its dialogic facets, the impact of conversational human voice can be maximized in an interactive medium (Lee & Park, 2011). For this reason, the current study used the format of Facebook pages to manipulate communication messages provided by organizations in social media. The purpose of this study is to seek empirical evidence of the effects of organizational human voice on publics' perceptions. This article provides a strategic framework to guide organizational relationship building through social networks. It is also meaningful to empirically test the impact of an organization's interaction through social networks on perceived relational outcomes of publics involved in corporate crisis situations. To do this, this article explicates the concept of organizational human voice, describes relationship-building strategies, and tests the impacts of organizational human voice incorporated in social networking sites.

Literature Review

The definition of crisis varies in scholarship and in PR practice. Pauchant and Mitroff (1992) described a crisis broadly: "a disruption that physically affects a system as a whole and threatens its basic assumptions, its subjective sense of self, its extensive core" (p. 15). This definition entails not only organizational crisis but also non-organizational crisis, such as natural disasters. However, the current study focuses on crisis at the organizational level, which is an event or interaction within a relationship between an organization and its stakeholders that can damage or be a threat to a quality relationship (Coombs & Holladay, 2002). Coombs (1999) argued that what defines an event as a crisis is the perception of a stakeholder, who is a person or a group affected by an organization. If stakeholders think there is a crisis, an organization should react toward it. In this regard, a crisis is a situation that causes negative or undesirable outcomes for an organization's stakeholders (Coombs, 2010). The Situational Crisis Situation Theory affirms that increased perceived severity of a crisis leads to diminution of organizational reputation (Coombs, 2007). Thus, it is critical to investigate how to manage publics' perception of crisis situations in order to protect organizational reputations.

One of the most proficient ways to guard organizational reputation from a crisis is to build a relationship between an organization and publics (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998; Bruning & Ledingham, 1999; Jahansoozi, 2006). Publics gather information about the crisis and they evaluate the organizational reputation based on the judgment of the organization's crisis

responsibility attribution (Coombs & Holladay, 1996). Publics' perceptions of organizations are key indicators of the overall organization-public relationship (Kim, 2001). Thus, an organization facing a crisis needs effective communication that inspires renewed or continued public faith and support (Allen & Caillouet, 1994). For example, it is suggested that an organization needs to build a relationship with publics based on organization-generated information during crisis in order to manage organizational reputation (Kim & Hong, 2011). In this regard, with effectively managed organization-publics relationships, publics will receive an impression that an organization is actively engaged in discussion about the incident and provides timely and accurate information; this leads to positive perception toward an organization (Sweetser & Metzgar, 2007). Brunig (2002) also explains that relationships affect attitudes, evaluations, and behaviors of publics.

Relationship-building has received extensive attention since Grunig (1992) argued that the two-way symmetrical model is most desirable. In the same vein, Broom and colleagues (2000) argued that "organization-public relationships are represented by the patterns of interaction, transaction, exchange, and linkage between organization and its publics" (p. 18). Hung (2005) believed this relationship continues when organizations and their strategic publics are interdependent and when organizations acquire resources that lead to constant influence on their interaction with publics.

Grunig (2001) initially identified four important roles that public relations should play during the time of crisis: relationship, accountability, disclosure, and symmetrical communication. Bruning and Ledingham (1999) categorize organizations and publics have three types of relationships; professional, personal, and community. Quoting Cutlip and colleagues (1985), Bruning and Ledingham (1999) defined public relations as "the management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and publics on whom its success or failure depends" (p. 158). They further conceptualized the relationship between organizations and publics as the "state which exists between an organization and its key publics in which the actions of either entity impacts the economic, social, political, and cultural well being of the other entity" (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998, p. 62).

Many scholars attempted to measure the organization-public relationship. For example, Ledingham and Bruning (1998) initially developed five dimensions to examine consumer perceptions of the organization public relationships: trust, openness, involvement, investment, and commitment. Since public relations research started to focus on interactive communication and relationship building studies, an increasing number of scholars became interested in exploring variables that manage beneficial organization-public relationships (Bruning, 2000). With this movement, relational maintenance strategies have been suggested, developed and applied to empirical research.

Relational Maintenance

Relationship management strategies have been subsequently used not only in interpersonal communication studies but also in organizational relationship studies (Canary & Strafford, 1992; Hon & Grunig, 1999; Ki & Hon, 2007; Sweetser, 2010). Hon and Grunig (1999) identified key concepts of relationship management strategies. *Access* refers to "what members of publics or opinion leaders provide publics." *Positivity* is "anything the organization or public does to make the relationship more enjoyable for the parties involved." *Openness* refers to "thoughts and feelings among parties involved toward when an organization provides disclosure." *Assurance* refers to "an attempt by parties in the relationship to assure the other

parties that they and their concerns are legitimate." *Networking* illustrates "an organization is building networks or coalitions with their publics do, such as environmentalists, unions, or community groups." *Sharing of task* is "what organizations and publics are sharing in solving joint or separate problems" (Hon & Grunig, 1999, p. 15). These concepts have been developed from the research of interpersonal relationships (Strafford & Canary, 1991), but now they are frequently used to evaluate online organizational relationships. By applying those strategies, practitioners are able to understand how to communicate with publics to maintain relationships.

Pointing out that the communication between an organization and its publics is an influential factor in relationship building, Kent and Taylor (2002) emphasized the role of dialogue in the public relations sphere. Relationship building can be developed if there are repeated interactions through a dialog over time (Taylor, Kent, & White, 2001). Then, dialogue helps an organization to establish trust, satisfaction, sympathy, and commitment to conversation (Kent & Taylor, 1998; 2002). Botan (1997) stated that dialogue manifests itself more as a stance, orientation, or bearing in communication, rather than as a specific method, technique, or format.

Quoting Anderson, Cissna, and Arnett (1994), Kent and Taylor (2002) defined dialogue as "a dimension of communication quality that keeps communicators more focused on mutuality and relationship than on self interest" (p. 30). Hence, it is important to understand that an organization can fulfill the relationship through dialogue with publics.

Relationships, Dialogues, and Social Media Platform

The impact of dialogue is notable in the online environment in which public relations practitioners can talk directly to key publics (Kent & Taylor, 1998). Kent and Taylor (1998) explained that the information available online should "allow public to engage an organization in dialogue as an informed partner" (p. 328). Through the Internet, an organization directly communicates with its publics by offering real time discussions, feedback loops, and posting of organizational members' information. Hence, it is logical to assume that if an organization properly releases a statement of interests, values, and concerns regarding building relationships with publics online, positive outcomes could occur.

Among various online platforms, social media particularly allow organizations to interact with their publics in a more interpersonal way and provide valuable opportunities to better engage their publics in dialogue and develop relationships with them (Park & Lee, 2011; Sweetser, 2010). Voit (2008) identified five characteristics of social media: participation, openness, conversation, communities, and connectedness. These characteristics increase the need to develop new public relations strategies, which are no longer the same as those used for traditional media (Coombs, 2010). Therefore, it is important for public relations experts to reach key publics strategically (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998) for corporate social networks to fulfill their duties.

Since social media is a potential place for groups of stakeholders to share their interests and opinions, it is worth mentioning that the information from social media significantly influences perception of negative incidents (Stephen & Malone, 2009). For example, Sweetser and Metzgar (2007) found that relationship-building between an organization and publics through blogs had an impact on perceived severity of a crisis. Participants who viewed personal and organizational blogs were more likely to perceive the crisis to be less serious, while participants who did not view blogs reported the highest levels of crisis severity. That is, during the crisis, the information of blogs provided by an organization leads to publics' satisfaction and reduced crisis severity. They also found that participants who read an organizational blog

reported that the company did a better job at establishing and maintaining relationships than those who read a personal blog. As such, reading organizational blogs could change the perceived level of crisis and decrease the feeling that the company is in a crisis.

Relational Outcomes

As Ki and Hon (2007) emphasized, building and sustaining positive organization-public relationships is public relation's primary purpose. Scholars have developed standards to appraise the outcome of relationship strategies (Hon & Grunig, 1999; Kelleher & Miller, 2006; Kelleher, 2009; Ki & Hon, 2007; Sweester & Metzgar, 2007). Relational outcomes are originally identified by Hon and Grunig (1999) in *Guidelines for Measuring Relationships in Public Relations*. They introduced six components to measure outcomes of organizational relationships: control mutuality, trust, satisfaction, commitment, exchange relationship, and communal relationship.

Out of six dimensions, only four relational outcomes (trust, satisfaction, commitment and control mutuality) were recommended and tested by previous research since exchange relationship and communal relationship scarcely accounted for ongoing relationships (Hon & Grunig, 1999; Kelleher, 2009; Ki & Hon, 2007). Hung (2005) argued that exchange and communal relationships should be treated "as types of relationships existing either concurrently or at different times" rather than relationship outcomes (p. 398). In addition, Kelleher and Miller (2006) described these two concepts as indicators for gauging the status of relationship.

Trust is defined as "one party's level of confidence in and willingness to open oneself to the other party" (Hon & Grunig, 1999, p. 22). It includes dimensions of integrity, dependability, and competence (Kelleher & Miller, 2006). The second relational outcome is *satisfaction*, "the extent to which one party feels favorably toward the other." (Hon & Grunig, 1999, p. 23). It is important because positive expectations about the relationship are reinforced. *Commitment* refers to "the extent to which one party believes and feels that the relationship is worth spending energy to maintain and promote" and contains continuance commitment (certain line of action) and affective commitment (emotional orientation) as its dimensions (Hon & Grunig, 1999, p. 23). The last indicator for evaluating the success of relationship building efforts is *control mutuality*. It illustrates "the degree to which parties agree on who has rightful power to influence one another" (Hon & Grunig, 1999, p. 22). By pursuing relational outcomes, organizations can expect that relationships with publics are effectively built. For example, publics' perceived satisfaction and control mutuality are significant indicators of attitude toward organizations (Ki & Hon, 2007). These positive perceptions are also strong predictors of supportive behavioral intention toward the organization. The effects of relational outcomes increase when organizations use conversational human voice in their dialogue with publics (Kelleher & Miller, 2006; Kerkhof et al, 2011). With these distinctions and findings in mind, the current study seeks to explore how public relations practitioners gain relational outcomes.

Conversational Human Voice

As a response to the increasing needs to establish empirical guidance to quantify the benefits that comes as a result of relationships, Kelleher and Miller (2006) identified the concept of *communicational human voice* as an antecedent of relational outcomes. With respect to their findings, previous studies on organizational relationships have shown that tone of voice has an important role in developing relations online (Kelleher, 2009; Kerkhof et al, 2011). Social networking sites are optimum environments for facilitating dialogic communication (Rybalko & Seltzer, 2010). For example, human voice presence in organizational social media leads to

increased relational outcomes with dialogic communication intentions (Kelleher & Miller, 2006; Park & Lee, 2011). In their experiment, Kelleher and Miller (2006) found that perceived human voice is greater in blogs than in the traditional web. In this regard, human voice application is a useful relational maintenance strategy in the online platform.

Supporting Searls and Weinberger (2000)'s assertion, Kelleher (2009) argued that the human voice of people in the organization is the most important tenet in online communication due to its interactivity. Interactivity has had significant effects on relationship building (Jo & Kim, 2003). In particular, perceived reputation increased among people who were exposed to high interactivity and organizational websites (Jo & Kim, 2003). Therefore, communicating in a human voice and making the most of multimedia can positively impact the organization–public relationship (Sweetser & Metzger, 2010). Their findings serve as a foundation for the analysis of conversational human voice with respect to public relations in social media.

Conversational human voice is conceptualized as "an engaging and natural style of organizational communication as perceived by an organization's publics based on interactions between individuals in the organization and individuals in publics" (Kelleher, 2009, p. 177). Kelleher and Miller (2006) operationalized conversational human voice as sentences attempting to make communication enjoyable, admitting an organization's mistake, providing prompt feedback addressing criticism with a direct but uncritical manner, and treating readers as human (Kelleher & Miller, 2006). Human voice must be considered because it is a key concept to maintaining relationships with publics and stakeholders (Kelleher & Miller, 2006).

Moreover, the conversational human voice factor is the key component in improving relationships with publics during a crisis in an online setting (Sweetser & Metzger, 2007). For example, Park and Lee (2011) explained that perceptions of relationships with an organization are more favorable when the organization's social networking page has a human presence rather than an organizational presence. Levels of trust, commitment, and satisfaction from respondents are positively predicted by the use of the human voice in social media. Similarly, in the experimental study of Kelleher (2009), conversational human voice in the organizational blog was a significant predictor of relational outcomes such as trust, satisfaction, and control mutuality.

Narrative Tone

Previous literature found that reading organizational blogs and the presence of human voice in an organization's social networking page increase respondents' perception of the organization's conversational human voice (Kelleher, 2009; Kelleher & Miller, 2006; Park & Lee, 2011). These works confirm that online platforms with dialogic functions are suitable for including conversational human voice. With this potential of social media, it is necessary to examine possible key contributing factors to enhancing the function of human voice in social media. This leads to the important issue of identifying specific facets constituting conversational human voice; how do PR practitioners adapt conversational human voice in organizational social media?

Albeit a growing body of research tests the impact of conversational human voice, it has recently been noted that researchers have yet to obtain specific conversational contents functions for achieving increased key publics' perceptions of conversational human voice. Therefore, the current study aims to explore elements in organizations' comments in social media that increase the effects conversational human voice and relational outcomes.

A limited number of studies has operationalized forms of conversational human voice in organizational comments in social media. Kerkhof and colleagues (2011) postulated the tone of voice, as an indicator of human voice presence, has a significant main effect on perceived conversational human voice. Specifically, personal tone of voice, speaking in the first person with a mention of a narrator's name generates a higher score on conversational human voice than a corporate tone of voice speaking in the third person with the name of an organization. Thus, personal tone use makes publics believe that an organization cares about their ideas and opinions. In addition, the human presence, as the name of the public relations representative written underneath the representative's electronic avatar, was used to manipulate conversational human voice (Park & Lee, 2011). Park & Lee (2011) found that participants in the human presence condition showed greater perceptions of conversational human voice and more positive relationships with an organization. However, the conversational human voice condition manipulated in those studies lacked a perceived level of 'conversation' itself even as there were perceived human characteristics. Since conversational human voice has been used as a way to evaluate the degree of dialogic conversation between an organization and publics (Kelleher & Miller, 2006), the current study will also look at how practitioners enhance the dialogic functions in the social media context.

Given that the significance of dialogic communication has been stressed from a relational perspective, scholars suggest that organizations should engage in dialogic relationships in order to increase perceived legitimacy (Kent & Taylor, 2002; Ledingham & Bruning, 2000). For example, Gilpin (2008) argues that public relation practitioners use public news releases in the form of the "episodic autobiographical narrative genre" (p. 10). Rather than a news story transmitter, a public relations statement must be used as a tool to establish dialogue and promptly deliver messages, especially during a crisis in which circumstances are ongoing.

In order to obtain the impacts of dialogic tenets, considering the salience of narrative structures has been recommended from multifarious fields across context, issues, and individuals. Somer (2004) stated that "the concept of narrative has long fulfilled the role of social science's '*epistemological other*', a mode of representation that was apparently discursive" (p. 606). A narrative structure includes testimonial assertions, which Reinard (1988) referred to as judgments and opinions from others, and also includes what O'Keefe (2002) referred to as description and information in detail about an instance or an event.

The news release is not an only an exemplification of presented narrative messages. In public relations news releases, the narrative structure can serve to form an organization's intended image, and offer clues to its construed image (Gilpin, 2008, Somer, 2004). Scholars propose that narrative structure is also an effective way to increase dialogic functions in public relations messages (Scoble & Israel, 2006; Yang & Lim, 2009). Blog mediated public relations research also regards narrative structure as a principal to appraise the effectiveness of intangible relational outcomes (Yang & Lim, 2009).

From a relational perspective, dialogue helps an organization to establish trust, satisfaction, sympathy, and commitment to conversation (Kent & Taylor, 1998, 2002). In the same vein, narrative function in dialogic communication is critical to enhancing relational trust with publics (Yang & Lim, 2009). Summarizing Yang and Lim (2009) and Kent and Taylor (2002), the narrative message is an important determinant of the success of organizations' relationship building endeavors. Thus, guided by previous literatures, the current study assumes that perceived relationship and conversational human voice can be enhanced when there is a narrative structure in the organizational statements.

H1a: Participants, who are exposed to a narrative tone of an organizational Facebook page, will show greater perceptions of conversational human voice than those who are exposed to a non-narrative tone.

H1b: Participants, who are exposed to a narrative tone of an organizational Facebook page, will perceive more favorable relationships with organization than those who are exposed to a non-narrative tone.

Type of Spokesperson

Despite an increasing interest in the effects of organizational conversational human voice, how public relations practitioner incorporate conversational human voice is scarce in the literature. Ucelli (2002) argued that what companies say and how they say it largely determines how the public judges companies. Aside from what and how companies communicate, an important question is who communicates and who should deliver messages. The current study also aims to seek the effects of conversational dialogue depending on types of spokespeople delivering the message.

Who is representing an organization is a crucial issue (Wilson & Patterson, 1987), given that authentic dialogic communication is a central element to organizational public relationship in the online setting (Henderson & Bowley, 2010). It is important to understand the impact of different online sources on users' perceptions of online contents (Sundar & Nass, 2001). Hu and Sundar (2010) also proposed that different online sources in computer mediated communication influence message credibility as well as behavioral intentions. Especially in the web 2.0 era, in which everyone can easily search for important information, credible sourcing is an indispensible factor and the most effective tool for convincing publics (Bostrom & Tucker, 1969; Hong & Park, 2010; Sundar & Nass, 2001).

It is worth mentioning that the source of the message has a significant impact on persuasiveness (Reinard, 1988). Not surprisingly, credible sources are more persuasive than sources with low credibility. Thus, organizations try to increase the credibility of spokespeople in social media since the need for more person-to-person communication, or interactions with publics, has been suggested by number of scholars (Gilmore & Pine, 2007; Henderson & Bowley, 2010). For example, Henderson and Bowley (2010) found that organizations often remind their spokespeople to update their Facebook profiles or to respond to comments to increase their authenticity.

A spokesperson is the representative of the organization involved in the crisis and delivers an official crisis response or account that attempts to explain the organization's involvement in the crisis to the media and to the organization's relevant publics or stakeholders (Benoit, 1995; Coombs, 1998). The importance of hiring a well-trained spokesperson is tremendously emphasized by scholars (Coombs, 1999; Elsbach & Sutton, 1992). Because credibility is associated with the spokesperson, it determines the extent to which an audience will believe the organization's explanation (Arpen, 2002). In short, relying only on one spokesperson to deliver the important message could not be an effective strategy.

Related to this discussion, the credibility of the CEO as a spokesperson is often unquestioned (Lucero et al, 2009). CEOs are "such persons of authority and power, including president or managing director for corporate entity or non-profit organization or heads of government" (Lucero, et al., 2009, p. 235). The CEO is the face of the organization (Ferns, Emelianova, & Sethi, 2008) and organizational leaders are required to engage in communication with publics as well as stakeholders because they are considered to be credible sources (Kent &

Taylor, 2002). With that, are messages from the CEO more credible than those from a spokesperson? Presence of a CEO enables publics to consider an organization as responsible for long-term success (Edwards, 2000). For example, the CEO of Doosan provides his personal comments on social media in South Korea. In 2011, the number of his followers reached one million. Publics eagerly read his personal opinions as well as his official statements regarding issues of the company. People are interested in him and rely on him because of his CEO position. Also, publics generate positive attitudes toward organization when the CEO delivers messages through social media (Hwang, 2012). In this regard, scholars recommend that the CEO communicate with publics in order to develop effective personal public relations and in order to achieve open two-way communication (Hwang, 2012; Men, 2012). This argument led to the following research question asking about the effects of spokesperson type on perceived credibility.

> **RQ1**: Will perceived credibility of organizational statements presented in Facebook be different depending on the type of spokesperson?

Scholars predict the perception of relational outcomes by considering the effects of source credibility of spokesperson because credibility of the communicator influences publics' judgments of the quality of crisis communication (Heath, 1997). The concept of credibility accounts for relational outcomes. *Trust,* one party's level of confidence in and willingness to open oneself to the other party, and *commitment*, the extent to which one party believes and feels that the relationship is worth spending energy to maintain and promote, are considered to share a significant amount of variance with credibility (Petters, Covello, & McCallum, 1997). While trust and credibility have three determinants 1) knowledge and expertise, 2) honesty and openness, and 3) concern and care, these three account for a significant amount of the variation in perceptions of trust and credibility together (Petters, Covello, & McCallum, 1997). Kasperson, Golding and Tuler (1992) identified four components of trust: 1) commitment to a goal and fulfilling responsibilities, 2) competence, 3) caring, and 4) predictability. They assert that perceptions of commitment to a goal are in turn based on perceptions of objectivity, fairness, and information accuracy. In their findings, commitment was understood as a way to demonstrate concern and care for others, which is also a determinant for trust and credibility. In a similar vein, Hon and Grunig (1999) include integrity, dependability, and competence as dimensions of trust. Given that the concept of commitment illustrates "the degrees to which parties believe that the relationship is worthwhile to continue" (Kelleher & Miller, 2006, p. 401), it is logical to assume that perceived relational outcomes will increase when participants consider the source as credible. Followed by this line of research, the current paper hypothesizes that organizational comments presented in social media lead to different conversational human voice and relational outcomes and depend on who is speaking for an organization. Thus,

H2: Perceived level of message credibility will positively affect participants' relational perception.
H3a: Participants, who are exposed to organizational statements written by the CEO, will show greater perceptions of conversational human voice than those who are exposed to the statements written by a spokesperson.

H3b: Participants, who are exposed to organizational statements written by the CEO, will perceive more favorable relationships with an organization than those who are exposed to the statements written by a spokesperson.

RQ2. Is there any interaction effect between narrative tone and type of a spokesperson on conversational human voice?

RQ3. Is there any interaction effect between narrative tone and type of a spokesperson on relational outcomes?

Methods

Design

The current experiment used a 2 (type of source: CEO vs. spokesperson) x 2 (tone of message: non narrative vs. narrative) x 2 (message repetition) x 2 (order) mixed-subject design. Type of message and order served as between subjects factors while type of message and message repetitions served as within subjects factors. Each participant was assigned to one of four conditions.

Participants

Two hundred and sixty five (N = 265) students were initially recruited from undergraduate courses at a large Midwestern university, but six participants who were not using Facebook were excluded for the main analysis (N = 259) as the current study used the Facebook platform as a channel of organizational statements. Participants had mean of 788 Facebook friends on average (*SD* = 424.97), while the participants ranged in a number of organizational Facebook fan page they subscribed from 1 to 1000, with an average number of 79.86.

A percentage of 73.7% of participants were females (n = 191). The majority of the participants were Caucasian (83.8%, n = 217), while 5.8% (n = 15) were Asian, 5.8% (n = 15) were African American, and 2.3% (n = 6) were Hispanics. Also, they had a mean age of 19.41 that ranged from 18 to 26.

Procedure

Participants received a link to the online experiment with an electronic informed consent. Participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions. In each condition, the participants viewed two different crises stories as well as one filler used to prevent participants from noticing our treatments.

After answering demographic questions, participants first read a news story about a university crisis and organizational statements posted on Facebook. Then they were asked to evaluate perceived conversational human voices and perceived relational outcomes of those statements**.** This process was repeated twice for each crisis incident since the current experiment adapted multiple messages. After completing the entire questionnaire, each subject was thanked and debriefed. The experiment lasted approximately 30 minutes.

Stimuli

The current study used two different university crisis scenarios. Both crisis stories were about crisis incidents related to a university safety issue at two different fictitious universities. For instance, the university crisis story was about: 1) a shooting occurred at a university, and 2) a fire razed on campus dorm. In order to control variations of each incident, the two universities

used the same crisis responses (e.g., official apology, concerning victims, and employing corrective actions) and the identical number of students were affected by the two crises.

In terms of a university's statement regarding a crisis, the narrative tone was manipulated as a spokesperson's name inclusion and writing in the first person while non-narrative tone used no name and writing in the third person in a Facebook posting (Kerkhof et al, 2011; Park & Lee, 2011). For instance, narrative tone statements included: *Hello, I am Michael Miller, a spokesperson of the University of Harmony. I am so sorry about what happened. Our campus was a vibrant, friendly environment not only for learning but also for promoting harmonious interactions among our students. Now we have nine of our students who need our prayers to recover,* while non-narrative tone statements include: *This is a spokesperson of the University of Harmony. The University of Harmony is sorry about this accident and sad about the tragedy. The university dealt with an unexpected, dangerous situation, but officers followed every step suggested by the Clery act from the start to minimize potential damages and increase safety to protect everyone*. In addition, the type of spokesperson was operationalized with two conditions, the CEO and a spokesperson. Organizational comments in the stimulus identified the spokesperson type in the first sentence.

Variables

Perceived crisis responsibility. Crisis responsibility of each of the university was assessed with two items (Coombs & Holladay, 2002): "the blame for this incident lies with the university" and "how responsible do you think the university is for this crisis," with Cronbach's $\alpha = .84$.

Conversational human voice. Conversational human voice was measured by the mean score of 11 items adapted from prior research (Kelleher & Miller, 2006). For example: "invites people to conversation," "is open to dialogue," "uses conversation-style communication," "tries to communicate in a human voice," "tries to be interesting in communication," "uses a sense of humor in communication," "provides links to competitors," "attempts to make communication enjoyable," "would admit a mistake," "provides prompt feedback addressing criticism with a direct but uncritical manner," and "treats me and others as human" had Cronbach's $\alpha=.88$.

Relational outcomes. Relational outcomes are generally measured in terms of control mutuality, commitment, trust, and satisfaction as suggested by Hon and Grunig (1999). However, the current paper used a shortened version replaced with previous measurements. These substitutions were guided by Sung and Yang (2009)'s use of the Hon and Grunig (1999)'s instrument for which the context was particularly for the assessment of the university student relationship. All 15 items include *control mutuality* ("this university and students are attentive to what each other say," "this university believes students' opinions are legitimate," "in dealing with students, this university has a tendency to throw its weight around," "this university really listens to what students have to say"), c*ommitment* ("I feel that this university is trying to maintain a long-term commitment to students," "there is a long-lasting bond between this university and students," "compared to other organizations, I value my relationship with this university more"), *satisfaction* ("I am happy with this university," "both the university and students benefit from the relationship," "most students are happy in interactions with this university"), and *trust* ("his university treats students fairly," "whenever this university makes an important decision, I know it will be concerned about students," "this university can be relied on to keep its promise," "I believe that this university takes students' opinions into account when

making decisions," "this university has the ability to accomplish what it says it will do") on a 7-point scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Cronbach's α=.94.
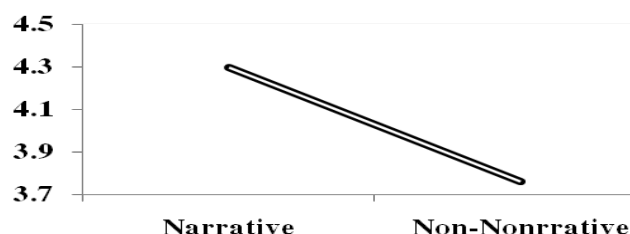
Results

Manipulation Check

Manipulation checks were conducted to verify that participants were exposed to stimuli as expected. The manipulation check of the narrative tone was tested by using an independent samples t-test. Participants exposed to the narrative condition should have provide a greater score than those who exposed to the non-narrative condition by indicating their level of agreement with Escalas' (2004) Narrative Structure Coding: "showing personal engagement," "demonstrating my feeling and thinking," "having a well-defined beginning, middle, and ending of a story," and "talking about specific, particular events, rather than delivering news or general knowledge." Responses to four items measuring the perceived level of narrative tone used were averaged to create composite scores for the manipulation check. The result indicates that the participants agreed that the tone was narrative when they were exposed to the narrative condition rather than when they received a non-narrative condition ($M_{narrative}$ = 4.79 and $M_{non-narrative}$ = 4.13; $t(257) = 4.86$, $p < .001$).

To see if the participants perceived two manipulated crisis incidents differently, they were asked their level of agreements on a 7-point Likert scale to whether the university they just viewed was responsible for a crisis. As we intended, the results of a paired-samples t-test revealed that there was not a significant difference in the scores for a shooting case ($M = 3.50$, $SD = 1.29$), and a fire case ($M = 3.46$, $SD = 1.47$) conditions, $t(258) = .51$, $p = .61$. This result suggests that our participants perceived no significant differences between the two crisis incidents in terms of the universities' crisis responsibility. Therefore, results suggest that the manipulation of both the original crisis stories and the independent variable were successful.

Hypothesis Testing

A repeated measures ANOVA was used to test H1, H3 and RQ1, RQ2, RQ3 while H2 was tested using Pearson's correlation analysis. H1a hypothesized that participants exposed to a narrative tone of an organizational Facebook would show greater perceptions of conversational human voice than those exposed to a non-narrative tone. The results showed that there was a statistically significant effect of the narrative tone on conversational human voice, $F(1, 257) = 24.876$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .09$, supporting H1a. Conversational human voice was higher when participants were exposed to the narrative condition ($M_{narrative} = 4.30$, $SD = .08$) than the non-narrative condition ($M_{non-narrative} = 3.761$, $SD = .08$).


Conversational Human Voice

H3a predicted that participants exposed to organizational statements written by the CEO, would show greater perceptions of conversational human voice than those exposed to the

statements written by a spokesperson. The results indicated that there was not a statistically significant effect of the type of spokesperson on conversational human voice, [$F(1, 257) = 2.276$, $p = .13$].

Moreover, there was an interaction between the narrative tone and type of spokesperson on conversational voice (RQ2), $F(1, 257) = 6.869$, $p < .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$. In the condition of non-narrative tone, participants were more likely to project greater perceptions of organizational human voice when viewing the CEO generated comments compared to spokesperson generated comments. However, in the condition of narrative tone, perceptions of organizational human voice were not different regardless of the comment source.
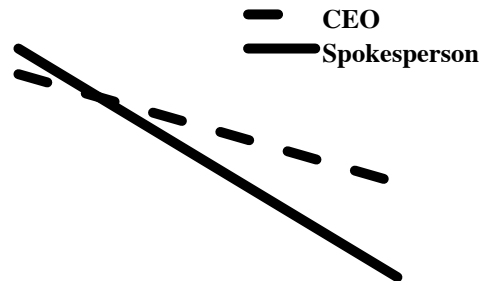
RQ1 asked if message credibility was different based on the type of the spokesperson. However, the perceived credibility of the CEO was not statistically different from a spokesperson, $F(1, 257) = 235$, $p = .63$.

A Pearson's correlation showed perceived level of message credibility positively predicted participants' conversational human voice, $r(259) = .49$, $p < .001$, and relational perception, $r(259) = .61$, $p < .001$, supporting H2a and H2b. In other words, if perceived messages credibility increase, perceived conversational human voice and more positive relational outcomes toward an organization would be also increasing.

H1b predicted that participants exposed to the narrative tone of an organizational Facebook would generate more positive relational outcomes than those exposed to the non-narrative tone. The results showed that there was a statistically significant effect of the narrative tone on relational outcomes, $F(1, 257) = 15.496$, $p < .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$, supporting H1b. Perceived relational outcome was higher when participants were exposed to the narrative condition ($M_{narrative} = 4.56$, $SD = .07$) than the non-narrative condition ($M_{non-narrative} = 4.21$, $SD = .08$).
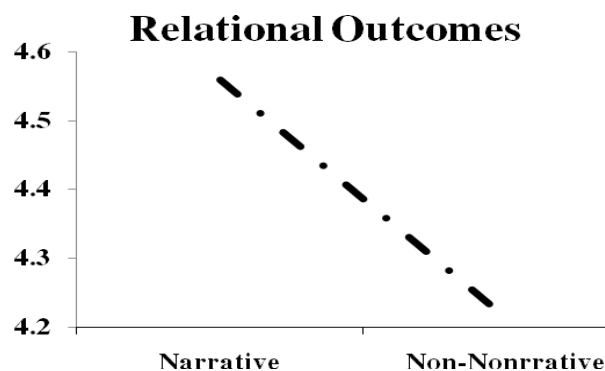
H3b predicted that participants exposed to organizational statements written by a CEO would show more positive relational outcomes than those exposed to the statements written by a spokesperson. The results indicated that there was a not statistically significant effect of the type of spokesperson on relational outcomes, $[F(1, 257) = .728, p = .39]$.

RQ3 asked there is any interaction effect between the narrative tone and type of spokesperson on relational outcomes. However, there was no interaction effect found, $F(1, 257) = 2.50, p = .12$.

Discussion

Scholars have highlighted the critical role of social media in building organization-public relationships in a more direct, interpersonal manner. Specifically, organizations can benefit from employing dialogue such as interpersonal, repeated interactions with their key publics, which in turn, may establish a positive relationship between an organization and their publics (Kelleher & Miller, 2006; Kent & Taylor, 2002; Taylor, Kent, & White, 2001). Corresponding to this line of research, recent papers shed light on how online PR experts should respond in a human manner to receive positive relational outcomes (Kelleher & Miller, 2006; Kelleher, 2009). This paper suggests specific strategies to effectively communicate with publics in social media. To examine strategies, the current study looked at the effect of organizational statements presented in social networks on the relationship between an organization and its publics. Specifically, this paper investigated the effects of narrative statements on conversational voice and perceived trust, satisfaction, commute mutuality, and commitments toward an organization facing a crisis.

Findings of the current study not only support previous literature in that conversational human voice account for relational outcomes (Kelleher & Miller, 2006; Kelleher, 2009), but identify more details about how practitioners can enhance the effects of conversational voice. Narrative tone in organizational statements presented in Facebook increase perceived level of conversational voice. Thus, these findings reveal useful insights into underlying mechanisms behind making use of the conversational voice in organizational social media. Implementing a sense of narrative structure makes participants perceive organizational statements as more humane and conversational.

Given that participants showed more favorable relational outcomes toward an organization when social media had conversational human voice, the current findings reconfirms the significance of a human presence in organizational social media, corresponding with previous studies (Kelleher, 2009; Park & Lee, 2011). Specifically, narrative statements along with greater conversational voice revealed higher scores on perceived relational outcomes, such as trust, control mutuality, satisfaction and commitment. Thus, public relations practitioners who value relationships with their publics should understand the importance of writing comments in a narrative tone on social media when dealing with a crisis.

Another interesting finding is that comments written by a spokesperson in social media were more likely to be perceived as using a conversational human voice than the CEO's comments in non-narrative condition. This means that even though participants comprehend non-narrative statements as less human in quality, perceived conversational human voice could increase if the CEO him/herself writes a comment regarding a crisis situation. This might be because the CEO is usually represented as an authority figure to the public. Hence, if an organization needs to keep professional/non-narrative forms in organizational statements on social media, it is be better to have the CEO to comment.

However, special attention should be paid to the insignificant main effects of the type of spokesperson on our main dependent variables. Participants did not differentiate the CEO condition from the spokesperson condition in terms of conversational voice and relational outcomes. One possible explanation is that our data showed perceived message credibility was the same, regardless of the type of spokesperson. Participants did not recognize whether the CEO or a spokesperson provided comments in terms of credibility. Perceived credibility of organizational statements positively predicts conversational human voice and relational outcomes (H2) explains why source type did not have main effects on both variables. This finding essentially supports a claim from previous research that perceptions of relational commitment are formulated based on perceptions of objectivity, fairness, and information accuracy (Kasperson et al., 1992).

At the same time, rooms for future scholarship are suggested in questioning why there was no difference in message credibility. The current study used general credibility measures that have been developed to assess credibility of traditional news media. However, this could be problematic as researchers should reflect social media users' perspectives when examining how credibility judgments are made (Kang, 2010). In this regard, Kang (2010) developed new measurement to gauge credibility in social media. It would be meaningful if future research can conduct empirical tests using this new measurement.

Limitation & Future Research

This study has several limitations that can be addressed in subsequent studies of this stream of research. First, the student sample used in this study may not be useful for generalizing our findings. However, previous studies (Sung & Yang, 2008; Sung & Yang, 2009; Park & Len-Rios, 2008) used stimulus stories in their experiments on university related crises. This study used similar stimuli treatments, allowing room for generalization.

Moreover, the treatment of crisis response in the current study includes a 2 x 2 design where treatment of independent variables was either provided or absent. Instead, Feduik and colleagues (2010) recommend the use of multilevel treatment effects. For instance, three levels of an independent variable such as narrative discourse could consist of non-narrative, some degree of narrative and high level of narrative. By doing this kind of design, future studies can advance current research in increasing intensity of statistical effects and in leading to additive benefits on the outcome variable (Feduik et al., 2010).

Finally, given our focus on conversational human voice and relational outcomes, the current study did not examine further consequences. For example, Ki and Hon (2007) stated relational outcomes positively predict attitude toward an organization, which accounts for behavioral intention. It would be valuable if future research examines publics' corresponding behaviors in social media when narrative organizational statements are provided.

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APPENDIX

Figure1. Narrative & Spokesperson Condition

Figure 2. Non-narrative & President Condition.

**Consumer Responses to Image Repair Communication via Social Media:
Gauging Involvement in Relation to Emotion and Corporate Responsibility**

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Abstract

Literature on crisis communication exhibits a gap in terms of emotional venting from the public and expressions of crisis responsibility attribution via social media. There is limited understanding of how publics perceive or attribute crises through social media, due to a focus on print media. Considering public involvement in social media has emerged as an area of interest in conflict management because involvement may influence anger and high crisis responsibility attribution in certain instances. To examine involvement, as related to emotion and responsibility attribution, the researchers content analyzed Facebook consumer comments made after Nike Running issued an apology and statement of corrective action about the technical issues surrounding their Nike Plus Sports Kit, using the Contingency Theory of Accommodation, the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT), and the Social-Mediated Crisis Communication Model (SMCC) frameworks to guide the research. It was found in chi-square analyses that involvement was not related to emotion, but effortful involvement in commenting was associated with crisis responsibility attribution.

Introduction

In May 2006, Nike introduced the Nike Plus iPod Sport Kit. Nike Plus began as a sensor that fit into special Nike Plus shoes and a connector that fit into an iPod Nano. The system tracked mileage and calories burned and included workout play lists and encouragements pre-recorded from professional athletes and coaches. The connector also connected to a computer and runs could be uploaded on the Nike Plus website. Nike Plus continued to evolve over the past five years. For instance, Nike integrated Facebook and its own social network on the Nike Plus website where runners can become friends, look at each other's runs and even challenge each other. A review of discussions on the Nike Running Facebook page reveals a theme of disgruntled users with the Nike Plus website and Facebook page. Users continually had problems from loading runs to logging in. On September 2, 2011, Nike issued an apology through email and on the Nike Running Facebook page, eliciting over 50 comments from users responding to the letter. On November 4, 2011, Nike Running issued an updated apology statement that employed a corrective action technique, triggering over 230 comments (236 intelligible and relevant comments, 346 likes, and 34 shares).[1]

The researchers are specifically interested in coding for involvement and how it relates to emotional valence and attribution of corporate responsibility in Nike Running's Facebook fans responses to Nike's November 4, 2011 statement in regards to its shortcomings with its Nike Plus website and products. The results of this content analysis could be particularly interesting given the recent findings that consumers prefer apology and related communication when it appears in traditional media (Fisher Liu, Austin, & Jin, 2011).

Literature on crisis communication exhibits a gap in terms of emotional venting from the public and expressions of crisis responsibility attribution through social media (i.e. Facebook) (Choi & Lin, 2008; Coombs & Holladay, 2008). Scholarship also demonstrates that there is limited understanding of how publics perceive or attribute crises through social media, due to a focus on print media (Lee, Park, & Cameron, 2010; Shin, Cheng, Jin, & Cameron, 2005). However, Waters, Tindall, and Morton (2010) demonstrate that social media have become integral to media relations and communication for organizations. Thus, this study fills a gap in the literature, as it examines responses to apology and corrective action released through social media.

Beyond source, considering public involvement has emerged as an area of interest in conflict management because involvement may influence anger and higher crisis responsibility attribution in certain instances (Choi & Lin, 2008; Coombs & Holladay, 2008; Hallahan, 2000; Heath, 1997). To examine involvement, as related to emotion and responsibility attribution, the researchers content analyzed Facebook consumer comments made after Nike Running recently issued an apology and corrective action statement about the technical issues surrounding their Nike Plus Sports Kit. The Contingency Theory of Accommodation explains how organizations, such as Nike Running, decide their stances and strategies in times of crisis. The theory particularly informs this study in that it explains conflict management as a life cycle with different phases.

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[1] The statement reads: "Nike+ is experiencing technical difficulties, and some Nike+ users may be unable to upload their workouts. Please know we're working to resolve this as quickly as possible. We recommend waiting to upload until the sync experience has been stabilized. We'll provide updates as more information becomes available."

Literature Review

Contingency Theory of Accommodation

Internal variables and external variables (enumerated in Cancel, Cameron, Sallot, & Mitrook, 1997) affect the success of an organization's ability to respond to conflict. External variables include external threats, industry-specific environment, general political/social environment, external public characteristics, and the issue under consideration (Cameron, Wilcox, Reber, & Shin, 2008). Internal variable groups include general corporate/organizational characteristics, characteristics of the public relations department, top management characteristics, internal threats, personality characteristics of involved organization members, and relationship characteristics (Cameron et al., 2008).

Predisposing and situational variables are also considered as variables of interest in the Contingency Theory of Accommodation. Cancel, Mitrook, and Cameron (1999) verified the theoretical groundings of Cancel et al. (1997) and found that predisposing variables impact (or may even predict) how organizations handle situational variables in times of conflict. Cancel et al. (1999) supports the notion that negative predisposing factors must be eliminated before advocacy from an organization or company can take place.

Cameron et al. (2008) also explicates the conflict management as a life cycle with four discrete phases, including proactive, strategic, reactive, and recovery phases. Proactive and strategic phases are more concerned with conflict prevention and concern. Reactive and recovery phases involve response to a crisis or conflict and rebuilding approaches. This study is most concerned with the reactive phase, which is explained in Cameron et al. (2008): "Once the issue or imminent conflict reaches a critical level of impact on the organization, the public relations professional must react to events as they unfold in the external communication environment" (p. 44). Public relations professionals use conflict resolution techniques to reach a solution.

Techniques

Despite previous findings, Coombs and Holladay (2008) found that apology is not a preferred response and Holtzhausen and Roberts (2009) found apology to be ineffective as an image repair strategy. However, it has been found that consumers prefer apology and related communication when it appears in traditional media (Fisher-Lu et al., 2011).

Apology has been considered a prevalent repair strategy and is defined in Benoit and Pang (2007). Under the auspices of the image repair theory, Benoit and Pang (2007) enumerate a typology of image repair strategies, including denial, evasion of responsibility, reducing offensiveness of event, corrective action, and mortification. Mortification is defined as apologizing. When mortification is used, the organization "tries to restore an image by asking forgiveness without attempting to reduce blame for or offensiveness of the act" (Benoit & Pang, 2007, p. 248).

In the Nike Plus case, Nike Running used apology as a repair strategy via their Facebook page and not through traditional media first in September of 2011. This could also be considered an act of "stealing thunder," as publishing apology through social media is an example of stealing thunder. In Arpan and Roskos-Ewoldsen (2005), authors identified stealing thunder as a credible tactic used to control message content and release in their research: "Stealing thunder involves disclosing potentially negative information concerning the self before it is acquired or released by another entity" (p. 426). As Nike could not reach conflict resolution through fixing their products and website, they issued another statement on November 4, triggering even more

responses from consumers about the shortcomings of the Nike Plus system. This statement was a form of corrective action where Nike Running promised to fix the problems (i.e. "we're working to resolve this as quickly as possible"). Corrective action has been found to be an effective strategy in traditional media, but its impact in social media is less understood (Haigh & Brubaker, 2009).

Emotional Situations, Accommodation, and Publics

Emotional response (especially anger) is of interest in the literature as a prevalent response in crisis from publics (Choi & Lin, 2008; Coombs & Holladay, 2008). Emotional response has been theorized and researched by Cameron and colleagues as well (Jin & Pang, 2010). Cameron and colleagues crafted the integrated crisis mapping model framework, identifying anger, fright, anxiety, and sadness as dominant emotions of interest (Jin & Pang, 2010). Jin and Pang (2010) state, "It is crucial for organizations to better understand the emotionally segmented publics in crises and tailor their crisis responses to facilitate publics' effective crisis coping, which might have [a] positive impact [on] crisis resolutions and reputation repair" (p. 681). Cases analyzed by Cameron and colleagues show how organizations must manage such emotions among publics and the release of information through media to respond to crises.

Cameron, Cropp, and Reber (2001) found that contending publics can impact accommodation and Cameron, Pang, and Jin (2008) explain that emotion and situational factors can have strong effects on publics' stance towards an organization in crisis. The SARS crisis is in 2003 an example in which public contention and emotion may have played a role in organizational stance and strategies (on behalf of Singapore's and China's governments). However, this case also demonstrates that media relations and use can shape crisis recovery.

For example, Jin, Pang, and Cameron (2006) indicated that the Singaporean government was able to internalize the SARS crisis and handle the situation through an accommodating, "over-managing" stance (p. 100). Jin et al. note that the government appeared to be more threatened by the situation than publics. Since Singapore's government was overtly accommodating, it was able to reassure publics and manage the publics' emotions.

Releasing information through media and relationships with media are also key to crises management. News media in Singapore (maybe because it is neo-authoritarian, as indicated by Cameron et al., 2008) aided the Singapore government's management of the situation, acting as a mediator between the government and affected publics (Jin et al., 2006). By contrast, the Chinese government under-managed in their initial de-emphasis of the SARS problem, leading to some negative media coverage and public perception (Cameron et al., 2008). However, it is possible for organizations to control information release by using repair strategies via social media, instead of traditional media. The Situational Crisis Communication Theory guides research on social mediated responses, but more in terms of the organization's tactics and responses (instead of consumer activity).

Situational Crisis Communication Theory

The Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) is beneficial in predicting proper ways for an organization to respond and communicate during a crisis situation to protect reputation (Coombs, 2007). The theory stems from Weiner's (1986) research on attribution theory. According to Weiner's research, individuals seek and search for causes of an event. Thus, as Coombs (2007) posits, there is a natural connection between crisis and attribution

theory. Specifically, Coombs states, "Stakeholders will make attributions about the cause of a crisis; they will assess crisis responsibility" (p. 136). If responsibility is attributed to the organization, negativity towards that organization will often appear. In terms of the SCCT, the theory posits three categories of organizational attribution during a crisis – victim (weak attribution), accidental (minimal attribution), and intentional (high attribution) (Coombs, 2007). Further, the SCCT proposes two ways of protecting a public from harm (Coombs, 2012). Those two strategies are instructing information (informs publics how to avoid physical harm) and adjusting information (informs publics how to avoid psychological harm). For Nike Plus, there is no physical harm involved, so adjusting information is the proper form of communication.

Once the initial strategy is decided upon, organizations can decide to respond in four different ways. Those response options are deny, diminish, rebuild and reinforce (Coombs, 2012). If denial is chosen, attacking the accuser, denial and scapegoating are three strategies. If diminishing is chosen, organizations can use and excuse or justification. If the rebuild response is used, companies choose between compensation and apology. Finally, if reinforcement is chosen, organizations can use bolstering, ingratiation or victimization tactics. Nike Running chose apology and corrective action strategies (rebuilding) for their response to crisis.

Complimentary to the SCCT, the Social-Mediated Crisis Communication Model informs the research of social mediated public responses.

Social-Mediated Crisis Communication Model

The Social-Mediated Crisis Communication (SMCC) model was first constructed as the blog-mediated crisis communication model by Jin and Liu (2010) and Liu et al. (in press) and was changed because of the findings that opinion leadership is stronger through social media compared to blogs. However, the SMCC model expanded on by Liu et al. (2011) is extremely pertinent to the current research of Nike Plus and Nike Running's communication through Facebook. The authors state that the model explains, "how the source and form of crisis information affect organizations' response options and recommended social-mediated crisis response strategies" (Liu et al., 2011, p. 346). Furthermore, the model states there are three types of publics who are involved in the interaction with the organization experiencing the crisis. Those publics are "influential social media creators" (create crisis information), "social media followers" (consume the creator's information) and "social media inactives" (may consume creators info from multiple sources) (Liu et al., 2011). Moreover, the model proposes that a main reason for publics to use social media during a crisis is for social venting and support (Jin & Liu, 2010).

In terms of the Nike Plus case, the two publics for study are influential social media creators and the social media followers (both understood by the researchers as commenters in response to the corrective action statement). The model also proposes if, why, and how an organization should respond to social media creators and influencers. The customer dissatisfaction with the performance of Nike Plus products was voiced on Nike Running's Facebook page for months before Nike decided to respond with the apology letter and their corrective action communication.

While Liu et al. (2011) propose that publics believe traditional media are more reliable during a crisis, they also found that publics still use Facebook for emotional needs and to "share or obtain insider information" (p. 150). Moreover, publics passively receive crisis information from Facebook and email (the only two tactics used by Nike to communicate with publics about Nike Plus in the case of the original apology) (Liu et al., 2011).

The model also proposes five influencers on how organizations communicate throughout the crisis situation. Those influencers are crisis origin, crisis type, infrastructure, message strategy, and message form. The crisis origin for Nike Plus was internal (i.e. inadequacies of website and products). The model proposes less lenience for an organization from publics if the origin is internal and thus, as stated above, the proper response for an organization with high responsibility is one of accommodation. That coincides with what Jin, Liu, and Austin (2011) found (emotions like anger are more prevalent when the crisis origin is internal). The crisis type is not as clear for Nike Plus. It could have been an accident—there are not really any victims involved and the malfunctions are most likely not intentional. In terms of infrastructure, Nike is using a centralized message (apology and corrective action). However, for the Nike Plus case, the crisis strategy and form are what are most important to the current research. The crisis form is social media (Facebook and email) and the crisis strategy is corrective action, preceded by apology.

In terms of the influencers of how organizations should communicate and the limited research that has been conducted on the new model, Nike Running may have and may have not used the correct response for their specific situation. Liu et al. (2011) found that, "publics are more likely to accept defensive, supportive and evasive crisis responses via traditional media than via social media" (p. 350). As previously stated, Nike Plus only used social media to communicate. While their responses were not defensive, it was supportive (assisting customers in troubleshooting) but probably not evasive (complaints were running rampant on Nike Running's Facebook page). However, the study also reveals communication through social media could be beneficial after most know about the crisis, which was the case with Nike Plus.

Social Media

Related to the SMCC, scholarship on crisis communication exhibits a gap in terms of emotional venting from the public and expressions of crisis responsibility attribution via social media (i.e. Facebook) (Choi & Lin, 2008; Choi & Lin, 2009; Coombs & Holladay, 2008). Scholarship also demonstrates that there is limited understanding of how publics perceive or attribute crises through social media, due to a focus on print media (Lee, Park, & Cameron, 2010; Shin, Cheng, Jin, & Cameron, 2005). However, Waters, Tindall, & Morton, (2010) demonstrates that social media has become an integral part of media relations and communication for organizations. This study fills a gap in the literature, as it examined responses to apology released through social media.

Involvement

Beyond source, considering public involvement has emerged as an area of interest in conflict management because involvement may influence anger and higher crisis responsibility attribution in certain instances (Choi & Lin, 2008; Hallahan, 2000; Heath, 1997). Like Choi and Lin (2008), this study may indicate that involvement is an important variable to consider in future studies using these frameworks.

There have been many definitions of involvement in scholarly literature. For example, the concept of felt involvement has emerged as one definition of involvement in consumer behavior and public relations research (Celsi & Olson, 1988; Choi & Lin, 2008). Felt involvement is a person's perception of personal relevance in regards to an issue, event, or object (Celsi & Olson, 1988). It is also understood to have motivational qualities that influence cognition of ads and messages and behaviors (Celsi & Olson, 1988). Felt involvement is also

related to the Elaboration Likelihood Model, which suggests that involvement levels within the consumer influence message processing; consumers with low-involvement are understood to process messages through peripheral routes whereas consumers with high-involvement are understood to process messages via central routes to persuasion (Petty & Cacioppo, 1981; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). These conceptions of involvement frame it as a consumer characteristic, rather than a static description of a product, brand, event, or issue.

Furthermore, McDonald and Hartel (2000) have suggested that involvement levels among publics influence both emotion and crisis attribution. Thus, involvement was studied as a consumer variable in this study and was hypothesized as a variable connected to emotional venting and crisis responsibility attribution.

Emotions

Macias, Hilyard and Freimuth (2009) found that the Internet and, specifically, social media can create a sense of community. Social media can also be an outlet for individuals to share and express emotions. Moreover, Jin and Liu (2010) found that individuals will turn to social media when they need to emotionally vent or when they seek emotional support. Coombs and Holladay (2005) also found that emotion can and should be a part of post-crisis communication for organizations. The above research shows social media often are an outlet for publics to express emotions. Additionally, when publics perceive that organizations have a high responsibility of the crisis, they are more likely to have strong emotional responses and those responses are more likely to be negative (McDonald, Sparks, & Glendon, 2010).

Anger, a clearly negative emotional response, often leads to decreases in purchase intent and increases in negative word-of-mouth communication among publics (Coombs & Holladay, 2007; Jorgensen, 1996). McDonald et al. (2010) found that high responsibility and high involvement of an organization during a crisis will lead to strong negative emotions (mainly anger), with responsibility more influential of negative emotions than involvement. McDonald et al. also found that anger leads to negative word-of-mouth communication and can influence customer loyalty and complaining.

Like McDonald et al. (2010), Jin (2009) examined emotional responses to crisis and found that anger in publics' responses happens most when the crisis is highly predictable and controllable. In terms of the Nike case, there have been problems with the Sports Kit for multiple years and since it is a product, publics likely see the crisis as being highly predictable and controllable. Thus, anger is the dominant emotion, instead of fear or sadness. To cope with these emotions, publics often seek emotional support and venting. As previously supported in this review, social media is often a likely form of communication for emotional support and venting among publics (i.e. Jin & Liu, 2010; Macias, Hilyard & Freimuth, 2009). Turner (2007) proposed four types of groups in the anger activism model that have different levels of anger. The two groups most likely examined in the Nike Plus case are individuals falling in the activist group (high anger and efficacy) and the empowered group (low anger and high efficacy). These are the two groups that expect change (the majority of the posts on the Nike Running Facebook page are customers expecting change in the form of a better functioning product).

Research Question and Hypothesis

As previously stated, apology may have a similar impact as other strategies (i.e. corrective action) in terms anger or other emotional responses (Coombs & Holladay, 2008). However, these authors compared different responses for a low anger situation and for a

company without a known prior reputation to participants (unlike Coombs & Holladay, 2008). This situation may have involved higher anger and Nike is an internationally recognized company, so its reputation is fixed in consumers' minds. This unique situation was accounted for in data analysis of responses to a corrective action statement after Nike Plus consumers had been exposed to Nike's apology letter.

Based upon the literature, the following was hypothesized:

H1: Involvement will be associated (statistically significant) with anger responses as shown in a chi-square analysis.

H2: Involvement will also be associated with higher levels of responsibility attribution towards Nike in a chi-square analysis.

Method

Method and Justification

To examine the levels and themes of emotions and involvement in the responses to the Nike Running corrective action statement posted on Facebook, a quantitative content analysis of comments left in response to the statement were examined. Berelson (1952) defined content analysis as: "a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication" (p. 84). Content analysis is often used to examine and make sense of traditional media content such as newspaper and magazine articles; however, it is also beneficial for examining communication content of publics. Further, content analysis is an "efficient way to investigate the content of the media" (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006, p. 150). Again, this study examined the content of social media, specifically, the content of public feedback. Wimmer and Dominick (2006) also note that content analysis is quantifiable with the goal of attaining an "accurate representation of a body of messages" (p. 151). Additionally, Kerlinger (2000) defined content analysis as a way to systematically and objectively study and analyze communication in a quantifiable manner. Because of the amount of responses (and lack of depth in most responses), a quantitative method was more appropriate as compared to a qualitative method.

Data Collection Plan

In terms of content analyzing online customer responses to a crisis situation, Choi and Lin (2008) provide a pertinent example while examining online customer responses in terms of emotion to the Mattel toy product recall. Studies have examined emotional responses to organizational crisis situations in experimental settings (Kim & Cameron, 2011; Liu et al., 2011; McDonald et al., 2010) and how publics use social media during an organizational crisis (Jin et al., 2011; Liu et al., 2011). However, those studies have used experiments and surveys to get stakeholder, customer, and public responses to either a crisis in general or a strategy from an organization in attempt to mitigate the crisis. Through content analysis, this study examined an actual strategy from a company and the actual responses of publics to that strategy.

Each consumer comment in response to the Nov. 4 corrective action statement was coded for involvement, corporate responsibility attribution, and emotion, given the previously stated hypotheses.

Data Collection

Two hundred and thirty six (*N* = 236) comments in regards to the November 4, 2011 corrective action statement, published at 12:35 pm Central Time, were downloaded from the Nike Plus fan page and analyzed. All intelligible comments were used in the analysis with a focus on reactive phase, from November 4, 2011 at 12:36 pm to November 12, 2011 at about 10 am. The last comment that was made besides this Nov. 12 comment was made on Nov. 22, 2011, well after the publication of the statement.

Coding Categories/ Variables

Involvement: This was primarily understood as felt involvement. As previously stated, felt involvement is a person's perception of personal relevance in regards to an issue, event, or object (Celsi & Olson, 1988). This is also the understanding of involvement in the ELM (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Involvement was coded for by looking for patterns of central (more elaboration) or peripheral processing (less elaboration) of the responses towards Nike communication (given the definition of involvement by Celsi & Olson, 1988, Petty & Cacioppo, 1981, and Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). If responses were more focused on the content of the apology and the arguments, they were coded as high involvement (an affirmative to "Does the commenter focus on content of corrective action statement or argument (not ranting, but rational questions or statement regarding technical issues)?")

The coders also measured how much effort the person uses to comment by counting the number of words the individual used to respond to the corrective action statement. This provided a measure of involvement to compare to the measure of felt involvement under the auspices of the ELM and helped the researchers understand involvement as related to resources the individual was devoting towards processing and responding to the message in the corrective statement. This measure was be recoded into low, medium, and high levels of involvement for data analysis (for cell count purposes) as such: "How many words does the commenter use (highlight and look at words)?" This was recoded into the following: 1-10 words as 1 (low), 11-35 words as 2 (medium), and 35+ words as 3 (high) (this was based on the distribution of counts; most comments had few words).

Corporate Responsibility Attribution: This refers to claims in comments that the organization (Nike) is responsible for the event or crisis at hand (Choi & Lin, 2008). Corporate responsibility attribution was coded in terms of mentions of Nike. The coders originally intended to code for attribution if Nike was mentioned as the cause of problems with Nike Plus products and the Nike Plus website. However, it proved difficult for coders to reach intercoder reliability because of difficultly with recognizing attribution in each comment.

Emotional Venting: This is conceptually understood as the positive and negative emotion in responses, given the findings of Jin (2009) and McDonald et al. (2010), for example (explained in the literature review).

To measure emotional venting in comments, the coders intended to look for explicit expressions of anger (i.e. mentions of hatred, anger, and outrage) (as practiced in Choi & Lin, 2008). However, the coders again had issues reaching intercoder reliability. It was difficult to agree on whether a statement exhibited anger or some other related emotion (i.e. frustration). The coders resolved to code comments as either positive or negative in regards to the incident.

Intercoder Reliability

In order to ensure that results of the content analysis were reliable between coders, the codebook was pre-tested for intercoder reliability. Two coders were trained on a sample of n = 51 comments, which represented 22% of comments coded in the complete analysis. Before refining the coding procedure, reliability using Cohen's Kappa was less than .8 (and other measures using ReCal). This was unacceptable and the codebook was simplified from a 9-item book to a 4-item book. After this, the average Kappa reliability coefficient was κ = .80 (from the n = 51 comments sample). Since the study was exploratory, this was viewed as acceptable. After both coders were finished with analysis, reliability was conducted again. The average overall reliability coefficient (Cohen's Kappa of 236 comments) in ReCal was κ = .87. Half of each coder's data was used for analysis.

Results

Chi-square analysis was used in SPSS to test the hypotheses. To compare observed and expected frequencies for independent and dependent variables and to look for association, researchers used crosstabs and chi-square analysis through use of the SPSS statistical software. This non-parametric type of test was used because all of our data was coded using categorical or nominal levels of measurement, as parametric types of tests deal with higher levels of measurement (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006). Even though effortful involvement was coded as a continuous measure, the researchers recoded it into three categories for chi-square tests.

On average, commenters wrote n = 21.21 words, with a range of 162. Six word responses occurred most. This suggests that most commenters had low to moderate involvement. Descriptive data for other involvement data showed similar results. For processing based involvement, most responses were coded as low involvement, in the negative to question 1 in the codebook (at n = 153 in the negative and n = 83 in the affirmative).

Most comments did not contain a mention of Nike at n = 155 in the negative (versus n = 81 in the affirmative) for question 3 in the codebook, suggesting low overall attribution. Emotion varied from other variables in that 91.1% of comments were negative—a clear majority. While a description of the sample is helpful, the results of data analysis reveal more about the relationship between variables.

H1: It was hypothesized that involvement would be associated (statistically significant) with negative (or angry) responses as shown in a chi-square analysis.

H1 was not supported. Chi-square tests were run for two types of involvement and emotion. The test of involvement related to a focus on corrective action content[2] showed no significance (p = .21) with $X^2(1)$ = 1.57. The chi-square test run for effortful involvement[3] also showed no significance (p = .67) with $X^2(2)$ = .79.

While the Involvement 1 x Emotion test had 0 cells with expected counts of less than 5, the Involvement 2 x Emotion test had 1 cell with an expected count of less than 5 (16.7%). This percentage only accounted for 1 out of a total 6 cells for the two variables of interest for this chi-square.

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[2] "Does the commenter focus on content of corrective action statement or argument (not ranting, but rational questions or statement regarding technical issues)?"
[3] "How many words does the commenter use (highlight and look at words)?"

H2: It was also hypothesized that involvement would also be associated with responsibility attribution towards Nike in a chi-square analysis.

H2 was supported. Chi-square tests were run for two types of involvement and attribution as well. For central processing related involvement, there was no significance ($p = .20$) with $X^2(1) = 1.66$. For effortful involvement, the test showed significance ($p < .01$) with $X^2(2) = 23.85$. Both tests had 0 cells with expected counts of less than 5.

Confirming the significance of the second test, a correlation was also run for effortful involvement and attribution (returning the word count values to effortful involvement—1-163 words). Significance of $p < .01$ was found at the .01 level with a Pearson $r = .35$.

Discussion and Limitations

Theoretically, this study contributes to Contingency Theory, SCCT, and SMCC frameworks and may indicate that involvement is an important variable to consider in future studies. The study may help public relations practitioners understand how apology and corrective action image repair strategies triggers emotional venting responses and expressions of corporate responsibility attribution. Results could also lead to further empirical research testing the relationship between involvement and emotional response, for example, as the results suggested that involvement may not be related to emotion in the social media setting.

The results of tests for H1 suggest that involvement as a central (with greater elaboration) processing phenomenon (versus peripheral processing—less elaboration) in commenting may be more strongly related to emotion than effort put in to commenting (again, given Celsi & Olson, 1988; Petty & Cacioppo, 1981; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). The results of the tests for H2 suggest that effortful involvement is associated with responsibility attribution; involvement as a processing phenomenon has a weaker association with attribution. In sum, this exploratory study suggests that involvement, as a central processing occurrence, may be associated to emotional response, while involvement as an effortful action may be strongly associated to responsibility attribution. These findings could lead public relations researchers to further content analyze responses to social mediated apologies, corrective action statements, and other organizational efforts to manage and resolve conflict (i.e. proactive, strategic, reactive, and recovery phases) (Cameron et al., 2008).

Given these findings, this study was meant to be an exploratory study of responses to apology and corrective action statements released through a social media format. Since it was a content analysis of responses, a future experimental study or survey may validate the findings of this study. As it stands, this study cannot serve as an account of actual human response, but rather an interpretation of publicly voiced reactions to Nike's action statement. With that, this analysis is limited in that it did not measure dimensional emotional or cognitive states of emotional venting or involvement. It did not analyze the dimensions of corporate attribution responsibility either. Through future study, hopefully researchers and practitioners can further their understanding of these variables in the social media context.

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Appendix

Codebook

Involvement

1) Does the commenter focus on content of corrective action statement or argument (not ranting, but rational questions or statement regarding technical issues)?
    0 = no
    1 = yes (high)

Involvement/effort

2)   How many words does the commenter use (highlight and look at words)?

Recode 1-10 words as 1 (low), 11-35 words as 2 (medium), and 35+ words as 3 (high) (based on distribution of counts; most comments had few words).

Attribution

3)   Does the commenter use the word Nike?
    0 = no
    1 = yes

Anger

4)   Is the comment negative or positive (neutral goes to negative)?
    0 = negative
    1 = positive

Pretest of Reliability Using ReCal
(Variables Emphasized with Red Frames)

File size: 1507 bytes
N columns: 14
N variables: 7
N coders per variable: 2

	Percent Agreement	Scott's Pi	Cohen's Kappa	Krippendorff's Alpha (nominal)	N Agreements	N Disagreements	N Cases	N Decisions
Variable 1 (cols 1 & 2)	98%	-0.01	-0	0	50	1	51	102
Variable 2 (cols 3 & 4)	90.2%	0.719	0.721	0.722	46	5	51	102
Variable 3 (cols 5 & 6)	100%	1	1	1	51	0	51	102
Variable 4 (cols 7 & 8)	100%	1	1	1	51	0	51	102
Variable 5 (cols 9 & 10)	74.5%	0.435	0.441	0.44	38	13	51	102
Variable 6 (cols 11 & 12)	60.8%	0.208	0.315	0.216	31	20	51	102
Variable 7 (cols 13 & 14)	90.2%	0.491	0.495	0.496	46	5	51	102

Overall Reliability Check in Recall (Screenshot)

File size: 4108 bytes
N columns: 8
N variables: 4
N coders per variable: 2

	Percent Agreement	Scott's Pi	Cohen's Kappa	Krippendorff's Alpha (nominal)	N Agreements	N Disagreements	N Cases	N Decisions
Variable 1 (cols 1 & 2)	83.1%	0.641	0.642	0.642	196	40	236	472
Variable 2 (cols 3 & 4)	97.5%	0.974	0.974	0.974	230	6	236	472
Variable 3 (cols 5 & 6)	100%	1	1	1	236	0	236	472
Variable 4 (cols 7 & 8)	97.9%	0.877	0.877	0.877	231	5	236	472

Descriptive Data

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics

	N	Range	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev	Variance
Involv	236	1	0	1	.35	.479	.229
InvolvE	236	162	1	163	21.21	19.705	388.267
Attribution	236	1	0	1	.34	.476	.266
Emotion	236	1	0	1	.09	.285	.081
Valid N	236						

Table 2
Statistics

		Involv	InvolvE	Attribution	Emotion
N	Valid	236	236	236	236
	Missing	0	0	0	0
Mean		.35	21.21	.34	.09
Median		.00	17.00	.00	.00
Mode		0	6	0	0
Variance		.229	388.267	.226	.081
Range		1	162	1	1
Min		0	1	0	0
Max		1	163	1	1

Chi-Square Tests

Table 3
Involvement 1 x Emotion

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1.567[a]	1	.211		
Continuity Correction[b]	1.025	1	.311		
Likelihood Ratio	1.510	1	.219		
Fisher's Exact Test				.235	.156
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.560	1	.212		
N of Valid Cases	236				

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 7.39.
b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Table 4
Involvement 2 x Emotion

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.794[a]	2	.672
Likelihood Ratio	.782	2	.676
Linear-by-Linear Association	.763	1	.382
N of Valid Cases	236		

a. 1 cell (16.7%) has expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.42.

Table 5
Involvement 1 x Attribution

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1.660[a]	1	.198		
Continuity Correction[b]	1.311	1	.252		
Likelihood Ratio	1.683	1	.194		
Fisher's Exact Test				.251	.126
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.653	1	.199		
N of valid cases	236				

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 28.49.
b. Computed only for a 2x2 table.

Table 6
Involvement 2 x Attribution

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	23.846[a]	2	.000
Likelihood Ratio	23.830	2	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	20.823	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	236		

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 5.49.

Table 7

Correlation Between Involvement 2 and Attribution

		InvolvE	Attribution
InvolvE	Pearson Correlation	1	.345**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	236	236
Attribution	Pearson Correlation	.345**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	236	236

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Exploring the Linkages among Users' Gratifications, Sense of Community, and Relationship Outcomes on Twitter

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Abstract
Grounded in uses and gratifications theory, this study explored the influences of users' gratifications on their attitude and behaviors toward Twitter. In particular, information seeking, social interaction, and entertainment were proposed as the antecedents of a sense of community; while trust and loyalty were proposed as the consequences of a sense of community. Measurement and path analysis using a structural equation model has been conducted to test the relations among variables simultaneously. Results indicated that information seeking and social interaction were the significant predictors of a sense of community, and that sense of community influences the trust users experience on Twitter. Finally, results also indicated that users who build trust on Twitter positively increased their loyalty on Twitter.

Introduction

With more than 200 million users, Twitter is one of the most used social network tools on the Internet. However, how and why people use Twitter, and what benefits an organization could have from Twitter have not yet been explored fully. Like other social media, Twitter has similar dialogic and two-way communication features; but it also has some unique features. On Facebook, for instance, people become friends to share their content. One's content and posted status are simultaneously shared with friends, and vice versa. On the other hand, a one-way following is possible in Twitter, and people following can see the tweets from whomever they are following. These people followed can send an "@reply" message or a private direct message to people who follow them without following them back.

It seems obvious that there is a power difference between people followed and people following, and the content of messages usually disseminated from followed people to the following group. Scholars have noted that organizations use Twitter to share information or news with their public, and despite its dialogic features of a social network site, one-way message dissemination is still the most popular public relations model demonstrated by organizations (Waters & Jamal, in press).

However, the role of Twitter in affecting the perception of the relationship between an organization and the public cannot be neglected. Twitter can also be a useful tool to show what issues an organization is involved in, and to utilize real-time communication with the public. Looking at real-time communication, scholars have explored Twitter's usefulness in a crisis context (Sreenivasan, Lee, & Goh, in press). For instance, researchers Vieweg, Hughes, Starbird, and Palen (2010) argue that Twitter could contribute to situational awareness and understanding in an emergency situation.

Hence, this current research aims to explore 1) how and why individuals use Twitter, 2) what perceived benefits stakeholders receive from an organization's Twitter use, and 3) how these perceptions affect stakeholder-organization relationship quality and loyalty towards the organization.

Literature Review

What is Twitter?

Twitter, defined as "a microblogging service, has emerged as a news medium in the spotlight through recent happenings" (Kwak, Lee, Park, & Moon, 2010, p. 591). Users can tweet less than 140-character messages about any kind of topic. Liu, Cheung, and Lee (2010) also defined Twitter as "a free real-time short messaging service that enables users to send and read messages (tweets) through the Twitter website, short message service (SMS), mobile application, and various desktop applications" (p. 929). Twitter was launched in October 2006 and immediately became a popular social medium. In 2008, about 1.22 million people used Twitter, and the numbers have grown to 41 million and to 73.5 million in 2009 and in 2010 (Liu et al., 2010; Kwak et al., 2010). Twitter became a popular communication tool for diverse social sectors including politicians and corporate managers. For example, during the 2008 presidential election, Barack Obama disseminated his messages through Twitter to the American public (Liu et al., 2010).

Twitter has some unique features such as RT, @, and #. RT stands for 'retweet' and it contributes to spreading messages among Twitter users (Kwak et al., 2010). An original message can be delivered beyond the reach of the original network by the RT function. The symbol @ indicates that the message is addressed to a certain user identified after @ (Kwak et al., 2010).

For example, '@Dell' means that the message is targeted to Dell. Also, Twitter has a hashtag function by using '#.' By using a hashtag, users can create trending topics on Twitter (Nagarajan, Gomadam, Sheth, Ranabahu, Mutharaju, & Jadhav, 2009).

Compared to other social media, Twitter has a limit of 140 words and the relationship is not necessarily reciprocal (Kwak et al., 2010; Liu et al., 2010). For example, on Facebook, two individuals become friends when one accepts a friend request from the other. When the two become friends, their messages, status, and information are shared reciprocally. However, on Twitter, when a person is followed by other people, he/she does not need to follow them back (i.e., Kwak et al., 2010).

Motivations to use Twitter

To explore why people use Twitter, this study reviews literature grounded in uses and gratifications theory. There are several ways people use media. Some people just consume media content to seek information (Shao, 2009). These people consume media content by reading newspapers or watching TV. Then, some people produce their content to express themselves or use media to participate in dialogue via media content or with other users (Shao, 2009). In particular, emerging interactive media has empowered people to participate in producing media content and in interacting with other users (i.e., Johnson & Yang, 2009; Shao, 2009; Quan-Haase & Young, 2010).

The type of media use can be determined by the needs or gratifications of users. In general, Lampe, Wash, Velasquesz, and Ozkaya (2010) suggested the following gratification categories: Information seeking, providing information, social enhancement, maintaining interpersonal connectivity, entertainment, and self-discovery. McQuail, Blumler, and Brown (1972) explained four major reasons why people use media. According to McQuail et al. (1972), people use media to escape from the real word (entertainment), to build and maintain relationships, to identify themselves, and to monitor how society functions (surveillance).

In a social media context such as Twitter, scholars have further emphasized that the most critical reason why people use Twitter is to become connected with others (Chen, 2011). Conducting a survey, Chen (2011) found that the more people use social media, the more they feel that they are connected with others in society.

Uses and Gratifications

The uses and gratifications perspective has been developed in an attempt to describe users' motivation to use media. The main assumptions of the perspective are active audience, goal-oriented media use, multiple media competition, and the influence of social and psychological factors (McQuail, 2005). Instead of investigating what media do to people, scholars were interested in understanding what people do to media (McQuail, 2005).

Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1973) explained that the social and psychological needs of audiences affect their media use patterns and their gratifications from media use. Traditionally, the four needs suggested by McQuail et al. (1972) were surveillance, dispersion, identification, and relationship. Katz et al. (1973) analyzed multiple factors of needs by testing 35 statements describing why people use media.

By using emerging social media, users have become more active. Because the interactive features available in social media, people can participate in dialogue with other users and can produce their own media content (Ha & James, 1998). Ancu and Cozma (2009) suggested three needs for social media use in the context of MySpace – social interaction, entertainment, and

information seeking. In the case of Twitter, Chen (2010) emphasized social interaction needs, saying that the desire of people to be connected with others is the main reason why people use Twitter. The more people are involved in the dialogue on Twitter, they more they feel connected with others (Chen, 2011).

Several prior studies have attempted to define the needs and gratifications of media use. For example, Kaye (2010) tested 56 motivational items suggesting nine motivational factors: convenient information seeking; anti-traditional media sentiment; expression/affiliation; guidance/opinion seeking; blog ambiance; personal fulfillment; political debate; variety of opinion; and specific inquiry. Liu et al (2010) explained four types of gratifications from Twitter use including content gratification, technology gratification, process gratification, and social gratification. In particular, content and new technology gratifications were the two most prominent (Liu et al., 2010). Shim and Hwang (2010) also suggested several gratifications derived from Twitter. People develop social interactions by exchanging information, form follower groups based on the social interactions, relax and pass free time, and transfer information easily (Shim & Hwang, 2010). Scholars also emphasized the usefulness of the 140-word limit, noting that Twitter is convenient, private, and easy (Shim & Hwang, 2010).

Sense of Community

Social and information motives have been emphasized by scholars to explain why people use Twitter (i.e., Johnson & Yang, 2009). The need for social interaction and identification are related to the concept of a sense of community. Lampe et al. (2010) used the terms "sense of affinity" and "sense of attachment." Sense of affinity refers to members' identification with a group they belong to, and sense of attachment refers to the dynamics among intra-group members (Lampe et al., 2010). When people evaluate their attachment to a group strongly, this attachment influences the initiation of social interaction (Lampe et al., 2010).

Sarason (1974) defined psychological sense of community as follows:
...the sense that one belongs in and is meaningfully a part of a larger collectivity; the sense that although there may be conflict between the needs of the individual and the collectivity, or among different groups in the collectivity, these conflicts must be resolved in a way that does not destroy the psychological sense of community; the sense that there is a network of and structure to relationships that strengthens rather than dilutes feelings of loneliness. (p.41)

Exploring the influence of sense of community, scholars found that sense of community is related to several subsequent attitudes and behaviors: participation (Wandersman & Giamartino, 1980; Hunter, 1975), international relationships (Ahlbrandt & Cunningham, 1979), or civic involvement (Davidson & Cotter, 1986).

Chavis and Wandersman (1990) defined sense of community as "a phrase commonly used by citizens, politicians, and social scientists, to characterize the relationship between the individual and the social structure (e.g., having a sense of community or lacking a sense of community) (p. 56). Prior scholars have attempted to develop measurement items to explore the effect of sense of community (i.e., Chavis & Pretty, 1991; McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Bachrach and Zautra (1985) measured sense of community using seven items: feeling at home in the community, satisfaction with the community, agreement with the values and beliefs of the community, feeling of belonging in the community, interest in what goes on in the community, feeling an important part of the community, and attachment to the community (cited in McMillan & Chavis, 1986, p. 8). Also, McMillan (1976) used four items to illustrate the development of a

sense of community: a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together (cited in McMillan & Chavis, 1986, p. 9).

Adapting the items identified by McMillan and Chavis (1986), Zhang (2010) measured sense of community on a social network. The four dimensions identified were membership, influence, fulfillment of needs, and emotional connection (Zhang, 2010):

> Membership refers to the feeling of belonging created by being part of a defined community. Influence captures the idea of community influence on its individual members, and the member's feelings of control and influence over the community. Integration and fulfillment of needs refers to the idea that common needs, goals, and values provide the integrative force for a community to meet both collective and individual needs. Shared emotional connection refers to the bonds developed over time through positive interaction with other community members (p. 227).

Relationship Outcomes

A quality relationship between organizations and the public has been posited as the long-term value of public relations (Ferguson, 1984; Grunig & White, 1992). Ledingham and Bruning (1998) defined relationship as "the state which exists between an organization and its key publics in which the actions of either entity impact the economic, social, political and/or cultural well-being of the other entity" (p. 62). These scholars attempted to measure the outcomes of a quality relationship with multiple items such as trust, openness, involvement, investment, and commitment (Ledingham and Bruning 1998). Hon and Grunig (1999) also developed guidelines for measuring the outcomes of quality organization-public relationships. According to these scholars, a quality relationship produces outcomes such as control mutuality, trust, commitment, satisfaction, communal relations, and exchange relations. These relationship outcomes are essential for an organization to build and maintain a long-term quality relationship with its public (Hon & Grunig, 1999; Ki & Hon, 2009).

Moreover, scholars have emphasized the role of emerging interactive media in affecting relationships (Kent and Taylor 1998, 2002; Ki and Hon 2009). Researchers have reported that social media such as weblogs have contributed to two-way dialogue between organizations and their public, and this dialogue favorably affects the organization's relationship building process (Sweetser & Metzgar 2007). The most common items used to measure relationship quality between organizations and their public have been identification, commitment, trust, and satisfaction (Bhattacharya, Korschun, & Sen, 2009; Hon & Grunig, 1999). Identification refers to "a sense of oneness between an individual's self-concept and their concept of the group or organization with which they consider themselves a member" (Bhattacharya et al., 2009, p. 264). Commitment refers to stakeholders' intention to commit their resources to maintain the relationship over time, and satisfaction refers to the overall evaluation of the relationship (Bhattacharya et al., 2009). Hon and Grunig (1999) defined trust as "one party's level of confidence in and willingness to open oneself to the other party" (p. 19). Scholars measure trust by multiple items including integrity, dependability, and competence (Hon & Grunig, 1999).

Furthermore, loyalty has also been explored as one of the outcomes of a quality relationship. Loyalty is related to subsequent evaluations of an organization by its customers (Gracia, Bakker, & Grau, in press; Martinez-Tur et al., 2001; Swan & Oliver, 1989), and customer loyalty has been measured by purchase intention, attitude, or cognition (Caruana, 2002). The concept was extended to intangible products and services (Gremler & Brown, 1996):

Service loyalty is the degree to which a customer exhibits repeat purchasing behavior from a service provider, possesses a positive attitudinal disposition toward the provider, and considers using only this provider when a need for this service arises (p. 173).

Gracia et al. (in press) also assessed customer loyalty with the likelihood of customers' repeating purchases, word-of-mouth behavior, and the perception of excellence of the products or services.

To explore the linkages among the uses and gratification, sense of community, and relationship outcomes in Twitter context, this study proposed the following hypotheses:

H1: Information seeking motivation of Twitter will be positively associated with followers' sense of community feeling.

H2: Social interaction motivation of Twitter will be positively associated with followers' sense of community feeling.

H3: Entertainment motivation of Twitter will be positively associated with followers' sense of community feeling.

H4: Twitter followers' sense of community feeling will be positively related to their perceived trust outcomes.

H5: Twitter followers' sense of community feeling will be positively related to their perceived loyalty outcomes.

H6: Twitter followers' perceived trust outcome will be positively related to their perceived loyalty outcomes.

Method

Participants and Procedures

As a pilot test, the researchers recruited about 50 participants (over 18 years old) through an online panel service. An invitation email was distributed by the company with a small monetary incentive for completing the survey. After the pilot test, researchers recruited 217 participants (over 18 years old) using the same online panel service. Before each participant answered the survey questionnaire, he/she was required to indicate 'yes' on a consent form page.

Measurement

Motivation. Adopted from previous literature, motivations to use Twitter were measured by 16 seven-point Likert scale items (Kaye, 2010; Liu, Cheung, & Lee, 2010; Shim & Hwang, 2010). The 16 items suggested the following motivations: Information seeking (six items), social interaction (four items), and entertainment (six items). Cronbach's α was reported as .89, .80, and .80, respectively. Moreover, one item for entertainment was dropped due to its small factor loading (less than .40).

Sense of community. This scale consisted of four sub-dimensions such as membership, influence, fulfillment of needs, and emotional connection. Fifteen seven-point Likert scale items were used to measure the concept adopted from previous research (Zhang, 2010). An example of an item is, "I am proud to be a follower of this Twitter." The overall Cronbach's α of fifteen items was .92 (membership (α = .84), influence (α = .81), fulfillment of needs (α = .74), and emotional connection (α = .89)).

Stakeholder-organization relationship quality. This concept captures the dimensions of stakeholder-organization relationship quality including identification, commitment, trust, and satisfaction. Six seven-point Likert scale items, adopted from previous studies, were used as measures (Bhattacharya, Korschun, & Sen, 2009; Hon & Grunig, 1999; Keh & Xie, 2009; Sen,

Bhattacharya, & Korschun, 2006). An example of an item is, "This organization treats people like me fairly" (α = .94).

Loyalty. Stakeholder loyalty was assessed with five items that measured the perceived purchase intention, positive (and negative) word-of-mouth intentions, and perceived excellence of the organization (Gracia, Bakker, & Grau, in press; Martinez-Tur et al., 2001; Swan & Oliver, 1989). Five seven-point Likert scale items were used. An example of an item is, "I will recommend this Twitter to other people" (α = .89).

Demographic information and additional measurement. Participants' demographic information was requested including gender, age, occupation, income, and their media use (both diversity and frequency). Also, open-ended questions were asked to explore how and why people use Twitter, the number of Twitter users they follow, the number of followers they have, and why people retweet certain messages.

Results

Structural equation modeling was used to test the proposed model with the LISREL 8.80 statistical package. With maximum likelihood estimation, goodness of fit of the model was estimated with the following indices: Comparative fit index (CFI), non-normed fit index (NNFI), and root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA). Generally, a model that has a CFI and NNFI value of .90 or larger has been considered reasonably good (above .95 is excellent) (Kline, 2005). Also, a model that has a RMSEA value between .06 and .08 has been considered as a reasonable fit (less than .06 is excellent) (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Zacchilli, Hendrick, C., & Hendrick, S., 2009).

Measurement Model

First, two measurement models (gratifications measurement and sense of community consequence measurement model) were estimated before testing the proposed structural path model (i.e., Gerbing & Anderson, 1988; Luo, 2010). Adopted from prior studies, this current study considered the three main gratifications of Twitter use as information seeking, interaction, and entertainment. A three-factor model was estimated using confirmatory factor analysis. All 15 items correspond to the three constructs significantly (see Table 1). All indicators show that this gratifications measurement model has an excellent fit: CFI, NNFI, and RMSEA were .98, .97, and .06, respectively.

Separately, a sense of community and consequence measurement model was estimated using confirmatory factor analysis. Fifteen items loaded on the sense of community dimension, six items loaded for trust, and five items loaded for loyalty. Overall, model goodness-of-fit indexes show this measurement model is a moderate fit. CFI, NNFI, and RMSEA were .92, .91, and .08, respectively.

Structural Model and Hypotheses Testing

To test hypotheses, a causal path model was estimated and four out of six hypotheses were supported (H1, H2, H4, and H6). The overall fit of the model is acceptable with CFI = .91, NNFI = .90, and RMSEA = .07.

Hypothesis 1 proposed that an information-seeking motivation for Twitter use will be positively associated with a sense of community feeling among followers. Table 2 shows that the information seeking path loading to a sense of community is .40 ($p < .05$). Hence, H1 is supported. Similarly, social interaction motivation is also positively associated with sense of

community with a path loading of .32 (*p* < .05). H2 is supported. Comparing the estimated parameter, results indicated that information seeking is the most critical determinant for a sense of community feeling among Twitter users.

Hypothesis 3 stated that an entertainment motivation for Twitter use will be positively associated with followers' sense of community feeling. However, our results reported a path loading of -.10 (*ns*). H3 is not supported.

Hypothesis 4 and 5 proposed that Twitter users' sense of community feeling will be positively related to their relationship outcomes (i.e., trust and loyalty). As shown in Table 2, sense of community feeling is only significantly loaded for perceived trust (loading = .50, *p* < .05) not for loyalty (loading = .07, *p* > .05). Hence, only H4 is supported.

Finally, Hypothesis 6 stated that Twitter followers' perceived trust outcome will be positively related to their perceived loyalty outcomes. The path loading of trust toward loyalty was .73 (*p* < .05). Therefore, H6 is supported.

Overall, information seeking, social interaction, and entertainment explain 37 percent of the variance in sense of community, and sense of community explains 25 percent of the variance in trust. Then, sense of community and trust explain 59 percent of the variance in loyalty.

Discussion

Grounded in uses and gratifications theory, this study attempted to explore the influences of information seeking, social interaction, and entertainment on Twitter users' attitudes such as sense of community, trust, and loyalty. In particular, this study proposed three main gratifications of Twitter as the antecedents of sense of community feeling toward Twitter, and proposed trust and loyalty as the consequences of this sense of community feeling.

Using a structural equation model, this study indicates that uses and gratifications explain users' sense of community toward Twitter. Among the three gratifications tested in this study, information seeking and social interaction influence a sense of community feeling. Users who employ Twitter to seek information or social interaction feel that they belong to the Twitter community of an organization or a person (e.g., celebrity or professionals). On the other hand, entertainment did not demonstrate a significant influence on sense of community.

Also, results indicate that users' sense of community toward Twitter influence their level of trust toward the organization or person who owns the Twitter account. Even though there is no significant direct effect of sense of community on loyalty, results showed an indirect effect on the sense of community on loyalty through trust.

This study expanded the theoretical understanding of uses and gratifications theory in the social network domain. Prior studies have suggested several different gratifications of social media such as personal expression, opinion seeking, or social interaction. Among the various items, information seeking, social interaction, and entertainment were selected as the most widely explored gratifications of social media (i.e., Facebook or Twitter). Luo (2010) suggested that entertainment is the most critical determinant of users' positive attitude toward the Web. However, this current study did not find a significant effect of entertainment on sense of community in the Twitter context. Compared to other social network sites, this 140-character microblog may lack the ability to entertain.

The current study also explored the importance of sense of community in the context of social networking sites. These technologies allow users to easily build their community feeling in cyberspace without face-to-face interactions. As shown in this study, users' strong sense of

community is an essential determinant of trust and loyalty toward an organization or person who uses Twitter.

In terms of practical implications, these results indicate that public relations managers should consider social media strategies that can enhance a long-term relationship between their organization and users. When users feel that they belong to an organization or a community, they return to the site and become loyal to the site. And, these results have useful implications for several applications beyond traditional public relations (e.g., e-commerce, online advertising).

In this study, antecedents and consequences of sense of community on Twitter were explored simultaneously. However, some limitations to the study were found. For example, the three factor gratifications failed to explain most of the variance in sense of community. Other extended gratifications items have been used in several prior studies, but this study did not test the influence of determinants other than gratifications. To validate current findings and better account for variance in sense of community, future studies should add more predictor variables.

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Table 1. Gratification measurement model

Paths[a]	Standardized estimates	t-values
INFO1 ← INFO	.58[b]	8.75
INFO2 ← INFO	.66	10.41
INFO3 ← INFO	.75	12.11
INFO4 ← INFO	.65	10.11
INFO5 ← INFO	.68	10.73
INFO6 ← INFO	.74	12.01
INTERA1 ← INTERA	.65[b]	9.92
INTERA2 ← INTERA	.71	10.55
INTERA3 ← INTERA	.67	9.77
INTERA4 ← INTERA	.72	10.77
ENTER1 ← ENTER	.53[b]	7.52
ENTER2 ← ENTER	.43	6.22
ENTER3 ← ENTER	.43	6.33
ENTER4 ← ENTER	.82	12.06
ENTER5 ← ENTER	.86	12.70

[a] Goodness-of-fit statistics: X^2 (69) = 2322.73; CFI = .98; GFI = .93; NNFI = .97; AGFI = .88; RMSEA = .06
[b] Fixed parameter

Table 2. Parameter estimates for causal paths

Hypotheses		Standardized parameter estimates	t-value
H1	SOC ← INFO	.40**	2.83
H2	SOC ← INTERA	.32**	2.33
H3	SOC ← ENTER	-.10	-.81
H4	TRUST ← SOC	.50**	5.78
H5	LOYALTY ← SOC	.07	1.15
H6	LOYALTY ← TRUST	.73**	9.81

* Goodness-of-fit statistics: X^2 (749) = 8230.82; CFI = .91; GFI = .75; NNFI = .90; AGFI = .71; RMSEA = .07
**$p < .05$

'Just Use the Right Buzz Words':
Social Media Strategies of Top Global PR Agencies

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Abstract

The present literature positions global PR agencies as experts in the strategic use of social media to achieve client goals. However, the literature has not yet explored the ways in which global PR agencies actually use social media in client campaigns. The purpose of this paper is threefold: First, to investigate how global PR agencies define social media; second, to look at the specialized social media services global PR agencies offer to their clients; and third, to look at the best social media campaigns of these agencies to understand how effectively they put their claimed expertise into practice.

An in-depth case study analysis was conducted to evaluate the social media campaigns. The sample for this study was drawn from the 2011 rankings of the world's 250 largest public relations firms from The Holmes Report. The top five global PR agencies (Edelman, Weber Shandwick, Fleishman Hillard Burson Marsteller, and MSL Group) promote their best case studies on their websites to showcase the work they do for their clients. This study examined these social media case studies using the five dialogic principles.

The findings revealed that the term "social media" is defined differently by each agency. Based on dialogic principles this study not only monitored and measured the success parameters for social media campaigns but also came up with suggestions for practitioners to plan social media campaigns.

The study allows practitioners to better understand how they can use social media tools to create dialogue and build relationships and provides a social media reference guide for practitioners. This study contributes to the social media literature by testing dialogic theory within the unique context of how global PR agencies use social media, which has seldom been explored before. Previous studies have sufficiently examined the growth of social media within the field of public relations. However, literature on how global PR agencies are using social media is limited at this point, calling for efforts to analyze the practice and come up with measures to quantify the impact of social media tools.

Introduction

The world of social media has become the new reality of public relations. Industry leaders expect that social media will continue to change the way public relations is practiced (Gillin, 2007; Johansson, 2011, December 20; Public Relations Society of America, 2011, January 3). Rosanna M. Fiske, 2011 chair and CEO of PRSA, explained that social media is no longer just a fad and should be embraced by public relations practitioners (Johansson, 2011, December 20). She observed that the public relations industry should "be leading the charge in developing innovative ways to better reach key audiences through the use of social media" (Johansson, 2011, December 20, para. 14). This paradigm shift has also been acknowledged and promoted by public relations scholars. James Grunig (2009) noted that social media has the potential to revolutionize the practice of public relations by making it more global, dialogical, relational, and socially responsible. It can be argued that social media is changing the very foundation of public relations.

Social media have had a staggering impact on the practice of public relations since the first blogs appeared more than a dozen years ago (Wright & Hinson, 2009). McCorkindale (2009) reported that 69% of *Fortune* 2000 companies use social networking sites. Burson Marsteller found that 79% of the *Fortune* Global 100 companies make extensive use of social media platforms, such as Twitter, Facebook, Youtube and corporate blogs (Wright & Hinson, 2010). This rate of adoption indicates that the corporations with the most resources and the broadest reach have embraced social media as an effective communication tool to interact with their target publics.

The traditional mass media model practiced by newspapers, magazines, media houses, ad agencies, and public relations firms is losing its stronghold on the creation and dissemination of information. Instead, Web 2.0 has given "anyone with access to a computer the ability to reach a potentially global audience at little or no cost" (Wright & Hinson, 2009, p. 3). Because of this shift, only those who understand the new digital world will be able to communicate effectively (Wright & Hinson, 2009). Both scholars and practitioners of public relations share the opinion that technology can play a crucial role in fostering meaningful dialogue and relationships with important publics (Heath 1998; Kent & Taylor, 1998). The role of dialogue formation and relationship building should be the specialty of public relations practitioners who serve as a liaison between a company's internal and external publics (Grunig & Hunt, 1984).

Social media has dramatically changed the way information is shared between individuals, groups and organizations. As a result, public relations professionals must master these communication platforms not only to advise their clients, but also to build trust and maintain relationships with key stakeholders. In today's global marketplace, corporations are members of a worldwide community, rather than merely members of their city, town, or state (Maignan & Ferrell, 2004). Globalization has placed increased importance on the role of international public relations (PR) agencies. PR agencies are often the creators of organizational social media strategy. As organizations have realized the potential of social media, global PR agencies have integrated social media strategies into their existing services. According to the Holmes Report's 2011 Global Rankings, there is still tremendous room for growth for agencies in the digital and social media practice (The Holmes Report, n.d.). However, the adoption of social media services by international PR agencies has not been studied in detail academically.

This study has three purposes. First, this paper investigates how global PR agencies define social media. Second, it identifies the specialized social media services global PR agencies offer their clients. Third, it examines the best social media campaigns of these agencies

to understand how they translated their claimed expertise into actual practice. Given the scarce research in this area, this study not only analyzes the past cases, but also proposes suggestions that can enable practitioners to plan future campaigns more effectively. Additionally, this study contributes to the public relations and social media literature by applying dialogic theory within the context of how global PR agencies use social media.

Review of Literature

Defining Social Media

Social media has changed the way organizations do business and the way they communicate with their stakeholders. However, a precise definition of social media is difficult to construct (Wright & Hinson, 2010). As explained in the introduction, social media differs considerably from traditional media because its content involves both participation and contributions by the public (Tredinnick, 2006). Cook and Hopkins (2008) defined social media as a set of internet tools that facilitate "interaction, discussion and conversation" (p. 1). Breakenridge (2008) explained that social media uses the internet to facilitate conversations between people. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) characterized social media in terms of its ability to a "allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content" (p. 61). Solis (2007) highlighted the ability of social media to democratize content by empowering people to create and share information. Similarly, Lariscay, Avery, Sweetser & Howes (2009) defined social media as online practices that utilize technology and enable people to share content, opinions, experiences, insights, and media themselves.

Taken in combination, these definitions encapsulate the ability of the media to empower people to create and share content. The various definitions provided by scholars and practitioners also share four common themes. First, social media is characterized by *immediacy* and *speed*. It takes very little time for a person to publish and distribute content using social media. Second, social media is *user-driven*. Social media content is not controlled by editors, distributors, or other outside influences, but is created and disseminated by the users themselves. Third, social media are *easy to use*. The user interfaces of social media are simple and familiar enough that social media sites accessible to everyone, enabling easy posting or sharing within the community. Fourth, social media are *cost effective*. Social media tools are cost effective because they are free, which makes it feasible for people to build social networks across the world.

Tools enabling this interactivity have developed into a number of different forms including text, images, audio and video through the development of forums, message boards, photo sharing, podcasts, RSS (really simple syndication), search engine marketing, video sharing, Wikis, social networks, professional networks, and micro-blogging sites (Wright & Hinson, 2010).

Social Media and Public Relations

Does the rise of social media affect the way public relations practitioners develop strategies and implement campaigns? Scholars have indicated that communication through social media requires a deeper understanding of publics and a focus on increasingly smaller groups that share similar interests. Key (2005) explained that public relations practitioners need to understand how target publics gather and share information on social networks in order to influence them.

Wright and Hinson (2009) studied the impact of social media on the public relations industry. They found that social media on public relations empowered both the practitioner and

the stakeholder to communicate effectively. Wright and Hinson (2009) also examined social media use by individual PR practitioners. They reported significant gaps between what practitioners say is happening and what should be happening in terms of social media use. The growth and abundance of new media has posed new challenges for PR agencies (Croft, 2008). Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) noted that the concept of social media is on top of the agenda for many business executives today.

According to Croft (2008), social media has transformed the public relations industry because of its impact on the communication patterns of individuals. The adoption of new media tools by professional organizations is indicative of the growing importance of this new media. The International Public Relations Association (IPRA), the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), the Institute for Public Relations (IPR), and the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) are some of the key organizations with a presence on social media sites. And the trend is rising as global organizations, PR agencies, and NGO's go "social."

Public relations practitioners need to understand the importance of the emerging tools in the new media and learn to master them. Eyrich, Padman, and Sweetser (2008) discovered that public relations professionals have embraced six different social media tools: e-mail, intranet, blogs, videoconferencing, podcasts, video sharing, and personal digital assistants. However, there are apparent inconsistencies between current trends in social media practices and what practitioners feel should be happening (Wright & Hinson, 2009). Croft (2008) recommended that practitioners understand and value the use of new media. He highlighted the importance of learning to measure the impact of the new media tools after integrating them in a communication strategy. Ramsay (2010) emphasized the need for businesses to refine the way they interact with their consumers in order to uphold their reputations. He also provided a checklist of dos and don'ts in the social networking sphere, underscoring the role of practitioners in controlling and facilitating online conversations.

Global Public Relations Agencies

Public relations is an extensive global industry. An annual research study compiled by The Holmes Report showed a growth of global PR agencies from 7.5% in 2009 to 8 % in 2010 (The Holmes Report, n.d.). Their study also revealed a growth in the number of people employed in 2010 (The Holmes Report, n.d.). According to Morris and Goldsworthy (2008), PR consultancy started in the United States about 100 years ago with most of the early consultancies built around individual personalities, such as Ivy Lee, Edward Bernays, and John W. Hill. The growth of multinationals and the emergence of the information technology industry made it possible for PR consultancies to develop into international businesses. By the late 1990s, PR consultancy firms were owned by large marketing groups like WPP, Omnicom, Publicis, Havas, and IPG, which helped large multi-national conglomerates reach out to a wide array of international stakeholders (Morris & Goldsworthy, 2008).

According to Morley (1998), "specialization, globalization and communication technology" are the factors that have the greatest effect on the practice of public relations internationally (p. 45). This statement still holds true because of the way new communication technology is reshaping the PR industry. Social media tools are becoming a technological imperative for public relations practitioners. A survey conducted by The Holmes Report indicated that 62% of the agency principals believe that digital and social media are the biggest growth opportunities for them (The Holmes Report, n.d.).

Kathy Cripps (2009), president of the Council of Public Relations Firms, asserted that the stakes of organizational reputation have increased all over the world. And with the rise of social media, the stakes are higher than ever before because of the way that social media can impact corporate reputation. Social media is bringing the discussion and evaluation of corporate reputation into the public sphere—whether by comment, by blog post, by video, by photo, or by fan page—since everything is open to public scrutiny (Cripps, 2009). However, PR practitioners seldom describe themselves as corporate reputation managers, creative directors, communication strategists, brand managers, or corporate social responsibility specialists (Morris & Goldsworthy, 2008). In a detailed analysis from Members of the Council of Public Relations Firms, Kathy Cripps explained that the digital know-how of the public relations firm is one of the main reasons to hire a firm. Thus, digital expertise positions public relation firms as leaders in helping clients to maximize social media platforms.

The agencies featured in recent rankings provide, to an extent, an array of specialized services, including digital media and marketing communications. Mangold and Faulds (2009) called social media the promotion mix model because the content, timing, and frequency of social media-based conversations facilitate the promotion of a brand. However challenges remain for the PR practitioner. This model exerts more pressure on the PR practitioner to shape discussions that are consistent with organizational objectives. Global PR agencies fill the need for expert direction in crafting organizational messages for social media.

Paul Taaffem, chairman and CEO of Hill & Knowlton, claimed that today's global brands need to be more comfortable with conversations rather than broadcasts. This level of comfort can be handled only by public relations firms that are well-prepared to deal with it. Celsi (2008) positioned PR professionals as leaders to lead their agencies and organizations toward the future in digital media.

The initial studies of the Web as a public relations tool were conducted by White and Raman (2000), who found that most PR companies were utilizing websites to keep up with the competition. A similar trend in social media seems to be the use of buzz words or checklists to showcase agency expertise in communication planning. PR agency claims of adding value to communication campaigns with social media was studied by a ZDNET survey. Porto (2009) reported that although 80% of the respondents acknowledged the extreme importance of an agency's understanding of social media strategy, more than half of the PR clients were dissatisfied with agencies' ability to tie PR initiatives to general business objectives.

Measuring the impact of social media has been another cause of concern for most organizations. Paine (2009) found that agencies are particularly clueless about measuring the value of social media in terms of business benefit. Although social media is embraced by the PR agencies, they often fail to measure the value of social media (John Bell, executive creative director, 360° Digital Influence, Ogilvy Public Relations Worldwide).

Some in the industry remain skeptical about the rush to adopt social media as a serious communication tool. Taylor and Kent (2010) suggested that little evidence exists to support "all the claims about the power of social media made by the profession" (p. 209).

Dialogic Communication

Dialogue has been identified as a possible new paradigm for the field of public relations (Botan &Taylor, 2004; Kent & Taylor, 2002). Brunig, Dias and Shirkha (2008) explained the positive effects of dialogue on organizational-public relationships. They observed that "far too often relationship building activity has adopted a 'one size fits all' strategy" (p. 29). Kent and Taylor (2002) explained that dialogue can be described "as communicating about issues with

publics" (p. 2). They argued that dialogue has the potential to change the nature of relationships between organizations and publics because it emphasizes relationships. Given its focus on interactivity, dialogic theory may very well represent the PR theory most suited to examine the wide-reaching effects and practice of social media. The interactive characteristic of the social media gives PR practitioners a unique opportunity to collect information, monitor public opinion on issues, and engage in direct dialogue with their publics about a variety of issues.

Kent and Taylor (1998) identified five principles for integrating dialogic public relations and the World Wide Web: 1) Dialogic Feedback Loop, 2) Usefulness of Information, 3) the Generation of Return Visits, 4) the Intuitiveness/Ease of Interface, and 5) the rule of Conservations of Visitors.

In order to use the dialogic principles to analyze social media a few modification need to be made that address the differences in technologies between Web 1.0 and Web 2.0. The first principle of dialogic loops, which represents the enabling of public queries and organizational responses, works well with social media because the technology is based on that principle. The use of dialogic loops can be assessed by observing if communication is generated and reciprocated by both organizations and publics in a symmetrical manner. In social media this dialogic loop can be seen through "responsiveness to posts" by inquiring if the company provides feedback for the messages that come from the public. The dialogic loop can also be assessed to see if organizations allow users to see the comments of other users, thus furthering and enhancing the dialogue.

The second dialogic rule, usefulness of information, also applies to social media. Criteria like "links to other pages/outside sources" are a way to assess the presence of this item in social media. Some organizational social media pages might have links to other outside sites. A productive fan page should give users more information about the company, its products, and its interests.

The third dialogic rule is to generate return visits. The social media criterion that assesses this rule is "development of social media presence." The aim of this rule is to inquire about the number of interconnected social media networks the organization is using. Broader social networks enable an organization to communicate with a larger number of people. Consequently, the greater the number of people in an organization's social network, the more visits the company's website can have from interactions on those networks.

The fourth dialogic rule of the intuitiveness/ease of interface does not apply to social media because every social networking site has its own proprietary interface that cannot be controlled by outside organizations. For example, Facebook pages and Twitter profiles have distinctive features that make each network difficult to personalize. However, the uniformity of interface within each social network increases the usability of the network as a whole for all users.

The fifth dialogic rule, the conservation of visitors, applies to social media. Features like "following the page/ navigation buttons" allow for an assessment of the increase in the number of revisits. An organization's well-established social media presence has the potential to encourage visitors to participate in the conversation and return to the fan page. In addition, when a fan page has more navigation buttons, this gives fans more content options to explore. Discussions, posts, updates, and photos are some of the features that have the potential to bring visitors back to organizational social media networks.

Research Questions

Based on the dialogic framework and the apparent position of global PR agencies as experts in the field of social media, this research seeks to analyze the best social media campaigns of the top global PR agencies. First the websites of global PR agencies were studied to understand how they define social media. This study then analyzed the commonalities of the definitions to determine how agencies offered social media expertise as a service to clients. The importance of how social media is "defined" and "practiced" is what defines this study.

The following research questions were identified to enable the exploration of the connections between global PR agencies and social media:

RQ1: How is the term "social media" defined by the top-five global PR agencies?
RQ2: What kind of specialized social media services do the top five global PR agencies offer to their clients?
RQ3: Which dialogic features are present in the social media campaigns of the top five global PR agencies?

Methodology

This exploratory study was an attempt to understand the growing field of social media from a global PR agency perspective. The sample was drawn from the 2011 rankings of the world's 250 largest public relations firms from The Holmes Report. The top five global PR agencies (Edelman, Weber Shandwick, Burson Marsteller, Fleishman Hillard and MSL Group) were investigated to determine (1) how they define social media, (2) the kind of social media services these agencies are providing, and to (3) evaluate the social media campaigns of these agencies.

Case studies are conducted, "when a researcher needs to understand or explain a phenomenon" (Wimmer and Dominick, 2006, p. 136). The purpose of the study was to identify social media strategies of global PR agencies. The selection of the top global PR agencies was based on the annual rankings by Holmes Report. The top five agencies in 2011 were also in the top five rankings in 2010, positioning them as the best in the business. PR agencies present their work on their websites in the form of case studies. The most recent case study presented by each PR agency was taken as a sample to answer the research questions.

The case studies were analyzed to understand the overall communication strategy. The method assessed how social media was used in the campaign based on the information about the campaign shared by the sample agencies. Although the secondary data used for the study was reliable and of high quality, it was still examined with care. Because it may have been possible for the data to be subjective from the agency's point of view special attention was paid to its credibility and meaning.

As global PR agencies and their use of social media has not been well documented in academic literature the research process was a learning curve based on thorough investigation. The first step was to choose the sample, which was taken from the Holmes annual global rankings. The second step was to look at the agency websites to understand how they define social media. The third step was to delve deeper into the social media services these agencies offer. The last step was to take the work of the selected agencies to analyze the cases using a dialogic framework.

Edelman ranked number one this year; last year, it was at number three. Edelman is an independent global PR firm that has more than 36,000 employees in its 53 offices worldwide

(Edelman). Edelman had a number of case studies about their digital expertise, and the most recent one was taken for analysis. Edelman handled the digital campaign for Ben & Jerry helping them to promote their trucks travelling across U.S. to offer free Ice Cream. The campaign used a variety of social media tools to achieve the campaign goals.

Weber Shandwick Worldwide ranked at number two was on the top position in Holmes Report in 2010. Weber Shandwick is a unit of The Interpublic Group, which is one of the world's leading organizations of advertising agencies and marketing services companies (Weber Shandwick). Weber Shandwick in their campaign represented KFC by handling the KFC Scholar Program for students through social media. The case study emphasizes Weber Shandwick's expertise in running the campaign entirely on twitter and giving away one of the scholarships basis of a single tweet. The student had exactly 140 characters to convince the jury and win a $20,000 scholarship.

Fleishman Hillard ranked number three in the 2011 global rankings and was on number two in the rankings in 2010. Fleishman-Hillard International Communications, based in St. Louis, Missouri, is a part of Omnicom Group Inc., with a global network of offices (Fleishman Hillard). A couple of case studies on their official website explained the kind of services they provide to their clients- most of which was creating online marketing tools and micro sites. One of the case studies was of the All State Foundation aiming to end domestic violence and raise funds utilizing social media tools. The main objective of fund raising was achieved with the extensive use of social media.

Burson Marsteller retained its number fourth position for two years consecutively in the global rankings. Burson-Marsteller is a part of Young & Rubicam Brands, one of the world's leading marketing communications agencies, which is a subsidiary of WPP. WPP is one of the world's largest communications services groups (Burson Marsteller). Under its digital services Burson Marsteller had only one case study of The Mexico Tourism Board. The links of the case study was checked a number of times by the researcher but were found to be not working. This was quite surprising to have one of the best PR agencies website having errors. Information about the campaign was found by the researcher from International Public Relations Association (IPRA) website to conduct the research. Burson Marsteller in their campaign helped promote Chichen-Itza using the social networking site Second Life. Virtual tourists were encouraged to cast their vote in favor of the archaeological site to be named as the new seventh world wonder.

MSL Group is Publicis Group's flagship specialty communications and engagement network with 88 offices in 28 countries (MSL Group). A case study on their social media expertise webpage highlighted the plans of the Boston-based bakery chain Au Bon Pain, to open cafes in India. MSL described the case under its work in the social media as the best one and detailed out the challenge and strategy they came up with. The campaign aggressively used Facebook as the key social media tool.

Results

The first research question was to understand how the selected top five global PR agencies define social media. Results show that there is a lack of a common term or definition for social media. Global PR agencies use different terms like "digital," "digital communication," and "social media" to describe the services they offer to their clients.

Edelman calls its services "digital communication" and describes "digital space" as having a voice rather than just a series of talking points (Edelman). Digital space according to Edelman comprises people connecting, sharing, and naturally interacting with each other.

Through digital space, Edelman claims to provide organizations a place to tell their stories and build meaningful connections with the people they want to reach (Edelman). Although the definition as given by Edelman covers an aspect of social media, it is not clearly mentioned whether "social" is a part of what they call "digital" or the differences between the two terms.

Weber Shandwick offers "digital" as one of its practices under the main heading "capabilities." Weber Shandwick's digital practice claims to help its clients in "digital," "social" and "emerging media." Under its services in the digital practice, Weber Shandwick presents expertise in strategy to execution. With more than 300 digital and social media specialists in 34 offices around the world, Weber Shandwick's teams help clients in engaging their publics to produce content for mobile and tablet applications, and to manage the community.

Fleishman Hillard mentions "digital" and "social media" under the section of what they do for their clients. Fleishman Hillard defines their expertise by mentioning social networks, blogs, microsites, and wikis as essential components of their digital marketing strategy coupled with their broad industry expertise (Fleishman Hillard).

New technologies, including the rise of user-generated media, have dramatically changed the way that people communicate with each other. These new technologies enable everyone to consume, create, share and edit information on their own terms. The results indicate that more than half of the agencies are using the term digital communication as a service to their clients.

Burson- Marsteller uses the term "digital media" and defines new technologies as enabling everyone to consume, create, share and edit information on their own terms (Burson Marsteller). The new technology according to Burson Marsteller has bought in new concepts where individual voices wins over corporate ones and thus created a need for companies to change the way they have traditionally interacted with their stakeholders.

The MSL Group identifies "social media" as one of the services they provide to their clients. The agency mentions a wide range of specialty practice areas, which are further grouped into eight key cluster areas. Social media is one of the key cluster areas creating opportunities for organizations to listen, participate, and host online conversations (MSL Group).

The results indicate that four out of the five agencies use the term "digital" on their websites to offer digital and social media services to their clients. None of the five agencies defines the term "digital media" nor do they explain what the term means. The terms "social" and "digital media" are used interchangeably. For example: MSL Group uses the term "social media" in defining their practice area yet they offer designing and developing social applications and mobile applications on the Apple, Android, and Blackberry platforms along with establishing organic search engine optimization (SEO).

What was interesting to find was that all five agencies had specialized blogs talking about social media, and how they are taking up the challenge of emerging technologies and media platforms. Almost all of the agencies have blogs, but none of the blogs explained or defined what was meant by digital or social media. For example, Fleishman Hillard has a blog titled "Fleishman DNA" that talks about how digital is the future of communications and highlights the expertise and knowledge the agency brings to its clients.

Based on the results and literature review, it is necessary to understand the differences between digital and social media. Digital media is a broader term that refers to the use of technology to create and manage communications in order to build relationships with target publics. Social media, on the other hand, is the use of social networks and tools to communicate with organizational stakeholders. Definitions of social media often include the names and features of social media tools to explain the interactivity aspect of the social media. Social media

can be personalized according to the target audience, which is not always possible in case of digital media. The focus of digital media can be measured in terms of return on investment; whereas, in social media the return can be measured in terms of influence it has on stakeholders and the brand.

The second research question looked at the services offered by the top five global PR agencies. The services range from strategic to tactical expertise. Edelman offers its digital services ranging from strategy to implementation under the "expertise" link on its website. The webpage on digital communication explains the process Edelman follows in each digital campaign, which starts with listening and goes full circle until it ends with engaging and measuring (Edelman). The environmental scanning stage observes the emerging trends, best practices, and the on-going online conversations to further plan the social media planning (Edelman). Edelman not only develops the digital marketing strategy for its clients, but also creates various website designs, mobile/tablet apps, social network apps. The creative service is enhanced by providing counsel, support, and training. The training is in the form of market toolkits, digital and social media training, and digital and social crisis counsel. The last step of measurement is highlighted by Edelman as a way to analyze and measure digital and social media impact.

Weber Shandwick's digital communications practice offers to help clients understand, apply and benefit from social and emerging media in measurable ways. Weber Shandwick calls its digital work "pioneering," and has successfully created transformational digital and social media campaigns for major multinational brands. Specialized services like crisis management and change management allow clients to participate in real-time dialogue. Digital production capabilities like content creation and social platforms help clients capitalize on the integration within the social web to measure if companies are reaching and engaging audiences in these fast-growing communities (Weber Shandwick).

Fleishman Hillard with its global network claims to have developed integrated solutions across traditional, online, experiential and mobile channels to drive successful marketing programs (Fleishman Hillard). Fleishman Hillard offers services to its clients ranging from site optimization and other strategies to leveraging proprietary digital research tools.

Burson-Marsteller describes digital communications as a core communications function and a critical component in early-stage planning activities. Burson-Marsteller also offers a range of digital services from strategic development and management of interactive campaigns. Specialized services like user-generated media strategy, online PR, CEO and executive positioning, crisis and issues management, and internal communications are also offered across its global networks. Burson-Marsteller claims to help organizations understand, adapt, and develop the best interactive approach and deliver measurable business results successful in today's digital landscape.

The digital services of MSL Group aim to help global brands create strategic programs to build long-term relationships with key influencers. MSL Group provides strategic counsel and implementation capabilities across the plan, build and engage phases. Their services include creating and engaging strategic platforms, engaging programs to build enterprise capabilities, and designing and developing social applications (MSL Group). However, in its services it does not clearly indicate how it measures the campaign results and outcomes unlike other global PR agencies.

The results indicate that the top five global PR agencies offer similar specialized services in digital media to their clients. Similarities were found in their offered services, such as

research, strategic counsel to clients, and implementation of social media campaigns. Execution is another key service that offered by all five agencies, including influencer outreach, and complete design and creative services. The use of measurement to evaluate the success of a campaign was lacking in all five PR agencies. Results indicate that the top five global PR agencies offer both strategic and tactical services in social media.

The third research question looked at case studies of social media implementation of each global PR agency to analyze the actual work these agencies have done for their respective clients. The cases were selected based on the most recent examples of work provided by the agencies on their websites. These cases studies were analyzed against the dialogic framework.

Edelman: Ben & Jerry's Tweets for Sweets

Objective: Ben & Jerry's, a regular client of Edelman, has been active in the social media space with their Facebook page, Twitter presence, and various mobile apps for its customers. One of the most recent projects in the digital space by Edelman was the summer sampling program using the culturally relevant food truck concept in major cities across the US (Edelman). Edelman Digital brought the "Scoop Truck" to five markets (Miami, Los Angeles, New York, San Francisco and Boston) during the summer of 2011.

Social media tool(s) used: Consumers in the five markets could follow the "Scoop Truck" on Twitter and tweet to have a free ice cream (#OMGFreeBenJerry's) treat. The campaign created an interesting dialogic loop with 1,694 tweets on the official Twitter page. The campaign generated return visits by giving specific dates when the truck would be in each city along the east and west coast. The dates gave people a place to go back and check for the travel locations and schedules of the food truck. The conversation of visitors was enhanced through the social media engagement portion of the program on Ben & Jerry's website, Facebook page, Tumblr, Flickr as well as digital media buys across Flavorpill and Mashable (Edelman).

Results: Edelman reported that the truck visit in Miami resulted in 16, 000 + followers and the West coast truck stop at the famous Roxy Theater garnered a 73,000+ Twitter following (Edelman). However, it is not clear whether the huge Twitter following was because of Ben & Jerry's truck visit alone or because of the following of the Roxy Theater as well. Ben & Jerry's truck account on Twitter had some impressive numbers for the campaign with 12, 800 followers and the account following 9,800 people or organizations. Edelman noted that the social media effort was only one aspect of the bigger media campaign by Ben & Jerry's to increase awareness and enable participation. Twitter was an appropriate tool for customers to suggest places for the Ben & Jerry's truck to deliver ice-cream.

Weber Shandwick: KFC: Short, But Tweet $20k Scholarship

Objective: The case study by Weber Shandwick presented a unique challenge: Turning the traditional college scholarship essay into a tweeting competition. The campaign was planned around the awarding of one of Kentuck Fried Chicken's (KFC) 75 annual scholarships based solely on a single tweet. The students had 140 characters, including the hashtag #KFCScholar, to convince KFC execs why they deserved a $20,000 scholarship.

Social media tool(s) used: The key social media tool used in this campaign was Twitter, generating more than nine million social media impressions in the form of tweets during the brief entry period. In all, more than 2,800 applicants tweeted for their chance at $20,000. The KFC Twitter handle saw a 20% jump in followers in just a two-week span in February 2011, representing KFC's largest follower growth spurt in the brand's three years on Twitter (Weber Shandwick). In addition, applications for the remaining Colonel's Scholars scholarships arrived

at a record pace (KFC). The use of Twitter was not merely to engage people in a dialogue in this campaign.

 Results: Twitter was used to present ideas and help students win a scholarship, which could have been done though other social media tools as well. The measurement and outcome is misleading as exact numbers are not given. A 20% increase could be huge or small depending on what they were targeting. The main objective of the campaign was to increase the talk around the annual scholarship program, which they were able to do successfully. This campaign was also featured in Mashable's "5 Smart Social PR Campaigns to Learn From" (2011). Other dialogic features like conservation of visits were implemented by connecting the social media tools with organizational websites and encouraging students to apply for the scholarships. There was not much information provided nor was the generation of visits increased through any discussions or pictures. Allowing tweets, pictures, and comments of the winning students on the Twitter account would have made it much more interactive and dialogic.

Fleishman Hillard: Driving Online Donations

 Objective: Fleishman Hillard took up the cause with Allstate Foundation's domestic violence program to provide survivors with the financial knowledge, skills and resources that they need to help get safe, stay safe and thrive (All State). In support of this, the Foundation asked Fleishman-Hillard to help overcome the perception of domestic violence as a taboo subject by encouraging dialogue around the issue and by drawing online consumer attention using the power of digital communications.

 Social media tool(s) used: To increase awareness and meet a fundraising goal of $300,000, Fleishman Hillard used online outreach and promotion to drive traffic to www.clicktoempower.com. The site allowed visitors to "click to empower and donate" to a job training program, whereby each click triggered a $1 donation to the fund (All State). The campaign used other social media tools like Facebook, Twitter and Youtube to achieve its objectives.

 Results: The donation goal of $300,000 was achieved on time and on budget, exclusively through the use of social media, demonstrating measurable impact in meeting the Foundation's goal of supporting survivors of domestic violence. Other results like 191+ million impressions from blogs, wire postings and influencer sites, 150,000+ clicks to donate, and 96,000+ unique visitors were also achieved (Fleishman Hillard). The campaign was one of the most well defined campaigns with clearly stated goals and strategies. The dialogic feature of generation of return visits was implemented by connecting the social media tools with the corporate websites. The usefulness of information was provided through creating information channels for other survivors to talk about their experiences. The campaign highlighted how social media can be successfully used to create a platform for people to come together and talk while achieving common goals for social good.

Burson-Marsteller: SecondLife in a campaign for Chichen-Itza

 Objectives: Burson-Marsteller (B-M) helped the Mexico Tourism Board to gain significant global recognition for Chichen-Itza (a UNESCO World Heritage Site) as a world-class tourist destination. To achieve these objectives, B-M decided to target the users (called residents) of SecondLife (SL).

 Social media tool(s) used: B-M's strategy was to use SL to communicate the wonder of Chichen-Itza in a way that would generate votes and also educate SL residents about the

characteristics and history of this World Heritage Site (B-M). In addition to the conceptualization and building of the site, B-M coordinated events and media outreach to highlight the presence of Chichen-Itza on Second Life. Activities like SecondLife live concerts with artists promoting the vote for Chichen-Itza, weekly in-world events for SL residents posted on SL's calendar of events, post-launch media tours of the site for journalists, and the distribution of search engine optimized (SEO) press releases and "in-world" press events were executed. Outreach to main travel bloggers was also a part of the campaign.

Results: The campaign had more than 33,000 visitors to Chichen-Itza the day of its launch followed by an average of 10,000 visits per day to the SIM following the launch. A huge 250,000 responses yielded when googling "Chichen-Itza Second Life" (B-M). The final seven wonders were announced July 7, 2007. More than 100 million votes were cast. Chichen-Itza was chosen as one of the new seven world wonders, ranking third among the winning seven in number of votes.

The campaign was one of the best of its kind in engaging people and achieving desired objectives. The campaign was managed in 2007 when the concept of digital media was growing still. The dialogic features of engaging in conversation through dialogic loop, conservation of visits and generation of visits was very well managed. B-M's campaign was one of the only campaigns that clearly laid out the goal and showed ways of how they achieved it exclusively through social media.

MSL Group: Au Bon Pain Launch in India

Objective: The challenge for the campaign was to launch America's fast food chain in India, which is a highly competitive market. The food chain was launched in one of the key cities targeting audience mostly young and middle-class people with disposable incomes. The strategy MSL provides is to reach out and influence the consumers through social media platforms, primarily Facebook.

Social media tool(s) used: The Facebook page as cited by MSL was used to engage people with activities, campaigns, and offers (MSL). A look at the Facebook page shows around 30,000 likes with just 160 people talking about it, which is less than 1% of the people liking the page engaging in a conversation (MSL Group). The campaign mentions having 85,000+ online interactions (comments/photos shared or other fan activities), which is not evident from their Facebook page. The dialogic features of creating a dialogic loop, usefulness of information or generation of return visits were all found to be lacking in the campaign. MSL Group highlights their expertise in launching the brand, details of what they set out to achieve from their social strategy was not highlighted. A clear measurement and outcome was also missing, which could have been the ROI or other tangible results rather than just the number of likes.

Results: The Facebook page has no discussion boards and no attempt to engage the customers. The campaign used just one social media tool instead of integrating multiple social media tools to target the stakeholders while India has many other social media tools which are unique to the country and its culture. The campaign also lacked in laying out clear objectives and expertise as showcased by the PR agency.

Discussion

The findings indicate that PR agencies are jumping on the digital bandwagon; however, there are differences in how agencies define what constitutes digital media, as well as a lack of explanation about how digital media differs from social media. Almost all the agencies describe

digital as social media or vice versa. All five agencies used these two terms interchangeably without defining what they actually mean. The definitions and services provided by the PR agencies do not indicate if digital is the same as social. Digital media refers to the one-to-many communication that is the most prevalent form of broadcast across TV, radio, digital signages, websites, and search engine optimization. Whereas social media works in a many-to-many format that challenges a communicator's ability to "control" a message.

Organizations have to deal with a considerable amount of uncertainty due to the nature of the Internet as a social medium. One of the possible reasons for using a broader term like digital communication could be to cover all kinds of services these agencies offer like designing and developing various forms of digital media that are not limited to social media tools. Another other reason could be that agencies use these terms interchangeably to showcase the expertise and capabilities of the agency.

PR agencies want to be perceived as digitally "savvy" by its clients. The question is how do these agencies demonstrate their digital capabilities? For an agency to be a thought leader, just having blogs with viewpoints is not sufficient for success. Case in point is all the agencies that had detailed blogs and viewpoints on digital and social media. An agency should listen first and try to make the online forum a discussion board rather than having a conversation only about the organization they are representing. For example, MSL Group used Facebook as a tool to advertise on behalf of their client Au Bon Pain. The only information on the Facebook Page was about the launch. There were no discussion forums or topics initiated on the official page. The social media tool was not used extensively nor was its features used judiciously to engage the stakeholders.

Another prominent finding of the study was the use of various social media tools in the campaign. The selected PR agencies used a variety of social networking sites as a part of the campaign yet little attention was paid to whether they should utilize the potential of each social media tool with the most appropriate content. In some cases the campaign revolved around one social media tool alone. For example, KFC used Twitter as a sole social media tool. The campaign was not present on any other social networking site. Williams (2009) stated, "Remember, social media outlets like Facebook and Twitter are all about building relationships. The key to your success is creating value-added content that will connect you more deeply to your existing customers and create new relationships as well" (p. 25).

Based on the case studies, there was a lack of clear measurable goals set at the beginning of the campaign. All the agencies just provided the business problem instead of defining the objective the campaign aimed to achieve. All the agencies stated the results or outcomes of the campaign rather than the campaign's impact. The large number of followers or tweets or posts was stated as success parameters, which may or may not be clear indicators of success. However just counting the number of postings or followers instead of measuring the real impact these numbers can have on the brand was done by all the agencies. For example, Au Bon Pain launch by MSL could have provided useful information or insights on healthy eating or lifestyle to further enrich each customer's day.

PR agencies that promote their expertise in social media need to leverage the power of dialogue for their clients. Accordingly, social media strategies need to take advantage not only of social media tools, but also of the conversations that result from the use of the new media. However, it seems that many agency websites merely use buzzwords that give the appearance of expertise in leveraging dialogue to influence and impress potential clients. "Going viral," "ROI," "engagement," and "dialogue" are a few of these buzzwords, which are often misunderstood by

practitioners and their clients. With an array of social media tools to choose from these buzzwords are common terms to describe the social media environment and conditions. The social media buzzwords like Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, blogging, transparency, and credibility can easily confuse the readers. These buzzwords are increasingly being used by agencies to attract clients and get more business, but this research found that the promise of these buzzwords is not fulfilled in the implementation of social media strategy. The lack of focus on building relationship can be attributed to either PR agencies' lack of knowledge in using social media to build relationships or the demands of agency clients for quick, short- term, quantifiable results; or possibility a combination of the two.

The social media is field is evolving rapidly, and so is its language. The language, words and jargon of social media should be developed and used in the proper context. Practitioners and academics must continue to clarify what social media means and how it can be effectively implemented to reach short-term campaign objective while at the same time building long-term relationships with strategic publics through the dialogic characteristics of the new media. More research should also be done to explore how relationship building and achieving short-term campaign objectives can be accomplished simultaneously using social media.

The results indicate that PR agencies are passionately embracing social media but they are failing to start a conversation and sustain it. Theoretical implications of the study suggest a re-look at the dialogic theory to incorporate features of Web 2.0. The dialogic tenets can be studied further to address the specifics of social media.

Implications for PR Practitioners

One key lesson for PR practitioners is to establish clear objectives and measuring metrics. The role of a PR practitioner seems to vary from planning the entire brand social media strategy to playing a key role in supporting and executing against an already existing plan. With social media, stakeholders are directly influencing brands and PR practitioners have expanded their expertise to accommodate these new influencers. A key implication for the practice is to know the difference between acting proactively and being reactive. Organizations should not just react to conversations that have already happened, but should be proactive in stirring up new conversations and creating opportunities to start and lead conversations.

Knowing your audience has become more critical for PR practitioners in the digital world. It is not only in a location, a city or an area but is spread around the world. Gathering deeper insights into where the customers exist, what are the ideas that the customers have and what can influence those ideas is important.

PR practitioners need to be cognizant of the conversations they engage in online with stakeholders. The role of PR practitioner does not end with engaging. Practitioners should be prepared to join the conversation. With social media, conversations can start from the stakeholders, which makes it important for organizations to accept that they are only a part of the overall conversation stream.

Limitations and Future Research

A limitation of this study was its small sample size. Another limitation is the time period; longer period would render data that would, perhaps, reveal more reliable trends. The current study was exploratory in nature. The field needs new theories to study the phenomenon of social media as opposed to only applying dialogic principles. Dialogic principles are not designed for Web 2.0 and hence using them as a theoretical framework was a limitation to explore

characteristics of social media tools. Based on the results, more theoretical grounding is required to understand and emphasize the conversational nature and dialogic benefits associated with social media. A fresher approach is needed to get into the concepts of PR 2.0 and the dialogic theory of PR for social media.

Further research may assess the quality of the relationships between companies and their publics and investigate potential ways of improving them. In addition, content analysis of the social media services by the global PR agencies may yield an even better perspective of how agencies provide social media expertise to their clients.

Conclusion

Social media is not a standalone initiative but should be a part of an overall strategy. Instead of viewing social media as a smaller piece of the initiative, agencies should look at the social media as part of the bigger strategy and ask the right overarching questions. The questions could be similar to what any traditional PR program tries to answer: goals or objectives, stories the organization wants to tell, the implementation strategy, and measurement techniques. Organizations today want leadership and strategy from PR agencies in current digital space. With the passage of time, there will be more tools that will allow organizations to have an online presence through many new platforms different from Twitter, Facebook, etc. Social media has not changed the practice of public relations, but it has definitely impacted the tools and languages being used in practice. The biggest change, however, for PR in the digital world is the progress of social networks and their power to build trust or take it away with a single post. Increasingly it seems that one reason campaigns fail is because the focus of the campaign is on technology rather than community.

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Levels of Evaluation: Public Relations Agency's Perspective

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Abstract

This study advances the research in the field of measurement and evaluation by proposing a model of measuring and evaluating public relations campaigns. The model called, Levels of Evaluation, was initially developed in the agency settings; however, it can be successfully applied in corporate, non-profit or government setting as well. The model takes into account what public relations professionals produce as their outputs, the message and its dissemination, the effects on the target audiences, the influence the activities have on business results, and, finally, the overall effect it has on the organization and its place in the industry.

Introduction

Measurement and evaluation is probably the most commonly discussed topic in public relations. Manning and Rockland (2011) note that almost every year is proclaimed to be the 'year of measurement' in public relations. Yet, measurement and evaluation still remain a mystery for many public relations professionals whether because of lack knowledge or lack of interest. It is rare to see an agency pitch to be built around solid system of measuring results – more often, it is an afterthought: "Yet, as professionals, we still find ourselves putting measurement on the to-do list" (p. 30).

One of the reasons for such a poor professional adaptation of measurement and evaluation may be the lack of standard approach or best practices to measuring results. This study aims to offer a possible solution. In fact, the study proposes a standardized hierarchical approach to measurement and evaluation of public relations called "Levels of Evaluation." Although, levels of evaluation are developed in an agency setting, they can also be used by internal public relations departments to measure the results of their efforts.

Literature Review

There is no doubt measurement and evaluation is on the forefront of public relations professional debate: clients demand accountability (Kim, 2001; Hon, 1998; Grunig and Hunt, 1984). The agencies today have to demonstrate how their efforts contribute to the organizational bottom line. The Barcelona Declaration of Measurement Principles adopted at the 2nd European Summit on Measurement in June 2010 may well be the first step in this change. The seven principles, referred to as the Barcelona Principles, cover such important topics in measurement and evaluation as transparency and replicability, moving away from AVEs, effect on business results, and so on. But, arguably, the most important principle is principle number 1: "Importance of Goal Setting and Measurement" (AMEC, 2010, p. 5).

As Lewis Carroll famously noted if you don't know where you need to go, it does not matter what road you take. In other words, if the public relations agency does not have a strategic plan on how it can build value for the client, it does not matter how it measures the campaign's results – it still is going to be lacking an answer. Thus, every campaign should focus on large organizational goals.

In fact, the Barcelona Principles talk about the need to have clear stated goals and objectives addressing "who, what, when and how much the PR program is intended to affect" and include "changes in awareness among key stakeholders, comprehension, attitude, and behavior as applicable; and effects on business results" (AMEC, 2010, p. 5). Public relations can focus on different goals and objectives depending on the organization – supporting sales, improving reputation, attracting members, increasing volunteer hours, and so on. Depending on such strategic goals, the measurement and evaluation of such efforts may also be different and involve different metrics. Indeed, Michaelson (2007) wrote that "significant variations continue to exist with the varying range of approaches to public relations measurement and evaluation" (p. 1).

Yet, such variability in measurement and evaluation can harm the profession of public relations. It creates significant difficulties in comparing and replicating public relations results. It also makes virtually impossible for clients to have a clear understanding of what public relations success actually is. As a result, attempts to standardize public relations measurement and evaluation have been made for years – but without much success. Michaelson and Stacks (2011) explain that "the concept of standard measures is increasingly debated within the public relations

universe, but attempts to develop these measures remain primitive and possibly misunderstood by significant proportions of public relations professionals and academics, as well as by the measurement and evaluation community itself" (p. 1).

One of such attempts of standardization was conducted by the UK Central Office of Information in cooperation with Public Relations Consultants Association, the Chartered Institute of Public Relations, and the Association for Measurement and Evaluation of Communication. The authors claim that the result was creation of "the first ever mandatory core standards for PR evaluation" (COI, 2009, p. 1). This standard included eight mandatory metrics public relations professionals were required to use in measurement and evaluation process. These metrics included number of pieces of coverage published as a result of campaign, exposure of target audience to these messages as number of people and percentages, frequency of exposure by one person and by all, ratings of coverage, cost per impact, and sources of coverage.

Although this standard of evaluation was a positive step forward as it focused on the actual target audience rather than overall circulation metrics or advertising-value equivalency, it had many significant drawbacks. First of all, it reads as measurement and evaluation of media relations rather than public relation in general. Some of the public relations sub-functions, such as for example investor relation or fundraising, do not place strong emphasis on publications in the media but rather on interpersonal or small group communications. Thus, COI's metrics would be virtually impossible to use in these specializations.

In addition, all the metrics are based in measuring the media – but having an article in a newspaper does not guarantee that the message the client wants to send across will actually be understood, liked, and acted upon by the target audience. Furthermore, the actual business results or other bottom-line measures are not even included in COI's standard – indeed, if a company engages a public relations agency services to conduct campaign in support of sales of a new product, the company wants to see increase in sales rather than just increase in media mentions. In other words, it is important to build a link to actual business results in measurement and evaluation standard. So, COI's standard lacks more advanced measures that will go beyond measures of media to measure actual changes in the target audiences and impact on the company's business. Finally, COI's standard also lacks less advanced measures – what the PR agency actually produced. Having three articles published in a newspaper can result from three press-releases sent or from 100 press-releases sent depending on the client, issue/product, deadlines, other events happening in the world, and so on. Public relations agencies have a need to demonstrate to the client the actual work performed on its behalf to be properly reimbursed, but COI's approach does not provide such an opportunity.

One of the earlier approaches to standardizing public relations measurement and evaluation process was conducted by Walter Lindenmann in 1997 and published in the final form in 2002. The goal was stated as finding "a uniform 'ruler' we can all use for measurement" (p. 1). Lindenmann (2002) proposed measuring three distinct areas: outputs, outtakes, and outcomes. Outputs are defined as results of public relations programs: for example, "in media or press relations, *outputs* can be the total number of stories, articles, or 'placements' that appear in the media…" (p. 5-6). Outtakes are defined as measures of target audience actually receiving and retaining the message. Outcomes are once again measures of the target audience but this time if the message resulted in the change of opinion, attitude or behavior in the target audience. Finally, Lindenmann (2002) also called for measuring outcomes on a organizational level – whether PR efforts can in fact advance the overall goals of the organization.

This approach has significant advantages – first of all, it takes into account organizational goals and moves beyond just media relations. Also, it clearly distinguishes between what appeared in the media and how it actually was perceived by the target audience. However, it also has its weaknesses. The approach does not measure the actual work performed by the agency – in other words, how much effort was invested to achieve whatever coverage was generated. Second, it has inconsistencies in its measurement areas – outcomes and outtakes represent two different measurement areas but both call for measures of the target public. At the same time, outcomes as a single area has two distinct measures: measures of target publics and measures of organizational results. Finally, this approach does not take into account the overall changes in the industry that can have significant influence on the business results and cannot be ignored.

Recent approach to measurement and evaluation was presented by Michaelson and Stacks (2011). Michaelson and Stacks adopt awareness, interest, desire, and action model to public relations. As a result, their measurement approach focuses primarily on target publics measuring their awareness, knowledge, interest and relevance, relationship, intent, and advocacy. In addition, they include intermediary measures based on media or other third party communications.

Once again, the authors do not take into account the amount of work that went into the campaign – the actual activities public relations professionals engaged in. On the other side of the spectrum, the authors of this approach do not attempt to evaluate the actual business results of the campaign – something that clients are in fact very much interested in.

As a result of this review, it is possible to suggest that diverse public relations measures can in fact be organized in a standardized approach to measurement and evaluation. However, such approach should take into account the weaknesses observed in earlier models. It is important to measure broad public relations activities rather than just media relations or any other separate sub-function. Thus, the measurement and evaluation standard should allow for variability of specific measures, while still presenting a unified structure of measurement. Such standard should also include measures at various stages: from the actual activities of public relations professionals to the final bottom-lime measures for the organization.

Consequently, the proposed approach to measurement and evaluation is a standardized hierarchical structure that can be applied across contexts and organizations. This hierarchical structure referred to as "Levels of Evaluation" can help achieve standardization of public relations measurement and evaluation and allow agencies to bring the results to the forefront of a campaign's pitch. At the same time, this model of Levels of Evaluation does not limit the variability of actual public relations activities. Instead, levels of evaluation define the hierarchy of levels at which any campaign should be evaluated, while the actual activities at each of these levels will vary across clients and campaigns.

Levels of Evaluation

Levels of Evaluation approach consists of five hierarchical levels: Output, Outreach, Outcome, Outgrowth, and Outperform.

Output

Every public relations campaign is based on the actions that public relations agency takes to achieve the objectives of the campaign. Public relations activities can include sending out news releases, organizing special events, building relationships with opinion-leaders, designing online presence, and so on. Each of these activities may require significant efforts on the part of

agency's staff and commitment of other agency's resources. Thus, it becomes important for an agency to measure and demonstrate to a client the actual work involved in the campaign – the amount of work, energy, goods, or services produced – in other words, the output of the agency.

Output is not a novel term when it comes to public relations measurement and evaluation, however, its use was inconsistent (Michaelson and Stacks, 2011). Yet, the dictionary definition of the term output is precisely this: "something produced" (Merriam-Webster, 2012). Thus, it is logical to use the term output for the level measuring what the public relations agency produces on behalf of its client.

Thus, the focus of the output level is the public relations agency itself and what it produces; however, the actual metrics can vary based on the campaign objectives. It is possible, of course, to present clients with an actual count of what was produced: for example, 30 press-releases were written, 50 phone calls with opinion-leaders were conducted, or 150 tweets were posted. More often, however, agencies use the hour method – presenting the client with the amount of hours that were dedicated to working on this client's account.

It is also possible to narrow down the measurements: one press-release is not always equal to another one. One can be 400 words while another go over 100 words, thus word count produced on behalf of the client can be measured. Qualitative measures can also be incorporated: for example, some press-releases can be about the products of the clients, some about the corporate structure, and some about research and development.

No matter what exact measures are used, what important is that agency presents to the client the outputs produced on its behalf. The output level becomes the foundation all other levels of evaluation are built upon and, as a result, the foundation for evaluating the success of the agency's work. Indeed, if the campaign aimed at sales increase falls short of its goal can it be explained by the lack of news releases produced or by the general economic downturn with the decline of sales across the whole industry? Measuring output can help the agency and the client understand the answer to this question.

Outreach

All the efforts the agencies put into the campaign are useless if the outputs of their work do not go anywhere beyond the agency. The goal of many public relations campaigns is communicating a client's message to the target audiences and to reach these target audiences agencies usually rely on intermediaries: mass media, bloggers, other opinion-leaders, and so on. Thus, the second level of evaluation focuses on the intermediaries and the channels of communications to measure how far and wide the reach of the produced message was.

For example, when we talked about output level, we said that the company produced 30 press-releases on behalf of the client, but let's say only five of these releases were actually picked up and published in media outlets. Then, when measuring outreach level we would report five press releases that were published.

Once again, the actual measures may differ as long as they focus on the intermediaries. Instead of amount of press-releases picked up, one can measure readership of newspapers where the stories were published or viewership of the TV program. In addition, different media outlets have different readers – a client may be interested in females 18 to 25 years old rather than males 60 to 75, as a result, a story in Cosmopolitan may be more appropriate than a story in the Wall Street Journal. Thus, measures of circulations, measures of readership/viewership can and should be incorporated during the measurement and evaluation at the outreach level.

Qualitative measures should also be used at the outreach level. For example, the stories that appear in the media can be positive, negative or neutral; they can briefly mention the client or focus specifically on the issue the client is interested in communicating about and develop significant coverage to this issue. In other words, these qualitative measures can significantly enhance the relevance and accuracy of the measurements on the outreach level.

Outcome

Having a releases on the topic important for client prepared and published in an appropriate outlet is not sufficient, however, to call the campaign successful – at minimum, our message should actually produce an effect in the target publics. Thus, the outcome level measures the outcome of the campaign in the target audience. Instead of the reach of the intermediaries, we will be measuring the actual target public and if they have become aware of the message, understood the message, developed an intended attitude toward the message, and, in fact, now plan on acting the way we want them to in regard to this message.

Indeed, placing a message in an article does not guarantee that a member of the target audience will actually receive the message. So, at the outcome level, we move from measuring the media/intermediaries, to measuring the actual target audience.

The basic measure of outcome is based on awareness. If the client produced a new model of cell phone, we want to know if the target audience is aware of this new model. But simply knowing about the new phone is not enough - we also want to measure the comprehension – if the target audience understands what is new about this cell phone, what features it has and what features it does not have, as well as how it is different from earlier models or competitors models.

However, knowing the features of the new cell phone and how it is different from other phones does not guarantee that members of the target audience will actually like the features the new device has. Thus, measures of attitude can and should be used at the outcome level – is there a perception that these features are in fact needed. Finally, despite knowing about the new phone, understanding its unique features, liking its capabilities, one still may be fine with his or her old phone and have no desire to purchase the new device.

Thus, another important measure of the outcome level is the purchase intention. Indeed, there is little value in making sure the target audience is aware of the product, knows its features, and likes it, if at the end of the day members of the target audience do not wish to buy it. As a result, purchase intention is an important measure of the target audience. Of course, intending to purchase something and actually purchasing it are also two very different things, but the actual purchases will be discussed at the higher level of evaluation, outgrowth, because to measure actual purchases we would need to go beyond the target audience measures.

Outgrowth

Once again, the clients are not usually interested in having customers liking the product or intending to buy it, but in actual purchases made. Thus, the outgrowth level moves away from measurement for the target audience and focuses on the measuring the client's business results – what is often referred as ROI, return-on-investment. Instead of measuring intensions to purchase among target publics we measure the actual sales based on the company's data. This level evaluates what actually grew out of the seeds of the campaign and what return the client generated.

Once again, the specific measures can vary based on the goals of the campaign – in the case of sales, it may be the actual sales in units or dollar amount, or sales increase in comparison with previous period; in the case of non-profit organization, it may be the actual donations or volunteers, or the percentage increase in both of these measures from the previous period; in the case of political campaign the amounts of votes received, or campaign contributions, and so on. The measure must reside in the organization and show the return for the organization based on the goal of the campaign.

Thus, it is also important to take into account the costs of the campaign. For example, a campaign that generates $1 million in sales and costs $100,000 is more successful than campaign that generates the same $1 million in sales but costs $500,000.

Outperform

The final level of evaluation goes one step above the actual client's organization and measures the whole industry where this organization operates. For example, for an automaker the sales can go up as a result of the overall economic recovery or go down as a result of the economic downturn whether campaign is successful or unsuccessful. It is possible to have increase in car sales simply because people have more disposal income and more consumer confidence, and thus they buy more cars across the board. Thus, this increase in sales will have nothing to do with the campaign efforts but rather with the state of the economy. The same would be true if sales are decreasing across the board in the industry because of the economic downturn or technological changes. If campaign measurement and evaluation is limited only to the first four stages, it would be impossible to identify this influence of the economy. Thus, adding the fifth levels will allow the public relations agency to capture this information.

Looking at the overall industry and the client's competitors can help identify if the industry is growing or declining as a whole, which competitors are growing and which competitors are declining and why. As a result, we can see the changes in the client's market share. In this situation, a successful campaign can help make the growth larger than the one of the competitors or have the downturn smaller also in comparison with the competitors. As a result, it is beneficial to look at the overall industry when evaluating the success of the campaign.

The actual measures can include the sales versus the competitors, changes in the market share, changes in the product competitive position, stock price changes in comparison with other companies in the industry, and so on. Once again, it is important to supplement these metrics with qualitative measures. In fact, identifying the reasons for changes in competitors' position can enormously help the client. For example, Kodak started as the leader in camera sales but was losing its market share for years until it finally ended on the verge of bankruptcy. Industry analysis would allow the company to identify the technology change as the reason behind the sales decline and, thus, respond to this challenge appropriately.

Levels of Evaluation: The Model

Levels of Evaluation model can allow public relations industry to develop standardization across the measurement and evaluation approaches, and yet, at the same time, use variability of specific measures most appropriate for various clients and campaigns. More importantly, levels of evaluation can help agencies not just after the campaign is over, but also to incorporate measurement and evaluation into the heart of campaign planning and campaign pitching to the clients as well as be used during the campaign as a monitoring tool.

One of the main strengths of Levels of Evaluation is the coverage of all stages in public relations process as presented on picture 1: from idea born in public relations professional's mind to the actual changes in the client's competitive environment rather than focusing on separate media effects or target audience measures. Each of the levels requires measurement taken among different publics/environment.

The first level, *output*, is a measure of the public relations agency activity – so, the measure focuses on public relations professionals' efforts. The second level, *outreach*, is a measure of how far the message was able to spread in the media, on the Internet, or among the opinion-leaders. Thus, the intermediary publics are measured. The third level, *outcome*, measure results in the target audience and, as a result, the measures focus on target audiences' awareness, attitude, and behavior. The fourth level, *outgrowth*, looks at the business results – thus, the focus in on the client's business. Finally, the fifth level, *outperform*, puts the campaign's results into the context of the overall industry and economy and, consequently, the focus is on the overall economic environment in which the client operates.

Finally, the model of Levels of Evaluation always focuses on the organizational goal: it starts with the goal and ends with measuring how the campaign helped to achieve this goal. Although it still does not allow establishing a definite causal relationship between measures taken at the output level, such as how many press releases were written, and the campaign's final result, for example increase in sales, presenting the client with the quantitative and qualitative results for each level of evaluation can help the agency build this connection between public relations actions and final results. Furthermore, having levels of evaluation as part of the campaign's pitch establishes this connection from the early planning stages and helps make campaign more strategic and relevant to the client's needs.

Picture 1: Levels of Evaluation
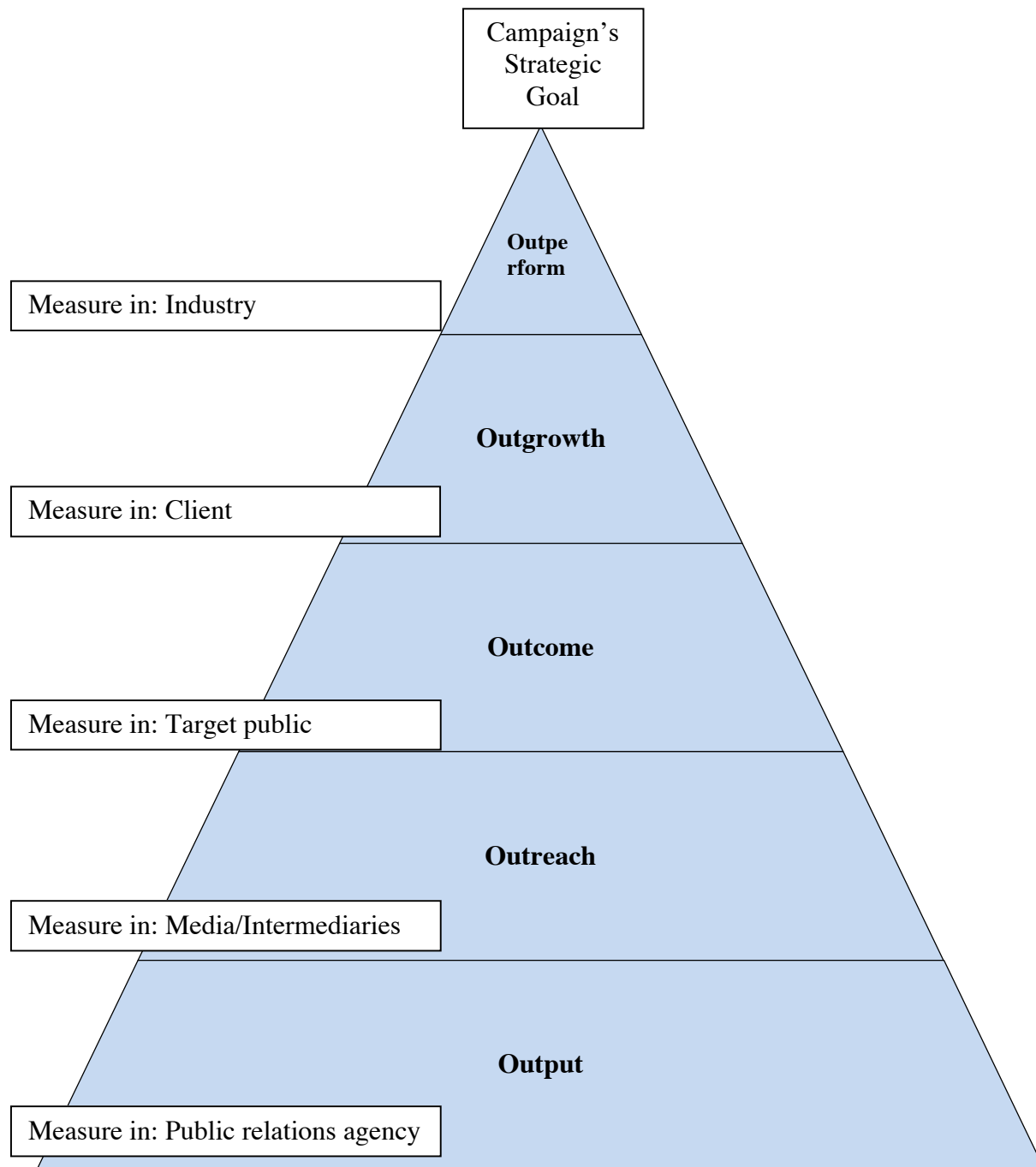
The model also does not take a stand on what is the best way to measure each of the levels. Indeed, campaign to increase donations to a non-profit would require completely different measures than a campaign aimed at increasing perception of reliability for a car manufacturer. Yet, results for both of these campaigns can be presented at each level of the Levels of

Evaluation model. Some campaigns would require quantitative metrics; some would be more appropriate for qualitative measures. Most likely, however, a combination of both quantitative and qualitative metrics would be the most effective.

To pretest this models of Levels of Evaluation, a survey of public relations professionals was conducted. The survey conducted online in summer 2006 recruited 122 public relations professionals from one large international public relations agency to answer the following question: In your opinion, how important each of these levels of evaluation is for your clients. The survey used the scale from 1 to 10, where 1 was not important at all and 10 was very important. Table 1 indicates that public relations professionals believed that every level of evaluation proposed in the model is important for public relations clients.

Table 1. The descriptive results for levels of evaluation.

	Mean	Median	SD	Skewness	n	Agree (8-10)	Neutral (4-7)	Disagree (1-3)
Output	6.54	7	2.832	- .497	122	44%	39%	17%
Outreach	8.84	9	1.688	-2.306	122	85%	12%	2%
Outcome	7.88	9	2.173	-1.049	122	68%	29%	3%
Outgrowth	7.99	9	2.320	-1.367	122	71%	25%	5%
Outperform	7.78	8.5	2.414	-1.094	122	67%	27%	6%

Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

In fact, the lowest scored item was the first one, *outputs* (M = 6.54; sd = 2.832; n = 122), yet the item's mean still indicates the respondents mostly agree that measuring output is important with 44% percent of respondents actually agreeing with importance of measuring outcomes for public relations agency's clients; only 17% of respondents disagreed with this statement.

All other levels of evaluation scored higher: 85% of respondents believe *outreach* measures of media are important (M = 8.84; sd = 1.688; n = 122); 71% agree with importance of *outgrowth* measures of business results (M = 7.99; sd = 2.320; n = 122); 68% agree with importance of *outcome* measures (M = 7.88; sd = 2.173; n = 122); and, finally, 67% agree with the importance of measuring *outperform* results in the client's industry (M = 7.78; sd = 2.414; n = 122).

These findings indicate that measures from each level of evaluation are important to the clients in public relations agency relationship. As a result, each one of these levels should be retained for the model of measurement and evaluation and used in measuring public relations results.

Furthermore, the survey also asked how important measurement and evaluation was overall for the agency's clients. The item was also measured on a scale from 1 to 10, with 1 indicating not important all and 10 indicating very important. The overall response to the question indicated that issues of measurement and evaluation are very important to the public relations clients (M = 9.04; sd = 1.265; n = 122) with more than 85% of all respondents agreeing with this statement and not a single one of the respondents disagreeing with it.

What is interesting, however, is the discovered correlation between the question of importance and the level of evaluation question. The higher the respondents rated the overall importance of measurement and evaluation for the public relations clients the higher they rated the importance of two of the highest levels of evaluation: outgrowth, measuring results for the

company's business (r = .323; p = .000), and outperform, measuring the results in the company's industry (r = .328; p = .000). Both of these results are statistically significant (p ≤ .001); see Table 2.

Table 2. Correlation results between the overall importance of measurement and evaluation and levels of evaluation.

	r	p	n
Output	.036	> .001	119
Outreach	.079	> .001	119
Outcome	.281	> .001	119
Outgrowth	.323	< .001	119
Outperform	.328	≤ .001	119

This finding indicates the importance of these two highest levels of evaluation. If a public relations agency has a client who values measurement and evaluation overall, it is more likely for such a client to demand higher levels of measurement and evaluation as well. However, other approaches to standardizing measurement and evaluation of public relations either do not include these measures at all or do not identify them as standalone levels. Thus, the proposed model of Levels of Evaluation that identifies company's business results and company's performance versus its competitors as important standalone levels of measurement and evaluation is better prepared to meet the needs of the public relations industry and its clients.

This can also perhaps suggest that as the overall importance of evaluation increases in the future the importance of higher levels of evaluation will be increasing as well. However, correlation does not necessarily mean causal relationship between the variables – so, additional research is required before this statement can be supported.

This proposed model of Levels of Evaluation was developed back in 2006 and the survey validating it was also conducted in summer 2006. Thus, it is possible that changes over the last five years made the model irrelevant to the practice of public relations today. However, recent developments indicate that it does not seem to be the case. In reality, some of the most recent standards proposed by the public relations industry, in fact, follow similar guidelines and provide additional validation of the model of Levels of Evaluation. For example, June 2011 AMEC proposed guidelines for measurement and evaluation standards are quite similar to the measurement and evaluation approach designed in this study. AMEC (2011) proposes three stages: public relations activity, intermediary effect, and target audience effect. These three stages are similar to the first three stages of the Levels of Evaluation model: public relations activities are measured at the output level, intermediary effects are measured at the outreach level, and the target audience effects are measured at the outcome level.

What AMEC standards lack are the final two stages; the stages that, arguably, are the most important for the clients of public relations agencies – actual business results and comparison with the competitors in the same industry. AMEC has recommendation to measure the business result as part of target audience effect – however, such approach is unclear. Target audience's intent to purchase a product does not automatically mean an actual purchase – thus, to measure actual business results one should measure the actual sales by the client's company. As a result, it is warranted to have it as a separate level of evaluation that would focus on measuring the company not the target audience.

Finally, as explained above, changes in sales (or donations, votes, or anything else) can be caused by factors outside of the agency's or client's control. On a very cold day there may be less people who would go to vote; when the economy experiences a downturn, sales of some products can decline across the board, and increase in sales of other products can be explained by changing technologies rather than by successful public relations campaign. Thus, industry level measures are important to better understand the contribution of the public relations agency to the company's bottom-line.

Conclusions

Linda Hon voiced the question that clients and executives ask of public relations professionals: "What have you done for me lately?" (1997, p. 1). She further explained that "the challenge for scholars and practitioners remains to more clearly articulate how effective public relations helps organizations fulfill their mission, whether that is making money, saving lives, or some other goal not showcased here" (Hon, 1997, p. 27). Today, this challenge remains.

The proposed model of Levels of Evaluation, however, can help to address this challenge. Starting with clearly defining the overall strategic goal for the public relations engagement creates a value proposition for the public relations agency's client. Then, it shows how each action taken by a public relation professional at the *output* level, translated into the media effects at the *outreach* level, leading to changes in the target audience's awareness, comprehension, attitude, or behavior on the *outcome* level, thus effecting the business results of the client's company on the *outgrowth* level, creating changes in the client's industry an competitive environment at the *outperform* level.

This standardized approach to measurement and evaluation at the same time allows for variations in specific metrics used at each level as public relations strategic goals can vary greatly from specialization to specialization, from client to client, and from campaign to campaign.

The initial validation of the model of Levels of Evaluation indicates its relevance to the public relations agency operations. However, the data collected focused simply on the clients' demands of public relations professionals. Future research should investigate the opinions of public relations professionals and their preparedness to conduct measurement on each of these levels of evaluation. Furthermore, although the survey received 122 responses, the data were collected only at one large international public relations agency. Other agencies may perform and view measurement and evaluation processes differently. Thus, additional research is needed to include more respondents from various agencies.

The model of Levels of Evaluation is applicable in agency's setting as well as internal department settings – more research is needed, however, to test the model in the department setting. Same is true for various specializations of public relations – the model should be applied in various contexts to better evaluate its usefulness: from investor relations to non-profit public relations.

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Perceived Professional Standards and Roles of Public Relations in China: Through the Lens of Chinese Public Relations Practitioners

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Abstract

As the first quantitative examination of perceived public relations professional standards in China using an online survey, this study was designed based on the standards of professional standards inventory Cameron, Sallot and Lariscy (1996) constructed and tested among practitioners in the U.S. The survey results suggest six dimensions of perceived standards of professional performance: 1) Role and function in organizational strategic planning; 2) Sufficiency in professional training and preparedness; 3) Gender and racial equity; 4) Situational constraints; 5) Licensing and organizational support; and 6) Participation in the organizational decision-making team. Four dimensions of public relations roles were also identified by the survey participants:1) Brand promotion facilitator; 2) Public information specialist; 3) Media relations counsel; and 4) Conflict management expert. Primary practice area was found to affect how Chinese practitioners perceive the six clusters of professional standards and the four identified public relations roles. These findings provide insights for both practitioners and researchers on how Chinese public relations practitioners view public relations as a profession and how the profession currently holds its professional standards in China.

Background

In a recent article on China and public relations research, Ovaitt (2011) described the growing public relations profession in China as "a one-of-a-kind place and experience." According to Ovaitt (2011), given China's "fast-developing indigenous public relations industry," its "growing number of local practitioners working on the client side and in Chinese and multinational agencies," and the Chinese public relations community's hunger for "research and expert knowledge from many sources," it is critical for researchers to examine how things work and further strengthen the research exchange and development.

Although different areas of public relations practice have been examined in the past several years (e.g., relationship management, Zhang & Taylor, 2010, Hung & Chen, 2009; reputation management and image restoration, Meng, 2010, Zhang & Cameron, 2003; government affairs, Yi & Chang, in press, Chen, 2007; consumer relations, Wang & Wang, 2007; corporate social responsibility, Wang & Chaudhri, 2009; crisis communication, Chen, 2009; etc.), the main approaches have primarily relied on case studies and qualitative research. Noticing this lack of sufficient quantitative research to provide a bigger picture of PR practice in China, Li, Cropp and Jin (2010) conducted a survey of Chinese PR practitioners' strategic conflict management decision-making processes regarding their evaluations of key components of the contingency theory of strategic conflict management. They also called for more quantitative research to identify the role public relations plays in the contextual trend of the globalization of public relations practice. This study responds to that call.

Adapting the research approach Cameron, Sallot, and Lariscy (1996) took in developing standards of professional performance in public relations in the U.S., this study seeks to examine the extent to which Chinese public relations practitioners perceive standards through their own point of view and experiences in the Chinese context.

Given the booming economic development of China, the trend of globalization of public relations practice, it is important for researchers and practitioners to understand whether there is a set of standards of public relations professional performance in China; if so, how and why they are similar to their peers in the U.S. Using an online survey of Chinese practitioners across practice areas and different geographic locations, this research advances the body of knowledge of international public relations research and helps practitioners to define their professional standards and improve their performance in different areas.

Literature Review

Standards of Professional Performance in Public Relations

Sha (2011) posited a general question "what is a profession?" (p. 121). Sha (2011) outlined the struggle as related to the definition "what constitutes a profession," which confronts "occupations in transition" (p. 122) in the United States and other countries and regions. The importance of understanding the characteristics of professions and professional standard was further advocated (Sha, 2011).

In the U.S., Cameron, Sallot, and Lariscy (1996) identified about twenty elements of professional performance of public relations practitioners in the U.S. It was found that U.S. practitioners tended to view ethical guidelines, accreditation and writing/editing skills as enjoying well- established standards. Licensing, location of public relations on the organizational chart and inclusion of public relations in the dominant coalition were viewed as most lacking in a standard of professional performance.

Cameron, Sallot, and Lariscy (1996), Sallot, Cameron and Lariscy (1997, 1998) examined the extent to which public relations practitioners in the U.S. perceive standards to be in place for each of the following items: 1) educational background, 2) continuing education/training, 3) research strategies for campaign planning, 4) management skills, 5) ethical guidelines for media relations, 6) ethical guidelines for client/practitioner relations, 7) accreditation, 8) research strategies for program implementation, 9) research strategies for program evaluation, 10) licensing, 11) documented accountability of public relations to clients/employers, 12) technical skills such as writing, editing, graphics, and production, 13) budgeting skills, 14) managing public relations through goals and objectives, 15) gender equity in opportunity, 16) racial equity in opportunity, 17) the location of public relations on the organizational chart, 18) the inclusion of public relations in the "top decision team", 19) public relations as an advocate for a client or a point of view, 20) how public relations should operate, such as publicity, public information, liaison, and 21) salaries for technicians, managers, and executives.

The professional standards framework Cameron and his colleagues developed was applied in understanding public relations practice in South Korea. Park (2003) examined the perceptual accuracy and the extent of the discrepancy of perceived professional standards between government and corporate public relations practitioners, the results of which suggested the influence of cultural perspectives. Gender and practice area (corporate vs. government) were found to be important factors that influence professional standards.

Developing Public Relations Professional Standards in China

Although case studies and qualitative research has been conducted on public relations practice in China, there few quantitative studies to provide a bigger and updated picture to describe this growing industry. Questions remain such as whether there is a set of standards of public relations professional performance in China, as well as how and why they are similar to their peers in the U.S. Li, et al. (2010) conducted an online survey, examining the influence of over 80 individual variables as perceived by Chinese public relations practitioners. Individual characteristics as related to strategic conflict management as well as political-social factors were identified as the most influential variables. However, there is still a lack of understanding about how Chinese practitioners view public relations professional standards and what roles public relations play in China.

In addition, factors such as gender (Aldoory & Toth, 2004) and practice area (Li et al., 2010), need to be taken into consideration, given their influence on public relations and their potential effects on how Chinese practitioners might perceive professional standards. In terms of gender effects, Park (2003) found that, in South Korean public relations practice, gender inequality in the relationship hierarchy had been eliminated; however, there was still no social and occupational consensus. As Li et al. (2010) found, female Chinese practitioners tended to indicate less variance or change according to who they are, whom they work for, and who they need to deal with. In terms of the effects of practice area, according to Park's (2003) study on practice in South Korea, public relations of government systems seemed to operate differently, compared to corporate public relations, in the realm of personal influence model and the behavior of personal relations. However, whether this applies to public relations practice in China remains unknown. Thus, the following research questions are posited:

RQ1: What are the perceived standards of professional performance among public relations practitioners in China?

RQ2: What key roles do public relations play as perceived by practitioners in China?
RQ3: How do gender and practice area affect practitioners' view of the professional standards of public relations in China?

Method

As the first quantitative examination of perceived public relations professional standards in China using an online survey, this study was designed based on the standards of professional standards inventory Cameron, Sallot and Lariscy (1996) constructed and tested among practitioners in the U.S. The original English version of the questionnaire was translated and pilot-tested among Chinese practitioners. Participants of the survey were recruited using a snowball sampling technique, due to the difficulty of obtaining access to an existing practitioner membership directory. This approach was used by Li et al. (2010) in their survey study. The online survey was launched on www.nquestion.com, a Chinese professional online survey service provider.

According to Katz (2006), snowball sampling is "nonprobability method for developing a research sample where existing study subjects recruit future subjects from among their acquaintances." As Katz (2006) mentioned, snowball sampling technique is often used "in cases where a sampling frame is hard to establish and it is assumed that cases are affiliated through links that can be exploited to locate other respondents based on existing ones." In this study, without any sampling frame from which to draw a random sample, the first author emailed her Chinese public relations contacts and invited them to recruit their acquaintances and further share the survey link to other practitioners they know. These connections later invited their professional contacts via emails, which directed participants to the survey site.

This online survey was conducted among Chinese public relations practitioners from June to October, 2011. A total of 118 Chinese practitioners completed the survey, with an average age of 30 and an average of five years of professional experience in public relations. About 52% were male and 48% were female. More than half (55%) reported their practice area as media relations, while 22% reported their practice area in consumer relations; the other 22% reported practice areas as investor relations, government relations, interest group relations, etc.

Results

For the first research question, an exploratory factor analysis was used to explore the dimensionality of perceived professional standards of public relations in China (see *Appendix A*). A Principal Components Analysis with Varimax provided a solution with eigen values above 1.0 and accounted for 64.78% of the variance, rendering six dimensions of perceived standards of professional performance (items assessed on a 5-point Likert scale): 1) Key role and function in organizational strategic planning (M = 3.93, SD = .73; alpha = .89); 2) Sufficiency in professional training and preparedness (M = 2.85 SD = .76; alpha = .73); 3) Gender and racial equity (M = 3.46, SD = 1.28; alpha = .81); 4) Situational constraints (M = 3.24, SD = .98; alpha = .58); 5) Licensing and organizational support (M = 3.28, SD = 1.00); and 6) Participation in organizational decision-making team (M = 2.87, SD = 1.03).

For the second research question, an exploratory factor analysis was used to explore the dimensionality of public relations roles as perceived by the practitioners in China (see *Appendix B*). A Principal Components Analysis with Varimax provided a solution with eigen values above 1.0 and accounted for 70.27% of the variance, rendering four dimensions of public relations role were rendered (items measured on a 7-point Likert scale): 1) Brand promotion facilitator (M =

4.67, SD = 1.39; alpha = .93); 2) Public information specialist (M = 5.02, SD = 1.37; alpha = .86); 3) Media relations counsel (M = 5.82, SD = .96; alpha = .79); and 4) Conflict management expert (M = 5.40, SD = 1.16; alpha = .77).

For the third research question, MANOVAs revealed interesting findings in terms of the main and interaction effects of gender and practice focus area on the six clusters of professional standards and the four identified public relations roles, respectively. Although no significant effects were detected in terms of gender difference, the findings revealed the significant role a given practitioner's primary practice area plays in his or her views of professional standards and the role of public relations. Specifically, practitioners primarily focusing on consumer relations (M = 4.33, SE = .15) put significantly more value on the key role and function of public relations in organizational strategic planning (F [2, 58] = 5.08, p < .01, par. η^2 = .149), compared to those primarily handling media relations (M = 3.75, SE = .10).

Discussion

These findings provide insights for both practitioners and researchers on how Chinese public relations practitioners view public relations as a profession and how the profession currently holds its professional standards in China.

Advocacy for Strategic Planning and Professional Preparedness

It is clear that Chinese practitioners perceive the success of public relations in China relies on strengthening the six pillars of the professional foundation:

First, Chinese practitioners practice and advocate the key role and function of public relations in organizational strategic planning. It is critical for Chinese practitioners to take on the responsibility to serve as a liaison between an organization and its publics. Individual practitioners need to seek training that updates them about new technology in the field. At the unit or department level, in order to be strategic, goals, measurable objectives, strategies need to be set and developed, accordingly, based on research and evaluation processes. It was viewed as critical for a practitioner to have a direct contact with the top management and to be viewed as accountable. Professional ethics codes were also viewed as something to be not just aware of but also carried out on a daily basis.

Second, Chinese practitioners demand sufficient professional training and preparedness. Chinese practitioners seemed to highly value a liberal arts degree as appropriate training for public relations, emphasizing writing skills as the most important aspect of training. It is also common for practitioners to have had formal instruction in management skills and techniques, which sets a strong base for the understanding public relations as communication management. Professional-experience based intuition is also valued in the decision making processes. As Liu, Jia, and Li (2011) found, the adoption of corporate social responsibility is emerging among Chinese corporations. At the individual level, a practitioner's community service and contribution seems to be expected to go beyond daily work.

Third, gender and racial equity is recognized by Chinese practitioners as very important. It also seems that gender and racial equity has been addressed and therefore not viewed as a priority concern or constraint for career success or professional development.

Fourth, Chinese practitioners recognize two primary situational constraints, which need to be addressed in order to maximize the function and key role of public relations. One of the issues is that upper management tends to perceive the public relations role as more of a technician than manager. The other is that often a public relations department or unit is too busy

putting out fires to develop a long-term strategic plan, although the importance of being strategic and accountable is a common understanding and desired approach.

Fifth, Chinese practitioners voice their need for licensing and organizational support as a profession. They believe that public relations should be a licensed profession. This echoes with Sha's (2011) finding that among the U.S. practitioners "accredited and non-accredited practitioners differ significantly on a range of demographic and job-related variables, including gender, age, years of experience, education levels, employing organization type, reporting relationships, professional competencies, and salary levels" (p. 121). Although there has been no APR accreditation counterpart for Chinese practitioners, it might be a direction or opportunity for Chinese public relations professionals to discuss and develop in the future.

Sixth, participation in the organizational decision-making team is viewed as important for the profession. This also relates to the top management access in the dimension of the key role and function of public relations in strategic planning, with more emphasis on infrastructure and reporting-line proximity in daily practice.

Multi-faceted Expert Role as Strategic Communication Manager

There are four dimensions of public relations role identified by the Chinese practitioners: First, the public relations practitioner as brand promotion facilitator: To fulfill this role, a practitioner is expected to be familiar with audio-visual productions as well as producing traditional print publications, and proficient in his/her languages skills (translation capability). It is also important for a practitioner to have event planning and coordination skills, connected with entertainment industry. To reflect the need for community service and giving back to the society, a practitioner and the profession are expected to excel in community relations and other social activities.

Second, the public relations practitioner as public information specialist: Internally, the importance of employee communications is stressed. As Men (2011) pointed out, it is critical for practitioners and their organizations in China to manage and enhance the quality of the organization-employee relationship. This also includes the skills to empower employees and handle their grievances. Externally, high demands of client servicing and customer relations push the envelope for a practitioner to strategically and ethically handle any given public communication interface, representing the organization properly and addressing the publics' informational needs.

Third, the public relations practitioner as media relations counsel: In this domain closely tied to media relations, crisis management, research-based crisis/conflict responses, and ethical handling of media inquiries on issues/crisis is critical. In addition to traditional media and word-of-mouth communication, as Han and Zhang (2009) highlighted, practitioners in China need to understand the role of new media (e.g., blogs) in China and its impact on international public relations practice. In addition, practitioners are expected to provide media training and organize press conferences as needed.

Fourth, the public relations practitioner as conflict management expert: This identified role of public relations in strategic conflict management reflects the findings of Li et al. (2010) on the complexity of communication practice and the pivotal role communication managers could play in managing conflicts and competitions in China. This goes beyond the role of intermediaries between the organization and its publics. It also suggests a more strategic, two-way dialogic approach than simply attempting to persuade publics to accept the organization's viewpoints

Consumer Relations vs. Media Relations: Determining Factors on Practitioners' Views

Unlike the previous findings from the U.S and South Korean studies, there were no significant effects detected as directly related to gender differences. Indeed, gender and racial equity is identified as an important dimension of public relations professional standards in China. Instead of being viewed as an issue to be addressed or a constraint to be handled, it seems that Chinese practitioners view gender and racial equity as should-be practice, based on common understanding, to be maintained and continue to be ensured and promoted.

In terms of the effects of practice area, the findings reveal that practitioners primarily focusing on consumer relations put significantly more value on the key role and function of public relations in organizational strategic planning, compared to those primarily handling media relations. This suggests that, depending on whether a practitioner works in consumer relations or media relations, the view of public relations determines the perceived needs to be more strategic. The findings of this study imply that the consumer relations practice area seems to cultivate more of a strategic planning and integrated communication approach; in contrast, the media relations field tends to emphasize a more traditional, information officer point of view about best practices of public relations. This is particularly true in China, where the intersection of media, media relations and government is often difficult to discern.

Future Directions and Conclusion

There are several limitations in this study that need to be further addressed in future research. First of all, due to the difficulty of having access to any professional association membership directory, we were not able to conduct systematic random sampling. Although a snowball sampling technique helped us identify qualified participants, its non-probability nature does not allow generalization of our findings to the population of Chinese public relations practitioners. In addition, the sample size of this study is small (N = 118), which raises statistical power concerns and limits the ability to generate adequate variance in the statistical analyses. A larger sample, based on random sampling, would provide a more generalizable picture of how Chinese public relations practitioners view their profession. Therefore, researchers should continue exploring this area and improve the quality of the sampling process to minimize biases.

Second, as an initial quantitative research examining how Chinese practitioners perceive their roles and professional standards in China, questions remain such as what could be the new dimensions of standards that are unique to public relations practice in China. The role of social media, China's social-network landscape in particular, also needs to be further explored. In-depth interviews of Chinese practitioners as well as follow-up practitioner surveys need to be conducted to triangulate the new findings. As Men and Tsai (in press) recently pointed out, the understanding of relationship cultivation on social media needs to be deepened from a cross-cultural perspective, as culture plays a significant role in shaping the organization-public dialogues in different countries.

Third, future research needs to be conducted in the role education and professional associations play in professional standards of public relations in China. Given the expressed needs among Chinese practitioners regarding licensing and organizational support, it is important for researchers, practitioners, and professional associations in China and in the U.S. to share the experiences and best practices in order to maximize the opportunities and chances of successes in global strategic communication practice. It is also a direction, headed toward by both U.S. and Chinese practitioners, to enhance the accountability of the entire profession in the participation in

organizational decision-making team, through practitioner-educator joint efforts in education program improvement (Zhang & Luo, 2011) and professional development (Sha, 2011).

As Ovaitt (2011) advocated, "the change of more research and content" is much needed. Indeed, it is time for us as applied communication researchers to dive into "the social science of social networking" globally.

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Appendix A: Professional standards of public relations in China

- Role and function in organizational strategic planning
  - A public relations practitioner has a responsibility to serve as a liaison between an organization and its publics;
  - It should be left up to the individual to seek training that updates him/her about new technology in the field;
  - An effective PR department/unit sets measurable objectives;
  - Goal setting and development of strategies to meet those goals is important in everyday public relations practices;
  - Without reservation, a practitioner should have direct contact with the company president or CEO;
  - Research skills are essential for the PR practitioner;
  - A practitioner should continue his/her education in public relations through academic training and/or professional skills and techniques;
  - I have direct access to the top management of my organization;
  - A practitioner's activities are instrumental to the success of his/her organization;
  - An effective public relations department/unit utilizes a Total Quality Control (TQM) process (or something similar);
  - Professional ethics codes lead to more socially responsible actions by practitioners.
- Sufficiency in professional training and preparedness
  - A liberal arts degree is appropriate training for public relations;
  - Writing skills are the most important aspect of PR training;
  - Most practitioners have had formal instruction in management skills and techniques;
  - Intuition is a major part of decision making in PR;
  - A practitioner's function is not just a job but also as a public service to the community.
- Gender and racial equity
  - Regardless of race, everyone is being paid the same in the field of public relations;
  - Women and men in the field of PR are being paid equally.
- Situational constraints
  - Management perceived the public relations role as more of a technician than manager;
  - A public relations department/unit is too busy putting out fires to develop a long-term strategic plan.
- Licensing and organizational support
  - Public relations should be a licensed profession.
- Participation in organizational decision-making team
  - Public relations in most organizations is part of the decision-making team.

Appendix B: Roles of public relations in China

- Brand promotion facilitator
  - o Audio-visual productions
  - o Translation
  - o Publications (newsletters, annual reports, etc.)
  - o Organizing events/activities
  - o Entertainment
  - o Community relations
  - o Social activities/function
- Public information specialist
  - o Employee communications
  - o Handling staff grievances
  - o Client servicing
  - o Customer relations
  - o Handle public enquires
- Media relations counsel
  - o Crisis management
  - o Conduct research and evaluations
  - o Media training
  - o Holding press conferences
  - o Handle media enquires
- Conflict management expert
  - o Act as intermediaries between the organization and the publics
  - o Persuade publics to accept the organization's viewpoints
  - o Managing conflict and competition

Principles for the Use of Return on Investment [ROI]; Benefit-Cost Ratio [BCR];
and Cost-Effectiveness Analysis [CEA]
Financial Metrics in a Public Relations/ Communication (PR/C) Department

Fraser Likely
Likely Communication Strategies

Abstract

An organization's financial performance has three drivers: increase in revenues; decrease in costs or expenditures; and cost avoidance associated through decrease in risk. Public relations has long sought to demonstrate how its work contributes to these three drivers. While the PR/Communication ROI discussion goes back thirty or forty years, it has accelerated greatly in the last decade. On the other hand, there has been little discussion on the use of two other financial metrics: benefit-cost ratio (BCR); and Cost-Effectiveness. The purpose of this paper is to propose a set of principles for the use of ROI, BCR and Cost-Effectiveness, both as concepts and as metrical calculations.

Purpose

An organization's financial performance has three drivers: increase in revenues; decrease in costs or expenditures; and cost avoidance associated with a decrease in risk (such as that associated with litigation, government regulation or public issues). Public Relations/Communication (PR/C) has long sought to demonstrate how its work contributes to these three drivers.

The financial metric most widely discussed in the PR/Communication literature, particularly the practitioner literature, as a possible link between PR/C work, the possible financial value of that work and an organization's financial performance is that of Return on Investment (ROI) The PR/C ROI discussion goes back thirty or forty years, but has accelerated greatly in the last decade (Watson 2011a). However, there has been little discussion on the use of two other financial metrics: benefit-cost ratio (BCR); and Cost-Effectiveness Analysis (CEA).

The purpose of this paper is to propose a set of principles for the use of ROI, BCR and CEA measures. The principles will address the where and how of possible applications, from the perspective of the PR/C function. In examining these three financial metrics, an argument will be made that the BCR and CEA financial metrics are more applicable and perhaps more useful than the utilization of a ROI measure.

Finally, the paper will present two frameworks. The first indicates where Chief Communication Officers (CCOs) make investments in PR/C departments (within three general categories of investments or costs: PR/C operational costs; PR/C program costs; and PR/C function costs). The second establishes where each of these three financial metrics is best utilized within each of these investments categories.

Introduction

The Public Relations/Communication function is a staff function. As a staff function, the PR/C function can be both strategic, in that it separately and equally contributes to the strategic management of the organization, and support, in that it offers services (including advice) to other functions in the organization. The function can be either centralized into a single, fully integrated, full service PR/C department or decentralized as a collective of various independent communication departments with each performing specialized PR/C activities or a hybrid of the two.

Like other staff functions such as Human Resources, Marketing, Finance, Strategic Planning or Information Technologies, the PR/C function is a cost centre, rather than a revenue-generating or profit centre. Staff functions contribute directly to the cost of the organization, but contribute only indirectly to the profit generated. As a cost centre, resource allocation originates from two areas: corporate draw; and/or the reimbursement from other staff functions or from business/production units. Occasionally, the PR/C function is a revenue-generating centre, with its own product or service line marketed externally. For example, the PR/C department could sell its communication services on the street and bring revenues back into the organization (Likely, 1998; Brody, 1985). Or, it could sell organizational products itself, such as through search engine optimization (SEO) (Jarboe, 2009).

But, direct revenue generation is not typically a PR/C business line. The PR/C function's work does not involve the direct development, production, sales or exchange of goods and services. That is, it is not directly responsible for operations that are performed by a business unit. The PR/C function is not at the heart of the operations that contribute directly to the revenue generation performance of the organization. The PR/C function supports these operations in

assisting with the management of external reputational and/or brand equity, internal cultural and engagement, stakeholder relationship and communication work. These are seen as part of an organization's intangible (non-touchable; non-physical) assets, whereas line operations, Sales and Finance functions deal with more tangible assets (raw materials; production equipment; inventories; and cash and monetary assets).

The PR/C function contributes to the intangible asset accumulation of, for example: goodwill; reputation; stakeholder relationships; employee engagement; customer loyalty; and knowledge acquisition and transfer. Through its work with intangible assets, the PR/C function has an indirect link to the financial performance of the organization[1]. Because of this indirect link, PR/C's influence on an organization's financial performance is difficult to measure. The contribution of intangible assets to financial performance is more difficult to quantify than the contribution of tangible assets (Lev, 2001). Other staff functions that are supported by the PR/C function, such as Marketing (see for example Farris et al, 2010) and HR (see for example Ulrich 1997), also produce non-tangible assets. They deal with intangibles such as brand equity or customer loyalty in the first case and employee engagement in the latter.

Over and above the general discussion of whether these three financial measures, as understood and utilized by financial and accounting functions, can be applied to PR/C work or not, or whether the discussion is important only to PR/C agencies and research firms and not to CEOs, in-house PR/C practitioners or even PR/C academics (Gaunt & Wright, 2004; Gregory & White, 2008; Gregory & Watson, 2008; Watson, 2011a & b; Watson, 2005), there have been only a few attempts to understand the practical application of these metrics to PR/C. The majority of interest has been with the financial metric ROI. Both PR/C practitioners and academics have attempted to apply this measure to PR/C work (see for example: Internal Communication: Meng & Berger, 2010; Towers Watson, 2010; Shaffer, 2004; Sinickas, 2004; Gayeski, 1993 and to Marketing Communication {Marcom}: Weiner, Arnorsdottir, Lang & Smith, 2010; Smith, 2008; Likely, Rockland & Weiner, 2006; Weiner, 2006). In a number of cases, the application of the ROI concept has been introduced in conjunction with other concepts, such as versions of compensating variation (Ehling, 1992; Internal Communication: Shaffer, 2004; Sinickas, 2004) or of marketing mix modeling (Weiner, Arnorsdottir, Lang & Smith, 2010; Smith, 2008). Regardless of the validity of any application of the ROI concept to PR/Communication, a clear consensus does not exist on the standards or the principles that should be followed when utilizing the concept as a PR/C measure (Watson & Zerfass, 2011). The same is true for Benefit Cost Ratio. The term ROI often is employed when the actual situational calculation is that of a BCR (see for example: Brody, 1987; Lacopos, 1997).

Definition of Terms: ROI; BCR; and CEA

The terms investments and costs are used interchangeably in the discussion that follows, but it is noted that costs seem to be given a more negative connotation – as an expense – in the literature whereas investments are treated as a positive – an endowment. Costs can be viewed as

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[1] A number of researchers believe that, of all the intangible assets, it will be possible to measure the ROI of relationships. "I believe that relationships are the most important of these intangible assets and that if we can show that public relations creates value in addition to financial value, we can show the overall ROI of the function. The British public relations practitioner and scholar, David Phillips (2005), also has studied the literature on intangible assets and argued that relationships are the most important of these assets. I believe this approach to ROI eventually will show the value of public relations and encourage public relations scholars to join in the study of intangible assets." (Grunig, 2006).

sunk (costs that have already occurred) and incremental or prospective (costs that will occur once a go-ahead decision is made). Costs also can be viewed as either fixed (they don't change regardless the levels of production or number of outputs), variable (they vary directly with the level of production and number of outputs) or mixed (a combination of fixed and variable). Sunk/Incremental and Fixed/Variable cost ratios must be included in any determination of costs or investment. For the purposes of this paper, net present value or the time value of money – what the investment money is worth in the future – for investments that carry over multiple fiscal years is recognized as a concept that must be considered in the various calculations, but is not discussed in detail in this more general description of the three terms.

Return on Investment

Return on Investment is a financial term, one that refers, in general, to a financial return from any financial investment.[2] In an organization, that investment may be in a monetary asset, in a physical asset (office space; web site; equipment), in a program, campaign or project (for example: marketing program; employee change management program), in a process or a practice (approval processes; research and planning practices), in a function or department (PR/C function; Corporate Communication department), or in employee performance (reward systems; learning plans and training programs for instance). It should be noted that all financial investments are organizational investments, in that they originate from a single corporate pot and are allocated from there. That allocation could be in the form of a permanent, ongoing budget allocation or as a one-time, one fiscal year only allocation.

The definition for Return on Investment offered in this paper is: ROI (%) = Net Financial Return (net return: gross financial return minus the financial investment) divided by the Financial Investment x 100 (Friedlob Jr. & Plewa, 1996). A ROI metric is expressed as a percentage and the calculation is made after the actual returns, all actual returns, are realized.

$$ROI = \frac{\textbf{Net Financial Return}}{\textbf{Financial Investment}} \times 100$$

For example, a gross financial return ($15,000) minus the financial investment ($5,000) equals the net financial return ($10,000). This is divided by the financial investment ($5,000) equaling 2. The number 2 is then multiplied by 100 to equal a ROI of 200%. In this example, ROI is: $15,000 - $5,000 = $10,000 ÷ $5,000 = 2 x 100 = ROI of 200%.

A financial return is calculated only at the organizational level (Friedlob Jr. & Plewa, 1996; Rachlin, 1997). As Rachlin (1997) states: "Return on investment (ROI) is the culmination of all activities of a company" (p. 3). That is, ROI is not calculated at an activity level, a program level, a function or unit level. It is calculated as a sum or result of all those contributions. First, it is the sum of all investments made, be it a single investment or investments to a number of cost centres across the organization that concern the same capital asset, process or program. Second, it is the net return or net income, calculated at the level of the organization after all factors that

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[2] Though Watson and Zerfass (2011) defined the term more precisely as "expressed as a ratio of income or earnings divided by the costs that had been applied to generate the income or earnings," before going on to state that their research showed that the term is usually misapplied within PR/C, the more generalized definition will be employed here.

impact on costs are considered, including the length of project life (single or multiple fiscal years), the capitalization policy and the depreciation rates. The importance of ROI as a financial metric at the level of the organization is its primacy: " … ROI is the most commonly used management indicator of company profit and performance" (Friedlob Jr. & Plewa, 1996, p.8). Therefore, ROI can only be analyzed at the level of the organization – after the work and the investments of all applicable functions have been taken into account.

Walsh (2008) further explains the calculation of ROI, at the level of the organization, by saying that ROI is: "A term that is very widely used in connection with the performance of a company or project. It is calculated in many different ways. Usually a pre-tax profit figure is expressed as either the percentage of long term funds or total funds in the balance sheet" (p. 387). That is, organization level ROI is "derived from the two major financial statements, namely, the statement of income and the balance sheet" (Rachlins, 1997, p.39).

There are other more specific return on investment metrics (Bragg, 2009) – more specific in relation to how the investment is qualified - that an organization can utilize, including return on equity (ROE), return on assets (ROA), return on capital employed (ROCE) or return on sales (ROS). Return on Investment is used in this paper in its most general and generic sense, since "the definition of ROI depends on the investment base used … therefore, ROI must be considered a generic term and must be specifically defined before calculations can be made" (Rachlins, 1997, p.6). These more specific ROI metrics, though, do not have a direct bearing on a single function such as the PR/C, Marketing or HR.

Benefit-Cost Ratio
Benefit-cost ratio (BCR) or cost-benefit analysis (CBA)[3] calculations are somewhat similar to a ROI measure, where BCR = Benefits (or financial returns) over Costs (Mishan & Quah, 2007). That is, a BCR of 2:1 means that for every $1 invested, the financial benefit or return is $2. This translates into an ROI of 100% - for every $1 invested, an organization receives an additional $1 back.

The difference in the use of the BCR metric and the ROI metric is that the former is used to predict benefits or returns while the latter applies actual benefits or returns. The purpose of BCR, then, "is to provide a consistent procedure for evaluating decisions in terms of their consequences" (Dreze, J. & Stern, N. in Auerbach A.J. & Feldstein, M., 1987, p.909). The metric BCR is used to assess a proposal or to choose between several alternative ones (Schmidt, 2009). It compares the total expected costs of each option against the total expected benefits, to see whether the benefits outweigh the costs, and then by how much. That is, the BCR is used to build a business case. It should be noted, though, that a BCR exercise has two stages: the first is to value the costs and benefits for each year of a project; the second is to aggregate the present value of the project by discounting costs and benefits in future years to ensure they are commensurate with actual present costs and benefits.

The BCR is expressed as a number and not as a percentage as it is with the ROI metric[4]. To date, the most extensive discussion of the use of BCR in PR/C has been by William Ehling

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[3] Cost-benefit analysis (CBA) is a variation of BCR and is "distinctively developed for the evaluation of public policy issues" (Nas, 1996, p.1).
[4] It should be noted that there are alternative capital budgeting methods that work with BCR, including Net Present Value (NPV), Internal Rate of Return (IRR) and Payback. NPV, IRR and Payback define the business value of any investment. They are expressed as follows: value - how much money will be made on the investment; rate - the yearly percentage returned on the funds used on the investment; and time - when will the initial investment be made back. This level of detail is not needed for this discussion.

(in Grunig, J. (Ed.) Excellence in Public Relations and Communication Management, 1992). The discussion focused on the use of the BCR measure for PR/C programming, with Ehling (1992, p.631) describing three situations for its use, as follows:

> *"The first situation involves deciding between spending resources on a public relations program and not doing so, a "go/no-go" decision. A second situation is one where a decision must be made among mutually exclusive, competing public relations programs, a decision as to which is "best" to implement. Finally, decision-makers might select from a large set of programs the best subset that will stay within a fixed budget allocation."*

The difficulty in performing a Benefit-Cost Ratio measure is in estimating the expected benefit, in monetary terms that have some rigour. Ehling (1992) proposed the use of the concept of 'compensating variation' in determining the potential monetary return. Put simply, compensating variation is a financial construct that measures how well off someone is before a change and then how well off they are after a change. It determines an individual's monetary value or the monetary value to the individual. Adapting this to PR/C programming, individuals who potentially benefited from a change must be identified and then those benefits must be assigned a monetary value. This is typically done by "assigning utilities to the various degrees of achievement and by converting these utilities to monetary equivalents" (Ehling 1992, p.633). The simplest way is to ask: if this change occurred, to what degree would you benefit, then to what degree is that benefit worth financially? As noted above, both academics and practitioners have employed modifications of compensating variation, such as: Shaffer (2004), Sinickas (2004), Weiner, Arnorsdottir, Lang & Smith (2010) and Smith (2008). Indeed, it was used in the Excellence Project to determine the value of communication to an organization, by asking interviewees "how much they would be willing to pay to have something." "For public relations you ask members of the dominant coalition or public relations managers how much public relations is worth to them on either a monetary or nonmonetary scale" (Grunig, L.A, Grunig, J.E. & Dozier D.M 2002, p.106).[5]

But, as with the ROI measure, an expected financial return can be calculated only at the organizational level. Again, determining the expected return must involve other functions, since the PR/C work contributes to the overall program through these other functions. PR/C costs and expected benefits are a portion of the total of each for a particular program, activity or course of action.

Of course, simply asking individuals who may benefit from a PR/C program or activity – or even of the PR/C function itself – to place a monetary value on those benefits has its limitations. The use of compensating variation within a BCR calculation has major drawbacks; the biggest of which is simply the ability of individuals to carve out the role of PR/C and its effects from within the fullness of the program. This disclaimer was applied to its use in the Excellence Project: "… the monetary value attached to an outcome represents the best thinking of those who run the organization – even if that value is "mushy" and something less than truly "objective" (Grunig, L.A, Grunig, J.E. & Dozier D.M 2002, p.133)." Compensating variation is useful within a BCR measure as a guestimate, where more solid projections are not needed or available. Certainly, it can't be employed in a ROI measure since actual financial benefits are required.

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[5] It is interesting to note that with both the academic and with the practitioner references cited here as examples of the use of compensating variation, the term ROI was employed in the papers and articles and not the more appropriate term BCR.

Cost-Effectiveness Analysis

A CEA metric is different again from the ROI and BCR metrics (Levin & McEwan, 2007). It compares the relative costs and the outcomes (effects) of two or more courses of action or activities. It does not assign a monetary value (financial return) to the measure of effect. This calculation compares "the costs of providing the same beneficial outcome in different ways" (Layard, R. & Glaister, S., 1994, p.21). Or, as Mishan and Quah (2008) state, cost-effectiveness calculations are a way of "discovering the lowest cost of achieving a particular objective regarded as desirable …" (p.8). Like the ROI metric and unlike the BCR metric, Cost-Effectiveness Analysis (CEA) applies actual, realized investments or costs. Unlike the ROI metric but like the BCR metric, it applies intangible benefits as effectiveness measures. BCR and CEA are "essentially similar" in approach (Nas, 1997, p.3).

Cost-effectiveness is cost divided by effectiveness (however defined), and then applied comparatively. In PR/C, effectiveness may be such measures as channel reach, accuracy of media reporting, length of time on a site, or number of re-tweets (Paine, 2011). CEA measures are those that the PR/C function can perform independently. A CEA measure is not calculated as a part of a larger Marketing, Human Resources, Finance or business line calculation, like it would be with ROI or BCR (for detailed CEA measures: in HR, see Fitz-enz, 1995; in Marketing, Farris et al, 2010)

Investments in PR/Communication

For the purposes on this paper, three general categories of investments or costs will be examined. They are: PR/C operational costs; PR/C program costs; and PR/C functional costs.

Operational Investments

PR/C operating costs include fixed 'overhead' costs such as office space, equipment, supplies, core managerial and administrative staffing, knowledge management and archival and telecommunication support that are typical for any department and subject to a corporate standard and an allocation agreement.

A second set of PR/C operating costs include fixed and variable physical capital, material and human resource costs for common communication department support services such as research, planning and evaluation, graphic design, writing and editing, translation and learning and training.

The third set of operating costs involves the development and maintenance of communication channels (defined as the medium for the distribution of messages). These are fixed and variable physical capital, material and human capital costs for such channels as web sites, newsletters, town halls, exhibitions, mass voice or e-mails, internal closed circuit company television, Facebook pages, blogs, YouTube channels, media release distribution and pitching or advertising. Communication channels can be direct to stakeholder or mediated through a third party, and can be categorized as paid, earned, owned or shared.

For the purposes of this paper, costs involved with the development and maintenance of communication channels are deemed permanent or sunken investments. That is, the assumption made here is that for the majority of the communication channels listed above, they are ongoing from fiscal year to fiscal year and receive a funding allocation as a regular budget line item. Certainly, channels such as media publicity, web sites, print publications and newsletters, closed circuit television, YouTube channels or advertising require continuous human capital funding for specialist expertise in their development and operation and also require on-going capital funding.

But, it is recognized that the investments made each year in each channel are considered both fixed and variable costs. The fixed costs would include on-going physical and human capital expenditures as described. On the other hand, there are also variable costs that are dependent on channel usage, for example based on the number of news releases, web site postings, placed advertisements or YouTube videos made. These variable costs are dependent on the level of program activity, particularly the number and type of campaigns within each program area. Therefore, fixed and variable costs for the on-going operation of a channel are included here under Operating Investments, while the variable costs associated with the use of each channel are included in the next section, in Program Investments.[6]

Program Investments

PR/C programming costs or investments are variable costs. These material and human capital costs are for stand-alone programs and campaigns – even if they are conducted over more than one fiscal year (and if over more than one year include sunk costs as well as the new year's incremental costs). They can be funded by the PR/C function (such as corporate campaigns for organizational change management or organizational reputation) or more typically by other functions, such as Marketing, Human Resources or business units. A PR/C program is a set of campaigns and activities organized around the relationship between a particular stakeholder or strategic public of the organization, and based on issues of mutual interest and importance. Program costs include all costs associated with the maintenance of the relationship. These investments or costs in stakeholder relationship programs are not, as yet, commonly part of a ROI calculation (Paine, 2007; Grunig, 2006).

A PR/C campaign on the other hand, as part of an overall program, usually utilizes more than one communication channel (or media), each with a number of individual communication activities or products, to send and receive one or more messages to and from a defined and targeted audience over a specific timeframe, with the ultimate objective to have that audience change in some way. These may include such internal change management programs as organizational culture or employee engagement or external marketing communication, public education, community relations or government affairs campaigns or projects, to name but a few types. Regardless of the type, the ultimate goal is to induce the outcome of behavioural change. In a campaign communication plan, objectives are set for process and output measures, both for production and for dissemination (audience reach). These are project management measures, important only to the PR/C people undertaking the project. In the plan, engagement or outtake measures are also established and include measures for audience message receipt, recall and retention of the message, favourability to the message and how the message was heeded and/or responded to (e.g. was the call to seek further information or to pass on information heeded?).

Finally, in the campaign plan, objectives for audience awareness and understanding, opinion or attitude, commitment and intent and behavioural change results are established as outcome measures of the effects of communication (see Lindenmann, 2003 for a fuller description of program output, outtake and outcome measures). These measures are important for the PR/C people undertaking the project and for their direct internal clients in, for example, Marketing, HR, Operations, Legal or Finance. The final behavioural objectives and measures are

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[6] It is also the author's experience that this separation of channel costs, into Operating and Programming Investments, is mirrored in the PR/C department structure and capabilities. Typically, PR/C officers specialize in either a communication channel or in PR/C programs and campaigns – and these specialists are housed in different organizational units.

tied to the first tier behavioural objectives and measures set in the client plan. First tier behavioural objectives are, for example, sales leads for marketing, benefit plan uptake for HR or cycle time reduction for operations.

Functional Investments

Financial investments at the level of the PR/C function itself are strategic management costs. Strategic management costs include those associated with PR/C policy development and regulation, with function vertical and horizontal integration, with managing internal client relationships and with the cost of transforming communication, relational and human capital data and experience acquisition into intelligence and providing that insight as advice to business line/central function clients and to the enterprise management team as part of business line/function and corporate on-going strategic management.

This last is the cost of contributing strategic thinking and providing counsel, including such supporting determinations as: leading problem, issue and crisis solving; formulating insight through predictive, forecasting and scenario planning analytics in aiding the formation of emergent strategy; and maintaining a watch on the relationship between what the organization says by what it does and what it says by what it says. Ultimately, these contributions to the strategic management of the organization lead to changes in the attitudes, opinions and behaviours of managers and executives, both individually as unit leaders and collectively as a management team.

Summary of PR/C Investments

The following table provides a snapshot of the capital investments represented in an ideal PR/C function budget:

OPERATIONAL	OVERHEAD	▪ Office space, furniture and equipment ▪ Office supplies ▪ Telecommunication support ▪ Travel, meeting expenses, memberships ▪ etc. Core administrative staffing	None, typically these fixed-cost investments are made through enterprise-wide costing formulas.
	PR SUPPORT SERVICES	▪ PR/C Policy formulation and regulation ▪ PR/C Function integration ▪ Research, planning and evaluation ▪ Creative: graphic design; AV; etc. ▪ Corporate identity/branding ▪ Writing and editing ▪ Translation ▪ Staff orientation, learning, training, etc. ▪ etc. Core PR/C specialist staffing	Typically, these fixed- and variable-cost investments are allocations from the corporate budget, especially for human capital costs. Variable cost material and production costs may be charged back to line or other staff departments. Make or buy decisions (contracting; outsourcing)
	COMMUNICATION CHANNELS	▪ Paid: advertising ▪ Earned: media relations (media release distribution/pitching; media monitoring & analysis) ▪ Owned: web architecture/content management; print publications; town halls; exhibitions/events; internal closed circuit company television; etc. ▪ Shared: Facebook pages; blogs; YouTube channels; etc. Core PR/C specialist staffing	Typically, these fixed-cost investments are from the corporate budget, for channel architecture and for salaries. Variable costs associated with usage may be charged back to line or other staff departments. Make or buy decisions (contracting; outsourcing) Comparative cost-effectiveness decisions based on: reach; accuracy; # of touch points; frequency; timing; etc.
PROGRAM	REVENUE GENERATING PROGRAMS/ CAMPAIGNS	▪ Marketing communication ▪ Fundraising ▪ Investor relations Account Executive/Project Management staffing	Typically, these variable-cost investments, for program development and implementation expenses, are from line or other staff department budgets. Make or buy decisions (contracting; outsourcing)
	EXPENDITURE REDUCTION PROGRAMS/ CAMPAIGNS	▪ Change management (organizational culture, employee engagement, productivity, etc.) ▪ Communication around operational process changes Account Executive/Project Management staffing	Typically, these variable-cost investments, for program development and implementation expenses, are from corporate, or line or other staff department budgets. Make or buy decisions (contracting; outsourcing)
	RISK MANAGEMENT/ COST AVOIDANCE PROGRAMS/ CAMPAIGNS	▪ Executive/Manager change management ▪ Reputation management ▪ Public education / Community relations ▪ Corporate social responsibility ▪ Public/government affairs Account Executive/Project Management staffing	Typically, these variable-cost investments, for program development and implementation expenses, are from corporate, or line or other staff department budgets. Make or buy decisions (contracting; outsourcing)
FUNCTIONAL	STRATEGIC COUNSEL	▪ Internal client relationship management ▪ Stakeholder and publics relationship management; ▪ Organization Strategic Management (corporate and business unit strategy formulation & execution; Issues management & emergent strategy formation; and organizational say/do integration Senior Executive staffing	Typically, these fixed-cost investments, for strategic thinking (intelligence; insight; analysis; advice), are from the corporate budget.

Returns on PR/ Communication Investments

The returns or benefits derived from PR/C investments are not financial. That is, other than lowering PR/C salary or production costs and thus creating organizational expenditure reductions or actually generating revenue from sales controlled exclusively by the PR/C function, the returns from PR/C investments do not directly affect the organization's financial situation. PR/C returns are intangible assets - in that they are identifiable and an organizational asset but they aren't touchable or physical, they are difficult to quantify and they don't therefore, immediately, have a financial or monetary value.

Determining the return in any PR/C financial calculation is a complicated process. PR/C work typically contributes to the work of other functions directly and only indirectly to the organization as a whole. Therefore, the investment and return attributed to PR/C is a portion of the other function's investment and return contribution, for a particular activity or course of action. Adding to the complication, in the determination of an organizational return, other functions - besides the function to which PR/C 's work has made a contribution – have contributed investments towards the achievement of the return.

Here are the common results, benefits or returns for each PR/C investment category:

Operational

There are no returns or benefits associated with the Overhead cost centre, either for the PR/C function or any other function or business line. These are the basic costs of doing business. These are not subject to any ROI calculation by the PR/C function and that includes the adoption of new technologies, both hardware and software. Within the Information Management or Information Technologies literature, there is considerable scholarship on the financial calculations for the introduction and application of new technologies and we won't introduce those calculations here (see for example Rico, 2004). Do note, though, that these are BCR calculations, not ROI calculations, since they predict costs and returns.

The returns or benefits of the PR/C Support Services cost centre are tangible (communication plan; text; graphic; etc.) or intangible (knowledge transfer). These benefits are not a direct financial asset, in that in themselves they do not create revenue, reduce expenditures or avoid future costs. The metrics to be used include both BCR in building a business case for the introduction of a support service or in making make/buy decisions and CEA in determining the value associated with each service, where effectiveness could be determined through tests such as output quality, client satisfaction and/or productivity. Again, these are not a ROI calculation.

The Communication Channels cost centre is similar. The benefit stemming from the costs expended on each channel is the quality of targeted audience message receipt as determined by channel reach, frequency, timeliness, accuracy, touch points, etc. As the vehicle or medium for PR/C programs and campaigns, communication channels contribute to the return generated from each program, campaign and project. But they, in themselves, do not create an organizational financial return. Channels may be compared: any comparison is not a ROI or BCR comparison but a cost-effectiveness comparison. The comparison is the effectiveness of the channel or the quality of the channel in relation to a targeted audience, particularly when comparing the communication benefits of reach, timeliness and target audience characteristics between and among channels. In summary, ROI can't be calculated for PR/C Overhead, Support Services and Communication Channels, though BCR and cost-effectiveness can.

Program

The result of a PR/C campaign is to place people at the door of the Marketing, Human Resources, a business line, etc. and then allow these functions to convert the foot in the door to an actual sale, a signature on the dotted line of a benefit plan or a reduction in the number of steps or acts in an operational process. That is, the intent of a PR/C campaign is to address behaviour, either to get people to stop what they are doing, to maintain what they are doing or to change what they are doing to a new desired way. These are not financial results; they are communication outcomes or effects.

The PR/C campaign changes levels of awareness, understanding, commitment or intent prior to addressing behaviour change (note that research shows that this four-stage linear progression is not always necessary or true). Once at the door, it is then up to another function to perform the conversion and support the actual second behaviour or action that results in a financial effect. The number delivered to the door is not generally the number that actually behaves in a way that can be measured financially.

For example, PR/C delivers leads for Marketing/Sales. Marketing/Sales must qualify those leads, make the sale (dealing with such risks as product life cycles, product availability, salesperson availability, competitor price reactions, existing baseline sales, price changes, etc.), close the sale, receive the monetary exchange and deal with customer product returns and changes of mind. The effectiveness of Marketing/Sales can enhance or negate the effectiveness of the PR/C campaign. Or for example, a PR/C campaign can deliver employee behaviours, such as getting employees ready to sign up for a new benefits program that will cost the organization less and thus reduce organizational expenditures. Again, while the PR/C campaign delivers leads to HR, it is up to HR to qualify those leads (does the employee qualify or not?), make the sale (what options do you chose?), close the sale (employee signatures on required paperwork) and receive the monetary exchange (permissions for payroll deductions). HR must also deal with the risks involved, similar to those of sales. Finally, for example, for an Operations department, a PR/C campaign can deliver employee behaviours ready to change a production process. As in the other cases, it is up to Operations to qualify those leads, make the sale (dealing with such risks as the process change has to be seen as win-win for all departments; hesitation to deal with new supervisors; hesitation to deal with less discretionary actions, etc.), close the sale and receive the monetary exchange (in time and effort).[7]

The first behavioural change was getting the individual to the door; the second was the actual sale, signature or new process action. It is this second tier of behavioural change that is then subject to a ROI calculation - against the organization's financial status. Did the change, collectively, increase organizational revenues, decrease expenditures or reduce risk (and thus potential costs)? These client objectives and measures have a place in the scorecards for the various functions (HR; Marketing; etc.) and in the overall scorecard for the organization. The Human Resource literature does cover the ROI of human capital (McCann, 2011) and of various human resource programs, particularly that of learning and training programs (for example: Fitz-

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[7] It is important to distinguish between baseline behaviour change and incremental behaviour change, to ensure the proper assignment of behavioural change results to PR/C. Whether the PR/C communication campaign is part of a Marketing, HR or some other function's program, it should be noted that people will change their behaviour without knowledge from a communication campaign. In the Marketing program example, the generation of some leads (and ultimately sales) would have happened without any communication campaign – with incremental leads/sales representing the additional volume based on the campaign. This distinction applies to the HR and Operation department examples as well. Only incremental behavioural change should be measured.

enz, 2009; Phillips, 2003; 2002). As well, the Marketing literature covers the ROI of marketing programs (for example: Farris et al, 2010; Lenskold, 2003; Frieswick, 2001). Both have methods to track the incremental reduction in organizational expenditures or the incremental organizational revenues attributed to a program. A PR/C program can't determine an ROI metric for its campaign contribution to a client function's program by itself, without the second tier behavioural change work of another function. As well, since ROI is only calculated at the level of the organization, an all-in net revenue calculation (gross revenues minus the costs of all functions involved in the program) is needed.

The PR/C function can measure the ROI of a PR/C campaign, be it for customer sales, stakeholder engagement or employee cultural or performance change – but only as part of a larger program conducted by another function. There is no such thing as an ROI for the PR/C campaign per se. As stated by Grunig (2008, 101) (these PR/C program) "measures cannot be used directly to conclude whether public relations programs contribute to the effectiveness of the organization at the organizational or societal levels – the levels at which the return on investment (ROI) of public relations must be measured."

With a PR/C campaign, practitioners may be satisfied with the communication outcomes of awareness, understanding or engagement - but what's needed is a behavioural change outcome in order for PR/C or the other function to be able to measure ROI. To truly show PR/C's contribution to a ROI metric, it is necessary to show the progression from communication outputs to outtakes, to immediate outcomes (cognitive effects: changes in awareness and understanding), to intermediate outcomes (affective outcomes: changes in attitudes, opinions, feelings, intent) to longer-term effects (conative or behavioral outcomes: adoption of required first tier behaviours). There is also the need to differentiate between baseline and incremental behavioural changes.

Any measurement attempt to show a PR/C ROI that uses marketing mix modeling, pilot studies, control studies or compensating variation ("just ask the participants for the financial return they believe PR/C contributed") is inadequate. It is either incomplete or improper – and does not employ this financial metric in the same sense as does Finance or Accounting (Watson & Zerfass, 2011). There are so many factors that influence the path from lead to sale or first tier behavioural change to second tier that a ROI calculation can't be properly done on the number of first tier behaviours generated by the campaign. At best, through multivariate regression analysis and pattern recognition - such as are employed in the concept of Marketing Mix Modeling or Media Mix Modeling - a correlation can be determined. But, all this analysis would show is that the PR/C campaign was successful in getting people to the door – and with some of those people a sale was closed. It does not isolate the effect of the second tier behavioural change and thus can not show cause and effect between campaign and the close of the sale and therefore between financial investment and financial return. Pilots or control groups, based either on geography or on timeframes, do not address this difficulty, since the vagaries of second tier behavioural change remains outside of the control of the PR/C function. Also, the use of a compensating variation analysis (in general, asking those involved in the behaviour change how much credit they would give to the PR/C campaign) is a BCR metric and not a ROI metric, since it predicts returns and doesn't count actual returns. However, two other financial metrics have value at the PR/C Program investment level.

The PR/C department can conduct a cost effectiveness analysis of the various channels that make up the campaign. Which channel best met the communication outcome or effects objective of the campaign? Which channel was best at raising awareness in the target audience?

Which channel was best at raising awareness in the target audience, at the least cost? As well, PR/C can conduct a BCR analysis predicting the financial return from its contribution, if the analysis includes benefits and costs for the full program.

Functional

The returns or benefits from an investment in a strategic counsel cost centre are similar to those provided by executives of other business or functional areas. These are the expected subject matter expert contributions to the strategic management system for the organization. They include: intelligence; insight; analysis; strategic thinking; strategic planning; relationship management; and advice. Certainly, they are intangible assets. There is not a direct financial return and thus do not create revenue, reduce expenditures or avoid future costs. They may be subject to a cost effectiveness analysis, which may be thought of as a component of a performance review. ROI or BCR measures do not apply here.

Returns Summary

The next table summarizes where the BCR, CEA and ROI metrics can be properly applied:

INVESTMENT CATEGORIES	COST CENTRES	BENEFIT COST RATIO METRIC	COST EFFECTIVENESS METRIC	RETURN ON INVESTMENT METRIC
OPERATING	OVERHEAD	No (though possibly by other functions prior)	Yes	No
	PR SUPPORT SERVICES	No	Yes	No
	COMMUNICATION CHANNELS	No	Yes	No
PROGRAM-ING	REVENUE GENERATING PROGRAMS/ CAMPAIGNS	Yes	Yes	Yes, but only as part of larger Marketing, HR, etc. program.
	EXPENDITURE REDUCTION PROGRAMS/ CAMPAIGNS	Yes	Yes	Yes, but only as part of larger Marketing, HR, etc. program.
	RISK MANAGEMENT/ COST AVOIDANCE PROGRAMS/ CAMPAIGNS	Yes	Yes	Yes, but only as part of larger Marketing, HR, etc. program.
FUNCTIONAL	STRATEGIC COUNSEL	No	Yes	No

Principles to Follow When Attempting to Employ Financial Measures in PR/C

There has been much discussion in PR/C trade and practitioner literature - though not in the PR/C academic literature (Gregory & White, 2008; Watson, 2005) - on the need to measure ROI. Only a small part of that discussion has focused on the principles that need to be applied

when attempting a ROI financial measure in PR/C. The discussions on BCR and Cost-Effectiveness principles are even more limited.

Based on the discussion thus far in this paper, sets of principles are presented below for the proper utilization of each of these three financial metrics.

A Set of Principles for the Use of a ROI Metric for a PR/C Program or Campaign

The only place in which a PR/C investment could be measured for the financial return on that investment is in the Program/Campaign Cost Centre. These principles should be applied when attempting to use a ROI metric with PR/C programs and campaigns.

1. The PR/C campaign must establish baseline behaviours before it sets objectives for incremental behavioural change. Regardless of the overall program, be it a Marketing, HR, corporate organizational change, Community Relations or Investor Relations program, it should be noted that the desired behaviour is probably already exhibited by some people or will be regardless of a campaign. For example, in Marketing, there is the concept of baseline sales. These are expected leads and thus sales in the absence of any measured marketing activity. People will find the product before the product promotion will find them. The same understanding is there for employee change: some employees already exhibit the desired behaviour desired for all employees or will make the change without being influenced by the PR/C campaign. Therefore, any PR/C campaign objective must recognize the baseline and set a target of incremental change from the baseline upwards.

2. The PR/C campaign must track its targeted audience through all stages of cognitive, attitudinal and conative or behavioural change, to ensure that the same people who received the original communication in the first place are the same people who placed their foot at the door as a lead to be converted by another function. The targeted audience must be tracked through message receipt (outputs), message engagement (outtakes) and communication effects (outcomes: awareness, understanding, intent and behaviour change). That is, audience members must be monitored at each communication touch point. There will be drop off along the way but the PR/C campaign must demonstrate that those at the door came from the original targeted audience.

3. The subsequent function charged with converting the foot at the door into a sale, signature or some other act must track these same people through all stages of the conversion process. Again, there is a drop off rate. This may go on for some time, since there will be customers who return a purchase, employees who change their minds or people whose behaviour will change and then change back again. Net conversions, at some future date, are the only meaningful numbers.

4. All investments must be accounted for, including PR/C's and a subsequent function's investments. These investments will include fixed and variable costs for both, as well as a percentage of sunk costs as appropriate.

5. Most probably, the timeframe for any overall program, with a PR/C campaign within, will overlap more than one fiscal year. Therefore, it will be necessary to look at the investment that will be risked with the new program and examine hurdle rates (what's the minimum acceptable rate of return on this investment?) opportunity costs (what if the money risked on this program was invested somewhere else?) and diminishing returns (when do you close the program in the face of stragglers?). This examination would be at the level of the overall program by Marketing, HR, etc. and within the PR/C campaign by PR/C. The time value of money – investment moneys will depreciate over the course of the program – should also be

taken into account.

6. The financial return is the financial value for each closed sale, each closed signature or each final action. Therefore, these are net financial returns or benefits, taken after all sale returns are made, all changes of mind are made.

7. With any ROI calculation, there is no estimating of PR/C intangible outcomes and then trying to give them a financial value. There must be clear evidence that communication behavioural outcomes were realized. There must be clear evidence that another function's conversion outcomes were realized from the communication outcomes. There must be clear evidence that organizational financial benefits were realized from the other function's conversion outcomes. For the ROI calculation, organizational financial returns or benefits are compared to organizational financial investments.

A Set of Principles for the Use of a BCR Metric for a PR/C Program or Campaign

1. The projected campaign must have a clear path to its expected end state. That end state includes both first and second tier behavioural change, as well as the number of individuals affected. Therefore, it includes the actions of other functions.

2. All potential investments must be accounted for, including PR/C's and a subsequent function's investments. These investments will include fixed and variable costs for both, as well as sunk costs as appropriate.

3. There must be an expected sum of money as the benefit or return from each individual. That is, the financial value for each possible closed sale, each closed signature or each final action is required. Therefore, these are net financial returns or benefits, taken after all sale returns are made and all changes of mind are made.

4. When utilizing compensating variation to assign monetary benefits, accuracy in the identification of campaign effects and accuracy in the valuation of those effects are necessary. Objectivity is required.

5. A positive benefit cost ratio means that expected financial returns will exceed financial costs. If not, the program needs to be altered. Or, an alternative program should be proposed.

6. Proposed programs can be examined based on a comparison of benefit cost ratios. At the same time, a baseline ratio should be established first. The baseline is the minimum ratio acceptable for the introduction of any and all new programs or campaigns.

A Set of Principles on the Use of a Cost Effectiveness Metric

1. All potential investments must be accounted for. These investments will include fixed and variable costs, as well as sunk costs as appropriate.

2. An effectiveness benefit must be identified, one that is universal to ensure a solid comparison. For investments in Overhead, the benefit may be for the effectiveness of meetings, with comparisons for example between the effectiveness of face-to-face, Skype or video teleconferencing. For investments in PR Support Services, the benefit may be writing quality control, with the comparison among writing effectiveness if in-house versus if left to the internal client versus if contracted out. For investments in Channels, the effectiveness benefit may be reach, with comparison among various paid, owned, shared or earned channels in reaching a specific audience. For investments in Strategic Counsel, the effectiveness may be the timeliness or quality of the intelligence provided, with comparisons across various strategic advisors/account executives in the PR/C department.

3. The effectiveness benefit must be quantifiable, and be quantifiable across the comparison.

Then the ratio of cost to effectiveness benefit may be determined and compared across all contenders.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to define and describe three common financial concepts, explain where investments are made in PR/C, and then consider where and how each of these financial metrics can be applied by a Chief Communication Officer in her or his PR/C department to the financial returns or benefits from these investments. To ensure that the application of these financial measures provides value to the CCO and is accepted by other functions and by Finance executives, their use must follow accepted and long established practices.

As Ehling (1992, p.633) stated years ago, the PR/C function needs to be much more rigorous in applying financial measurement principles. Certainly, PR/C needs to use common metrics like ROI, BCR and CEA as they were designed. If the PR/C function is to employ a financial term such as ROI that has a specific meaning and a long history, then PR/C should have the professionalism to use it appropriately.

ROI (and BCR) are - and should be - measured at the level of the organization itself. In particular, ROI is a measure for organizational financial 'risk' investments and for organizational financial 'net profit' returns on those investments. The PR/C function can only measure ROI of communication campaigns if that measurement is part of a larger program ROI measure and if that program ROI measurement exercise includes all attributable costs from across the organization and a net financial return at the level of the organization.

BCR and CEA financial metrics have the possibility of greater utility in providing valuable financial measures for the many categories of investments - than does the utilization of a ROI measure. These two are underused currently. The PR/C measurement consultants - not PR/C CCOs - are the primary promoters currently of the use of the ROI metric (Gaunt & Wright, 2004; Gregory & White, 2008; Gregory & Watson, 2008; Watson, 2011a & b; Watson, 2005). The PR/C CCO should find additional value by introducing BCR and CEA measures in the department.

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Internal Communication in the Macau Gaming Industry:
Effects of Internal Market Orientation on Organizational Performance

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Abstract

Internal marketing has been discussed in the management and academic literature for more than three decades. Internal Market Orientation (IMO) represents the adaptation of market orientation to the context of employer-employee communication. IMO, if developed, may increase the effectiveness of a market-oriented company's response to external market conditions because it allows the company's management to better align external market objectives with internal capabilities.

Utilizing IMO theory and previously tested instruments, this study examines the effect of IMO on organizational performance among the Macau casino operating companies, including employee job satisfaction and perceived customer satisfaction. Moreover, external measures, such as more positive media reputation coverage and position change in market share, support the perceptions.

Using responses from a sample of 220 employees from the gaming industry, the underlying structure of the IMO items is shown (factor analysis) and a path analysis disclosed the relationships among variables. The three factor IMO structure is formal and informal internal information generation and dissemination activities and responsiveness to the collected information.

The path analysis results show that IMO is positively related to employee job satisfaction while employee job satisfaction is positively related to perceived customer satisfaction. Moreover, external measures, such as positive reputation change in the mass media and positive change in market revenue share are positively associated with perceived customer satisfaction.
H1a,b,c: The greater the IMO utilizing formal internal communication (partially supported)/ utilizing informal internal communication (supported)/ responsiveness (partially supported), the more positive the employee job satisfaction.
H2a,b,c: The greater the IMO utilizing formal internal communication (supported)/ utilizing informal internal communication (not supported)/ responsiveness (not supported), the more positive the perceived customer satisfaction.
H3: The greater the organization's employee job satisfaction, the higher the perceived customer satisfaction (supported).
H4: The greater the organization's level of perceived customer satisfaction, the greater the positive corporate reputation, i.e. positive reputation change, reflected in the mass media (supported).

H5: The greater the organization's level of perceived customer satisfaction, the greater the positive market share change (supported).

H6: The greater the positive corporate reputation reflected in the mass media, the greater the positive market share change (supported).

Findings and implications for casino employer-employee internal communication are discussed.

Introduction

Effective internal communication plays a crucial role in team building, organizational commitment, and services management (Hiltrop, 1996; Rafiq and Ahmed, 2000; Tansuhaj, Randall and McCullough, 1988). In a service-intensive environment, a manager has to communicate with his/her subordinates frequently in order to align them with the organization's goals and norms, to understand the difficulties they encounter, and to provide feedback and assistance promptly when necessary. The concept of "internal marketing" was then developed (Berry, 1974). As argued by Berry (1974, 1981) and Heskett, Sasser and Schlesinger (2002), treating employees well will make employees satisfied, in turn leading to satisfied customers.

Macau was a Portuguese colony and a regional tourist spot – a placing having a relaxing environment for visitors enjoying fusion foods and table games. It was returned to mainland China in December 1999. In 2002, the Government of Macau SAR decided to liberalize the gaming industry and granted concessionaires to local and multinational casino operating companies. Since then, Macau has developed rapidly and transformed itself to the world gaming center (Lai and To, 2010). In 2010, Macau attracted over 25 million visitors and gross gaming revenue was MOP 190 billion (DSEC, 2011a), equivalent to USD 23.6 billion. The number of casinos increased from 11 in 2002 to 33 to 2010 (DICJ, 2011). Moreover, the number of employees in the gaming industry increased from 19,772 in 2004 to 44,806 in 2010 (DSEC, 2011b). Hence, this paper aims at investigating (i) to what extent Macau casino operating companies use internal marketing to align their employees to their service missions, (ii) whether internal marketing is positively related to employees' job satisfaction and is associated with external measures such as reputation and change in market share, and (iii) other structural factors that may affect the market share of each casino operating company.

Literature Review and Research Hypotheses

Internal communication has moved from a top-down management strategy to direct, instruct and control employees in order to achieve the organization's goals (Sampson, 1973 cited in Davis, 2001) to a critical strategic communication function (Downs and Adrian, 2004), especially in service-based economies. As time evolves, most economies transform themselves from a manufacturing-based economy to a service-based economy. According to Spohror, Gregory and Ren (2010), the service sector contributes to over two-thirds of a nation's GDP in developed economies. In Macau, its dominant service industry – the gaming industry – contributes to over 85 percent of its government revenue. In a casino environment, players bet on their luck at game tables and interact with frontline employees such as hard & soft count clerks, cage cashiers, dealers, pit supervisors, casino floor-persons, etc. frequently. As a result, casino operating companies started deploying a number of management strategies to enhance service quality, reputation, and employee and customer loyalty. Internal marketing as a way to align employees with the organization's goals is one of those strategies.

Internal marketing was firstly proposed by Berry (1974). It evolved gradually and "treating employees as internal customers" became a founding stone of internal marketing (Berry, 1981; Rafiq and Ahmed, 2000). Rafiq and Ahmed (2000) reviewed internal marketing concepts, practices and processes. Specifically, they mentioned that internal communication (formal and informal) is important to clarify roles and to strengthen employees' feelings toward their own importance in the organization settings. Lings (2004), Lings and Greenley (2005) and Gounaris (2006; 2008) proposed a method to characterize the extent of use of internal marketing in organizations. Borrowing ideas from (external) market orientation (Kohli and Jaworski, 1990),

developed instruments to measure "internal market orientation" (IMO). Ling and Greenley (2005) and Martin and To (2013) found that IMO was significantly related to employees' job satisfaction and perceived customer satisfaction in various service contexts. Besides, employees' job satisfaction is related to perceived customer satisfaction. Hence, it is proposed that:

> **H1a,b,c**: The greater the IMO core components such as utilizing formal internal communication/utilizing informal internal communication/responsiveness, the more positive the employee job satisfaction.
> **H2a,b,c**: The greater the IMO core components such as utilizing formal internal communication/utilizing informal internal communication/responsiveness, the more positive the perceived customer satisfaction.
> **H3**: The greater the organization's employee job satisfaction, the higher the perceived customer satisfaction.

Reputation refers to the 'favorability' of a business organization within a social system (Zyglidopoulos, 2003). More specifically, corporate reputation can be used to indicate 'the overall estimation in which a particular company is held by its various constituents' (Fombrun, 1996: p.37). Martin (2010) argues that reputation plays a significant role in shaping the organization's image to the public and is a significant predictor of competitive advantage. Management of reputation becomes a critical function of a manager's job and has to be performed through excellent service delivery. No service manager can create reputation without a group of dedicated and capable employees. Although Macau was seldom mentioned in western media including trade magazines and academic journals, this phenomenon has changed drastically since 2002. For example, academic articles using Macau as a research context increased from 68 in 1990 to 215 in 2010, according to Google Scholar. In trade magazines and public media, the number of articles describing Macao surges even more rapidly. Positive or negative coverage in the mass media will have a substantial impact on the organization's image and profitability. And reputation must be closely linked to employees' perceived customer satisfaction and/or its antecedents, i.e. IMO. Hence, it is posited that:

> **H4**: The greater the organization's level of perceived customer satisfaction, the greater the positive corporate reputation, i.e. positive reputation change, reflected in the mass media.

In a competitive environment, the strength of an organization is normally reflected by its market share. In Macau, all gaming companies or their parent companies are listed companies in the New York Stock Exchange or the Hong Kong Stock Exchange. Hence, the market share of each casino operating company is known and published in its annual and quarterly reports. Indeed, it is a general belief that market share, or specifically change in market share, is strongly linked to its reputation and perceived customer satisfaction. Hence it is hypothesized that:

> **H5**: The greater the organization's level of perceived customer satisfaction, the greater the positive market share change.
> **H6**: The greater the positive corporate reputation reflected in the mass media, the greater the positive market share change.

Method

This research involves the collection of two types of research data – primary data as well as secondary data. We developed a closed-ended, structured questionnaire using items from Lings and Greenley (2005) to measure IMO, employees' job satisfaction, and perceived customer satisfaction. We distributed copies of this questionnaire to solicit inputs and opinions from employees in the gaming industry. On the other hand, reputation measures using the items proposed by Fombrun and Shanley (1990) and Fombrun and Van Riel (2003) were obtained from the mass media. Market share change was determined using the annual and quarterly reports of casino operating companies.

We distributed 400 questionnaires to employees working in casino operating companies and collected 220 completed questionnaires in four rounds. In order to assess whether non-response bias existed, we performed independent *t*-tests to compare the responses we collected in the first round and the last round, i.e. the first fifty and the last fifty completed questionnaires as suggested by Armstrong and Overton (1977). The results of independent *t*-tests show that there was no significant difference between these two groups of respondents, meaning that non-response bias was not a problem.

Results and Analysis

Effects of IMO on Organizational Performance

Table 1 shows the demographic profile of the 220 respondents. It indicates that 132 of them were female and 88 of them were male. In terms of age, 11 of them were below 20, 148 in the age group between 20 and 29, 46 in the age group between 30 and 39, and 15 aged 40 or above. 127 of the respondents had secondary education, followed by 72 respondents having bachelor's degrees. 112 of the respondents worked as frontline service employees, followed by 58 supporting staff and 50 administrative staff respectively. Most of the respondents (153) had worked for casino operating companies less than two years, 57 between two and four years, and only 10 more than four years. 112 of the respondents were employees of Sociedade de Jogos de Macau S.A. (SJM) or Galaxy Entertainment Ltd. – the regional casino operating companies and 108 respondents were employees of Las Vegas Sands (Venetian) or Wynn – two Las Vegas-based casino operating companies.

Table 1. Demographic profile of the respondents.

		N	%			*N*	%
Gender	Female	132	60	Position	Frontline	112	51
	Male	88	40		Supporting	58	26
					Administration	50	23
Age	< 20	11	5				
	20-29	148	68	Years with	< 2 years	153	70
	30-39	46	21	the company	2 to <4 years	57	25
	40 and above	15	7		4 years or +	10	5
Education	Primary	17	8	Group	Regional	112	51
	Secondary	127	58		Las Vegas-based	108	49
	Bachelor	72	32				
	Masters	4	3				

In fact, the demographic profile of respondents closely resembles the results of the Survey on Manpower Needs and Wages – Gaming Sector (DSEC, 2011b). The Survey indicated

that 24,811 (52 percent) out of the total 47,321 employees in the gaming sector were female as at the end of June 2011. Moreover 20,247 (57 percent) out of the total 35,623 frontline service employees were female. Besides, it has been well known that majority of the gaming sector's employees were in the age between 20 and 29 and completed secondary school education. Due to the rapid expansion of the gaming sector of Macao, most employees had less than four years experience with casino operating companies and many of them had worked for the companies for less than two years. Table 2 shows that the number of casinos increased from 11 in 2002 to 34 in 2011. Tables 3 show the number of game tables and Table 4 shows the number of slot machines for the period of 2002-2011 respectively. All of these illustrated how fast the Macau's gaming sector has expanded in the past ten years. In order to provide excellent services to Macau's visitors, casino operating companies have to deploy various management strategies to enhance their images to external customers as well as internal customers, i.e. employees.

Table 2. The number of casinos from 2002 to 2011(3rd quarter).

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
SJM	11	11	13	15	17	18	19	20	20	20
Galaxy	0	0	1	1	5	5	5	5	5	6
Venetian	0	0	1	1	1	2	3	3	3	4
Wynn	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1
Melco	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	3	3	2
MGM	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1
Total	*11*	*11*	*15*	*17*	*24*	*28*	*31*	*33*	*33*	*34*

Note: (i) figures were obtained from the Macao Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau (DICJ, 2011).

Table 3. The number of game tables from 2002 to 2011(3rd quarter).

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
SJM	339	424	733	906	1202	1412	1334	1724	1888	1888
Galaxy	0	0	31	63	500	574	448	448	448	848
Venetian	0	0	328	368	840	1450	1197	1128	1128	1704
Wynn	0	0	0	0	220	290	367	404	479	509
Melco	0	0	0	0	0	255	286	686	686	686
MGM	0	0	0	0	0	0	385	411	402	427
Total	*339*	*424*	*1092*	*1337*	*2762*	*3981*	*4017*	*4801*	*5031*	*6062*

Notes:
(i) the numbers of game tables were obtained from annual reports of casino operating companies.
(ii) some total figures are different from the ones published by Macao Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau because some companies presented the average game tables in their annual reports.

Table 4. The number of slot machines from 2002 to 2011(3rd quarter).

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
SJM	808	814	1001	2318	2738	3702	4017	4770	5051	5051
Galaxy	0	0	83	74	800	1012	1006	1006	1006	2506
Venetian	0	0	670	850	1691	4636	3402	3491	3491	5691
Wynn	0	0	0	0	380	708	1241	1199	1015	943
Melco	0	0	500	634	937	980	1300	2650	2650	2760
MGM	0	0	0	0	0	0	890	896	1006	1006
Total	*808*	*814*	*2254*	*3876*	*6546*	*11038*	*11856*	*14012*	*14219*	*17957*

Notes:
(i) the numbers of slot machines were obtained from annual reports of casino operating companies.
(ii) some total figures are different from the ones published by Macao Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau because some companies presented the average slot machines in their annual reports.

We then categorized the collected data into two groups – Las Vegas-based casino operating companies and the regional casino operating companies. We determined the average summed scores of IMO components including formal internal communication, informal internal communication, and responsiveness, employees' job satisfaction, and perceived customer satisfaction. External measures including reputation and market share change were obtained from the mass media and companies' annual reports. Reputation was determined based on the frequency counts of six drivers with twenty underlying attributes using the corpus of news, reports, and stories relating to each casino operating company for the whole year of 2008. A database – LexisNexis was used as it has a wide coverage of English mass media. The six drivers are (i) products and services, (ii) financial performance, (iii) workplace environment, (iv) vision and leadership, (v) social responsibility, and (vi) emotional appeal (Fombrun and Van Riel, 2003). Table 5 shows the similarity/difference of employees' perceptions and external measures among two groups of casino operating companies.

Table 5. The average summed scores of IMO components and other measures

	Las Vegas-based	Regional	*t*-test for equality of means : *p*-value
IMO			
Formal internal communication	4.40 (0.12)	4.23 (0.10)	0.27
Informal internal communication	4.23 (0.11)	4.04 (0.10)	0.19
Responsiveness	4.28 (0.13)	4.17 (0.13)	0.52
Employees' job satisfaction	4.17 (0.11)	4.03 (0.09)	0.33
Perceived customer satisfaction	4.67 (0.10)	4.17 (0.09)	<0.001***
External measures:			
Reputation – mean value	16426	14365	N.A.
Reputation change – mean value	-2830	-3543	N.A.
Market share change – mean value	8%	-11%	

Notes:
(i) the values in bracket are standard errors.
(ii) *** represents a very significant difference between groups because of *p*<0.001.

Table 5 shows that the Las Vegas-based casino operating companies and the regional casino operating companies have utilized internal marketing strategies to align employees with the organization's goals and missions. It is because employees in both groups had relatively high

average summed scores in the areas of "formal internal communication" (4.2-4.4 out of a 5-point Likert scale) and "informal internal communication" (4.0-4.2 out of a 5-point Likert scale). Moreover, the average summed score for "responsiveness" was also high (4.2-4.3 out of a 5-point Likert scale).

As there was no significant difference on IMO components between the two groups of respondents, we conducted a factor analysis to re-confirm the factor structure of IMO. The analysis was performed by first determining the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and the Barlett's test of sphericity. The KMO value was 0.91 and the Barlett's test of sphericity was significant as $p<0.001$, indicating the dataset to be suitable for factor analysis. We then performed a principal components analysis with oblimin rotation. The output of principal components analysis confirmed that IMO has a three-factor structure as expected. The reliability of each component was checked using the Cronbach's alpha measure. The Cronbach's alpha values of the three components: formal internal communication, informal internal communication, and responsiveness were 0.91, 0.90, and 0.88 respectively. All the values were higher than 0.7 – a threshold suggested by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) for internal reliability. The Cronbach's alpha values of employees' job satisfaction and perceived customer satisfaction were 0.88 and 0.90 respectively.

To test Hypotheses H1a,b,c, H2a,b,c, and H3, we conducted a path analysis using SPSS17.0 and AMOS 18.0. A number of fit measures were used to assess the goodness-of-fit of the proposed theoretical model. That included the ratio of c2 to degree-of-freedom (df), the goodness of fit index (*GFI*), the adjusted goodness-of-fit index (*AGFI*), the comparative fit index (*CFI*), the norm fit index (*NFI*), and the root mean square error of approximation (*RMSEA*). According to Hair et al. (2005), these measures should be <3.0 for c2/df, >0.92 for *GFI*, *AGFI*, *CFI*, and *NFI*, and <0.08 for *RMSEA*. Table 6 shows the calculated measures for the same path model applied to the two-separate groups of employees; one group working for Las Vegas-based casino operating companies and another group working for the regional casino operating companies. The results indicate that the proposed path model was applicable to both groups of employees. It should be noted that some common insignificant paths were eliminated in the path models (as shown in Figures 1 and 2). Interestingly, both models indicate that the direct effects of informal communication and responsiveness on perceived customer satisfaction were not significant. Hence, H1a,b,c were generally supported. H2a were supported but H2b,c were not supported, and H3 was supported.

Table 6. The goodness-of-fit measures for the proposed path model (see Figures 1&2)

	Goodness-of-fit measures					
	c2/df	GFI	AGFI	CFI	NFI	RMSEA
Model 1 – Las Vegas Group	0.332	0.998	0.981	0.999	0.998	0.000
Model 2 – Regional Group	0.463	0.997	0.975	0.999	0.996	0.000
Criteria (see Hair et al., 2005)	<3.0	>0.92	>0.92	>0.92	>0.92	<0.08

Figure 1. Path model of IMO, employees' job satisfaction, and perceived
      customer satisfaction. (Las Vegas-based casino operating companies)
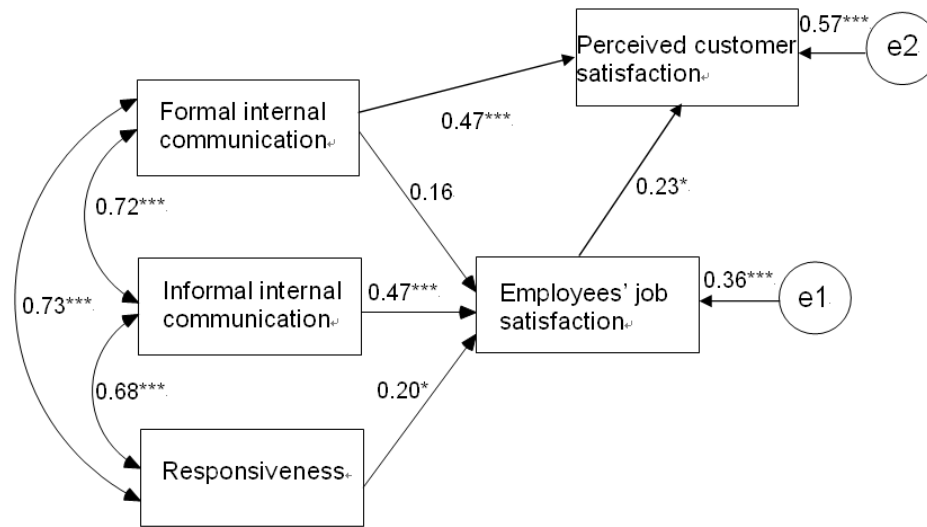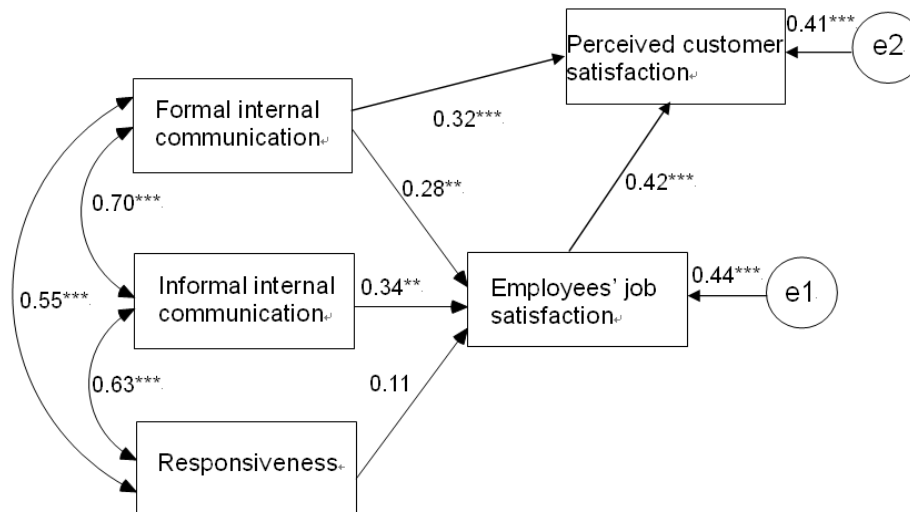

Figure 2. Path model of IMO, employees' job satisfaction, and perceived customer satisfaction.
(Regional casino operating companies)

      Bivariate correlations were performed between employees' job satisfaction, perceived customer satisfaction, reputation, reputation change, and market share change. The results are shown in Table 7.

Table 7. Bivariate correlations between employees' job satisfaction, perceived customer satisfaction and external measures.

	Employees' job satisfaction	Perceived customer satisfaction	External measures		
			Reputation	Reputation change	Market share change
Perceived customer satisfaction	**0.548****		-0.170*	**0.207****	**0.204****
Reputation		-0.170*		-0.847**	-0.185*
Reputation change		0.207**	-0.847**		**0.672****
Market share change		0.204**	-0.185*	0.672**	

Notes:
(i) ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level. (ii) * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 7 shows that external measures such as reputation change and market share change were significantly associated with perceived customer satisfaction, thus supporting Hypotheses 4 and 5, as shown in bold in the table. It also indicates that market share change was strongly, significantly, positively correlated with reputation change (r=0.672, p<0.01), implying that Hypothesis 6 was supported, as shown in bold in Table 7. In fact, reputation change and market share change were not significantly correlated with employees' job satisfaction but perceived customer satisfaction was significantly, positively with employees' job satisfaction. Hence, our proposed theoretical model illustrates that reputation change and market share change are related to customer satisfaction and "customer satisfaction can only be achieved when service employees are happy in their jobs" put forward by Berry (1974, 1981) and Heskett, Sasser and Schlesinger (2002). In this connection, management commitment to service quality (Cheung and To, 2010) and the implementation of effective IMO (Martin, 2010; Martin and To, 2013) shall produce synergistic effects on service delivery through a chain of reactions.

Table 8 shows bivariate relationships between reputation, market share, the number of casino tables, and the number of slot machines for the year 2008. It illustrates that reputation and market share were strongly, significantly associated with the number of casino tables and the number of slot machines.

Table 8. Bivariate correlations between employees' job satisfaction, perceived customer satisfaction and external measures.

	Reputation	Market share	Number of casino tables	Number of slot machines
Market share	0.959**		0.918**	0.953**
Number of casino tables	0.971**	0.918**		
Number of slot machines	0.967**	0.953**		

(i) ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

Structural Factors Affecting Market Share

The preceding section illustrates how internal marketing affects employees' job satisfaction and perceived customer satisfaction, in turn resulting in positive reputation in the mass media and market share change at certain point of time. However, one shall bear in mind that some other factors will also affect market share change, or more specifically market share, in an expanding market such as the Macau gaming industry. Indeed, the Macau gaming industry has a phenomenal growth in the past ten years as shown in Figure 3.

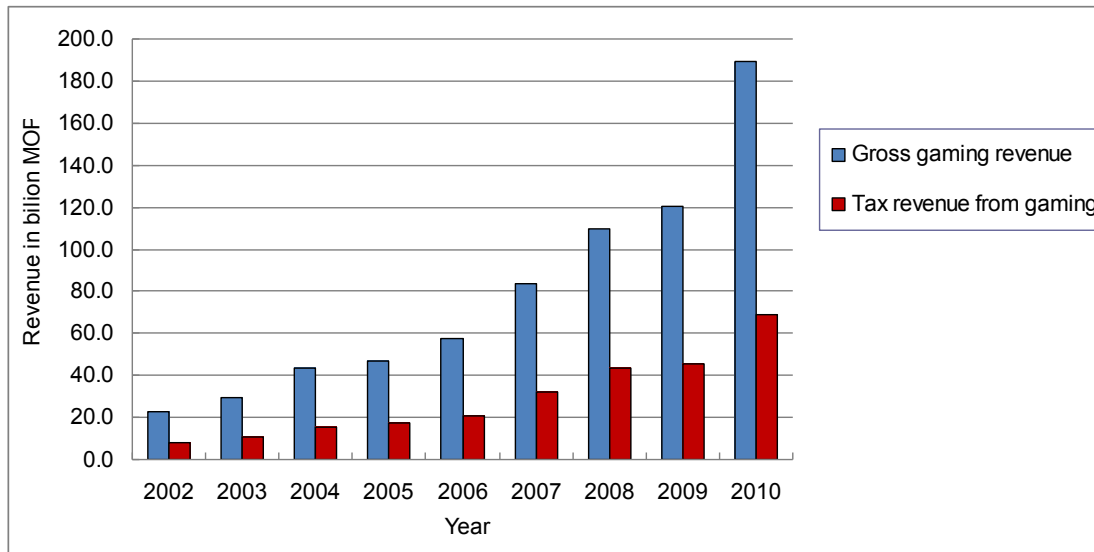Figure 3. Gross gaming revenue and tax revenue from gaming during the period 2002-2010. (DSEC, 2011a)

Figure 3 shows that Macau's gross gaming revenue increased from MOP 22.8 billion (USD 2.8 billion) in 2002 to MOP 190 billion (USD 23.6 billion) in 2010. During the same period of time, tax revenue from gaming increased from MOP 7.8 billion (USD 1 billion) to MOP 68.8 billion (USD 8.6 billion). In terms of share of tax revenue from gaming in public revenue, the proportion increased from 51 percent to 77.7 percent.

Table 2 (in the preceding section) shows the number of casinos from 2002 to 2011 (3rd quarter). By dividing the number of casinos under a casino operating company by the total number of casinos in each year, we determined the percentage out of the total number of casinos owned by each casino operating companies. Figure 4 shows the percentage as a function of year and casino operating company.

Figure 4. Percentage of the total number of casinos owned by each casino operating company.
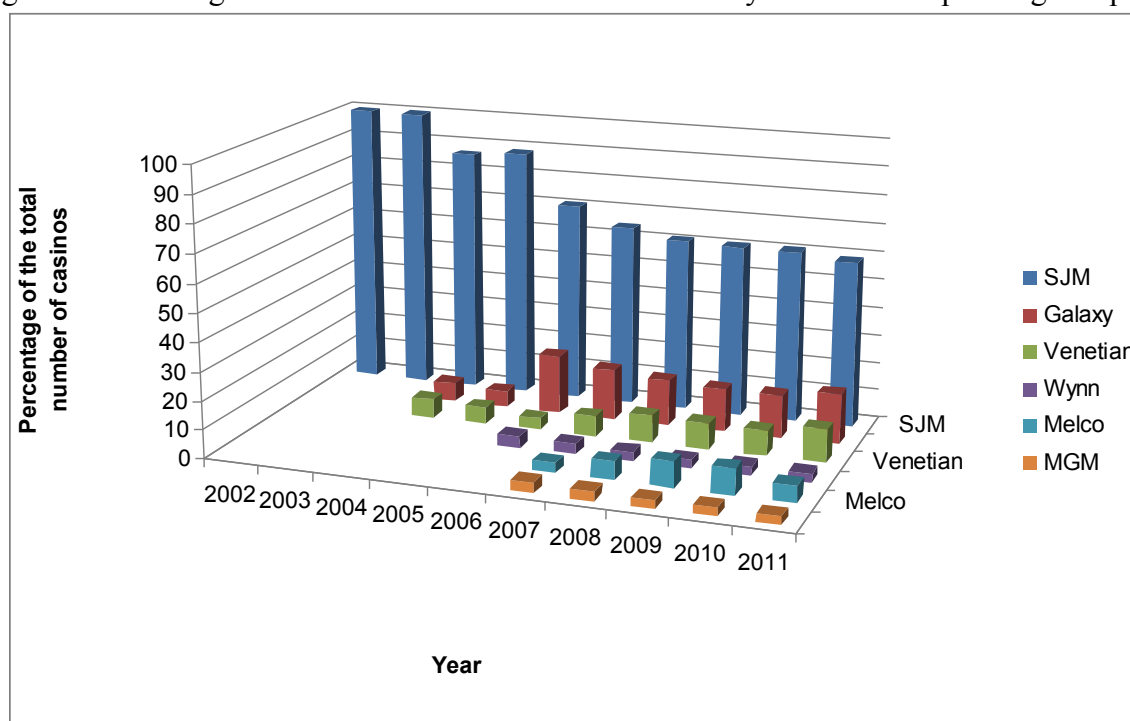

Table 9 shows the market share of casino operating companies from 2002 to 2011 (3rd quarter). It should be noted that all figures were obtained from the annual reports and press releases of each casino operating company. Besides, the figures for 2011 were estimates and have yet to take into consideration of the effect due to the recent opening of Galaxy Macau in Cotai on May 15, 2011 on the market share.

Table 9. Market shares of casino operating companies from 2002 to 2011(3rd quarter).

|	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
SJM	100	100	85	75	62	40	26	29	29	27
Galaxy	0	0	7	9	13	18	10	9	9	11
Venetian	0	0	8	17	20	21	26	23	20	21
Wynn	0	0	0	0	5	15	16	14	17	17
Melco	0	0	0	0	0	6	14	18	17	16
MGM	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	7	8	8

Notes:
(i) the figures were obtained from annual reports of casino operating companies.
(ii) the 2011 figures were obtained from press releases as the annual reports will not be available until Feb-April 2012.

Figure 5 shows the market share of each casino operating company based on its gaming revenue. It shows that SJM is still the market leader, Venetian (or Las Vegas Sands) once in par with SJM but its market share gradually erodes by the expansion of other casino operating companies such as Wynn and Melco. Again, it is expected that Galaxy Entertainment would have a rapid growth in 2011 and 2012 because of the opening of Galaxy Macau in Cotai.

Figure 5. Market share in percentage of each casino operating company from 2002 to 2011.
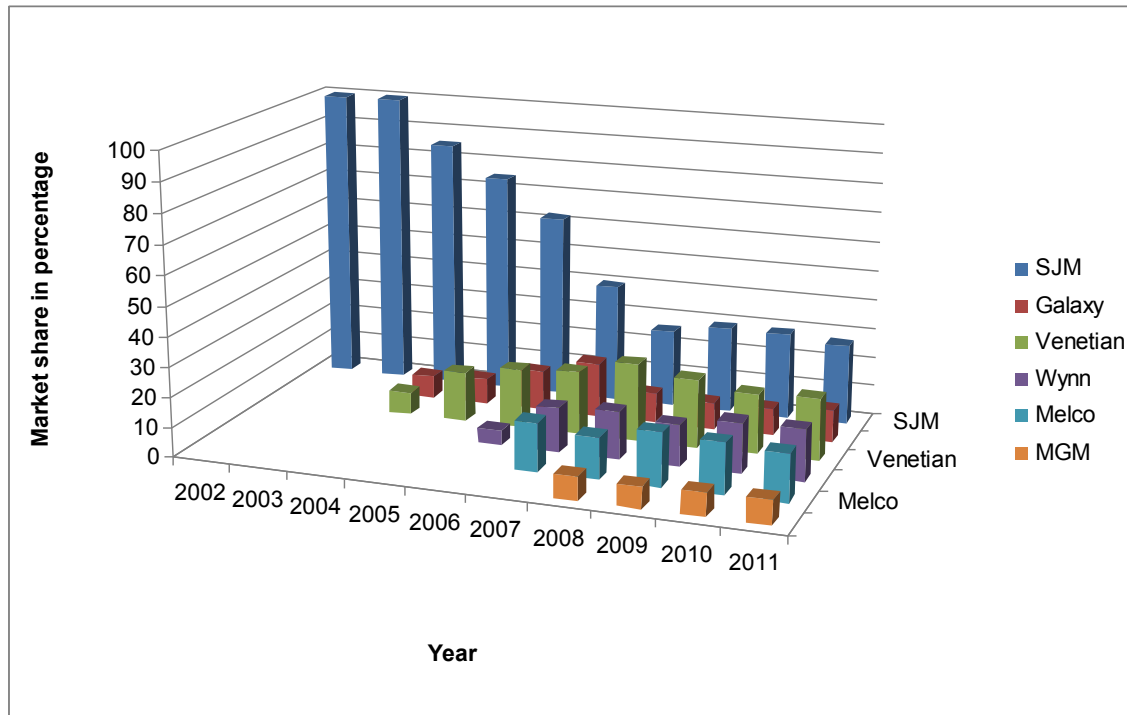
By comparing Figures 4 and 5, one can observe that market share of each casino operating company is related to the number of casinos it owned. However, casino size varies significantly. For example, Jimei (Grand Lapa) Casino has 15 table games and 59 slot machines while Venetian Macau has 870 game tables and 3,400 slot machines. Hence, it shall be informative if the percentages of game tables and slot machines are presented (as shown in Figures 6 and 7).

Figure 6. Game tables in percentage of each casino operating company from 2002 to 2011.
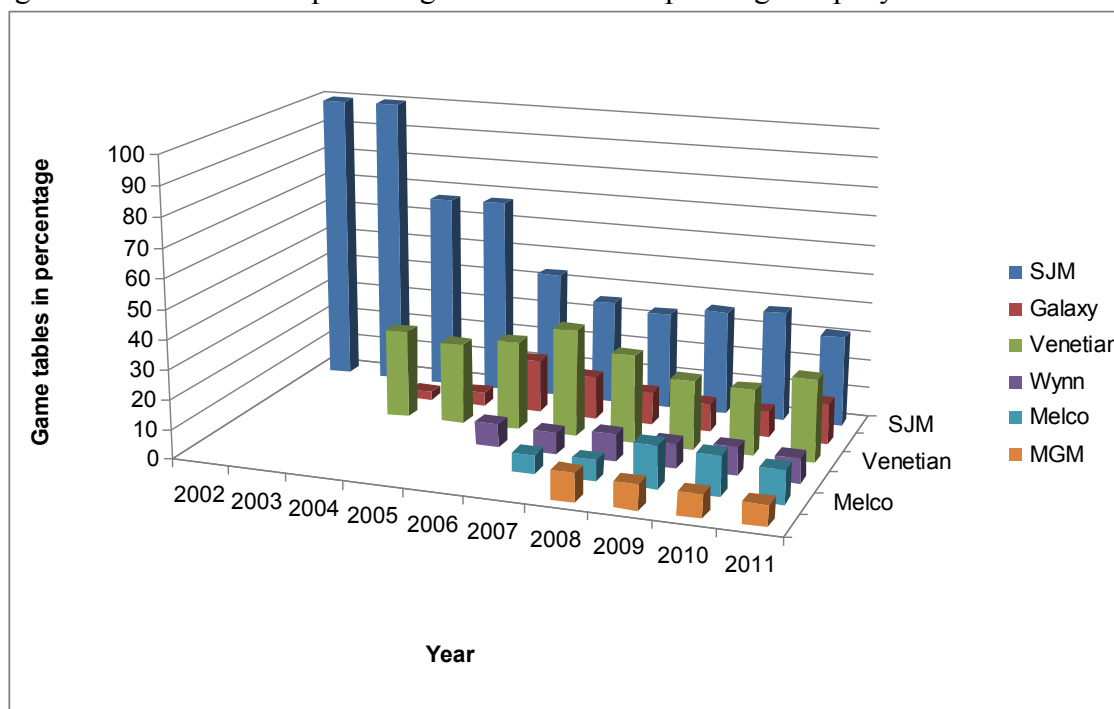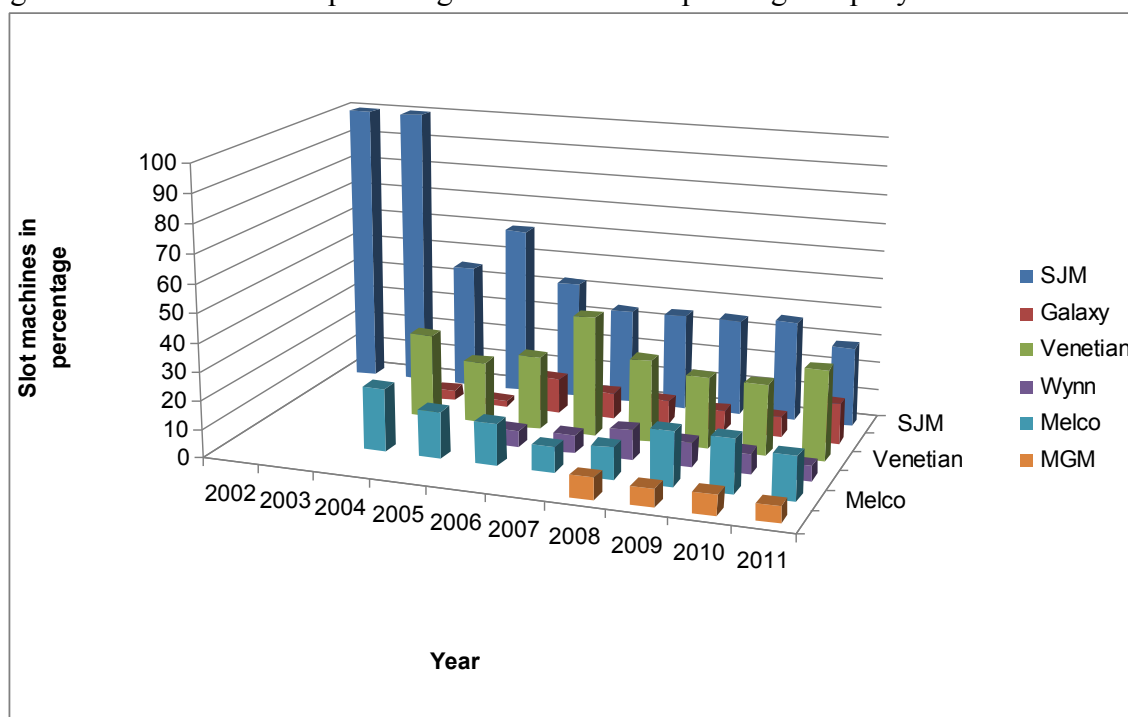

Figure 7. Slot machines in percentage of each casino operating company from 2002 to 2011.

By comparing Figures 6, 7 and 4 with Figure 5, one can observe that the number of game tables has the most significant effect on market share. That is perfectly understandable because gaming revenue is proportional to the number of game tables. However, a detailed inspection of

Figures 5 and 6 reveals that Wynn has the highest ratio of market share to the number of game tables, probably due to its outstanding reputation for looking after its high rollers in the most professional and luxurious way. Besides, employee development has been considered as one of the cornerstones of Wynn in Macau.

Media Reputation – its Change

We repeated the process of counting the frequency of six drivers with twenty underlying attributes using the corpus of news, reports, and stories relating to each casino operating company for the period of 2002-2011. The overall reputation of each of six casino operating companies as a function of time, i.e. year, was then obtained. Table 10 shows that the total frequency counts of the overall positive reputations increased rapidly from 2002 to 2007. Since then, the coverage on Macau casinos in the mass media has reduced steadily probably due to the global economic crisis. Figure 8 shows the positive coverage, i.e. the overall positive reputation in percentage, of casino operating companies.

Table 10. Frequency counts of the overall positive reputation from 2002 to 2011(3rd quarter).

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	*2011*
SJM	3738	9516	15275	14382	27139	27360	22858	21351	15786	*10560*
Galaxy	1429	1170	9523	9266	11024	8456	5872	6011	3717	*2752*
Venetian	1597	994	15038	12793	22694	28891	25538	22089	20596	*8018*
Wynn	1781	442	4019	4637	11081	9621	7314	7917	2985	*3377*
Melco	47	278	5623	7250	16923	21867	12619	13741	10827	*7686*
MGM	618	1774	4979	3772	8432	5479	5303	3454	2876	*3581*

Figure 8. Overall reputation in percentage of each casino operating company from 2002 to 2011.
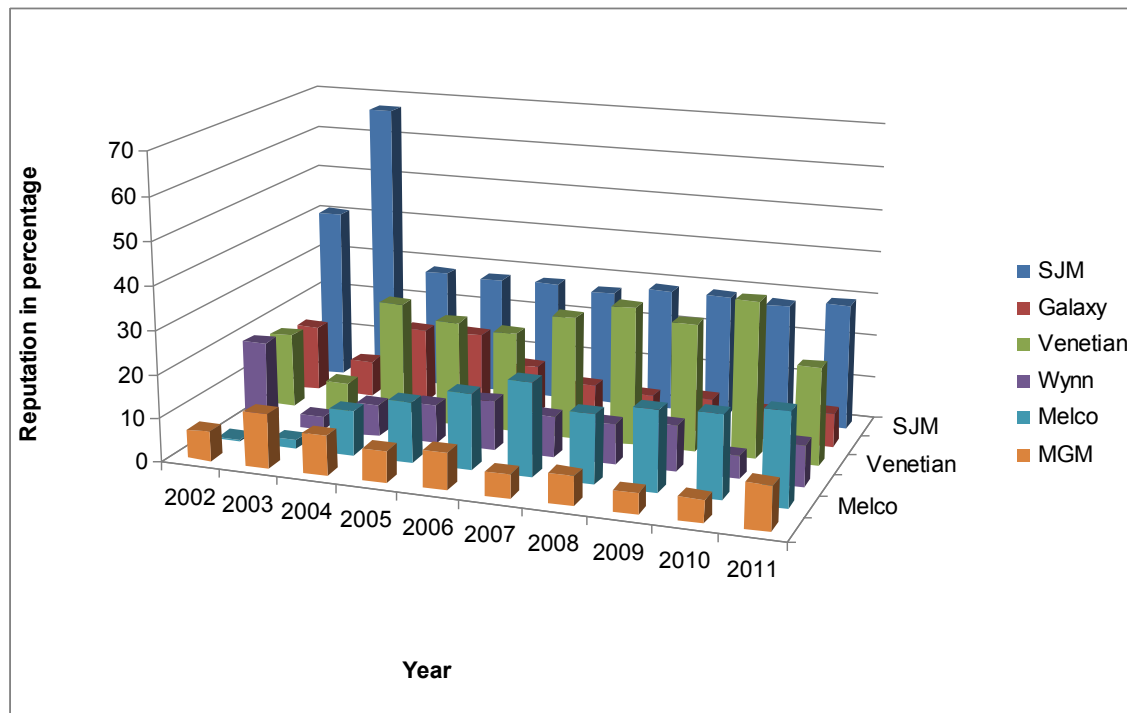
Discussion and Conclusion

In the fast growing gaming sector in Macau during the past ten years, the casino operating companies have competed on all fronts for external customers to increase their share of revenue. In the service environment, internal customers -- casino employees -- are critical in shaping the experience of external customers. In short, employee attitudes and behaviors can enhance value to the organization.

Previous research proposes that internal marketing, with practices and processes of formal and informal internal communication, is important in strengthening employees' feelings toward their own importance in the organizational settings.

In the study, we proposed that internal market orientation (IMO) would affect employee job satisfaction, perceived customer satisfaction, positive reputation change and positive market share change.

Half of the gaming operating companies come from the Asian region with the others have their base in Las Vegas. Country-of-origin does not have a significant impact of IMO management practices. The overall mean values of IMO formal internal communication, informal internal communication and responsiveness were not significantly different between Las Vegas-based gaming companies and the regional companies, indicating that these two groups of companies have adopted similar approaches.

With no significant difference on IMO components between the two groups of respondents, we conducted a factor analysis to re-confirm the factor structure of IMO. The factor analysis re-confirmed the three factors of formal and informal internal communication as well as responsiveness.

To test our hypotheses, we conducted a path analyses. The results indicated that the proposed path model was applicable to both groups of employees. In general, informal internal communication had the strongest effect on employee satisfaction. With slight differences in the direct effects regional and Las Vegas operating companies, the path generally supports the hypotheses H1a,b,c that the greater the IMO utilizing formal internal communication (regional only), informal communication and responsiveness (Las Vegas only), the more positive employees' job satisfaction. With the exception of the direct effect of formal internal communication on perceived customer satisfaction (H2a) IMO practice has an indirect effect on customer satisfaction via job satisfaction from the employees' perspective. That is to say that employee job satisfaction directly affects perceived customer satisfaction (H3).

We utilized external measures to test the other hypotheses, including market share (and market share change) from secondary reports from operating company annual reports and government sources and media reputation by counting positive words from a lexicon constructed to represent six dimensions composed of 20 attributes of positive corporate reputation.

Bivatiate correlations support that the greater the level of perceived customer satisfaction, the greater the positive corporate reputation change reflected in the mass media (H4). Additionally, the greater the level of perceived customer satisfaction, the greater the positive market share change (H5). And, very importantly, change in the media reputation is significantly linked to market share change (H6).

Having tested how internal marketing affects employees' job satisfaction and perceived customer satisfaction, in turn resulting in positive reputation in the mass media and market share change at certain point of time, we also looked at some other factors affecting market share change, or more specifically market share, in an expanding market such as the Macau gaming

industry. We found a significant correlation among casino operating company market share, reputation, number of casino tables and number of slot machines.

Implications

In service operations such as casinos, with close employee-customer interaction, internal marketing practices for effective management starts with both informal and formal methods. Informal internal marketing practice include activities such as notifying what employees are feeling, finding out what the employees want from the company, and providing feedback on issues which affect the working environment. In short, informal marketing practice is to be tuned in to employee needs and keep employees in the loop about things which affect them. Formal internal marketing practices includes activities such as regular staff appraisals to discuss what employees want and annual surveys of employees to assess the quality of employment and attitudes toward work. Management must demonstrate commitment through their responsiveness.

Casino managers must recognize that front-line employee satisfaction is linked to customer satisfaction, which is linked to positive changes in reputation and market share. By talking to employees informally, as well as formally and regularly, trust and commitment can be established among management teams and frontline employees, resulting in higher level of job satisfaction.

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How Millennials Are Interacting with Organizations on Facebook: A Survey of Their Uses and Organization-Public Relationships on Facebook

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Abstract

Because the Millennial generation is one of the most powerful publics in terms of purchasing power and influence, and due to their pervasive use of Facebook, investigating how they interact with organizations on Facebook is important to the field of public relations. Based upon a prior qualitative study conducted by McCorkindale and DiStaso (2011), this study employed focus groups and surveys to understand how adult Millennials engage with organizations, what motivates these relationships and what their reasons are for maintaining or terminating the relationships. Current trends are examined and best practices for this important population are identified.

How Millennials Are Interacting with Organizations on Facebook: A Survey of Their Uses and Organization-Public Relationships on Facebook

AVERAGE TIME SPENT ON FACEBOOK:

64%

25%

10%

Less than 30 minutes

More than an hour

More than two hours

ACTIVITY ON PAGES:

75%

Like

ORGANIZATIONS

45%

Like

PRODUCTS

48%
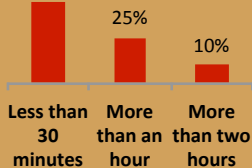
ACCEPTED FRIEND REQUESTS FROM ORGS

FREQUENCY OF FACEBOOK VISITS:

EVERY DAY 68%

2X PER WEEK 5%

FACEBOOK APP ON CELL PHONE:

57%

DONATED, SUPPORTED OR JOINED A CAUSE:

44%

METHODOLOGY:

414 respondents between 18-29 completed the online survey distributed to three university campuses, two in the Northeast and one in the Southeast

WHAT MILLENNIALS DO:

- **"Stalk, creep, check, browse" others' profiles**
- **Chat**
- **Update statuses**
- **Check messages, notifications, timelines**
- **Upload photos or other content**
- **Play games**
- **Keep in touch with family and friends**

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TYPES OF ORGANIZATIONS LIKED:

- Sororities and fraternities
- Nonprofits (including religious orgs.)
- Sports teams
- Local organizations
- College organizations
- Bands

ONLY A FEW CORPORATIONS WERE LIKED:

WHY MILLENNIALS SAID THEY "LIKED" ORGANIZATIONS:

- I am a current member [offline]
- I "like" the organization [offline]
- I would like updates
- I want promotions or discounts
- My friends were already members
- It's fun
- Someone asked me to join

MILLENNIALS ARE MORE LIKELY TO "LIKE" AN ORGANIZATION IF IT:

Offered discounts	Offered product samples	Sent events	Sent a personal invitation	Had games or "fun" applications
56%	40%	28%	27%	14%
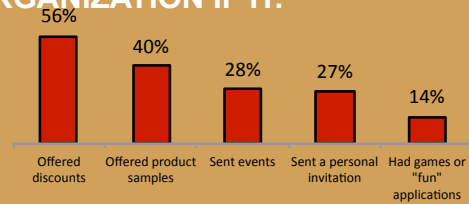
HOW OFTEN DO MILLENNIALS VISIT FAN PAGES:

1% DAILY   **15%** WEEKLY   **14%** MONTHLY   **69%** RARELY OR NEVER

HOW MILLENNIALS LEARNED ABOUT A FAN PAGE:

My friend is a fan	I stumbled upon it	My friend suggested it	I actively searched for it	Facebook suggested it
43%	33%	30%	28%	25%
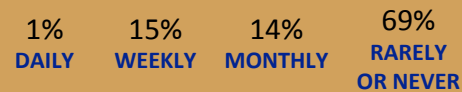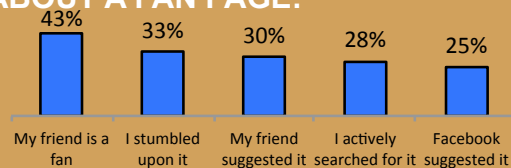
HOW MILLENNIALS LEARNED ABOUT A FACEBOOK GROUP:

66% — My friend suggested it
53% — My friend was a fan
28% — I stumbled upon it
22% — I actively searched for it
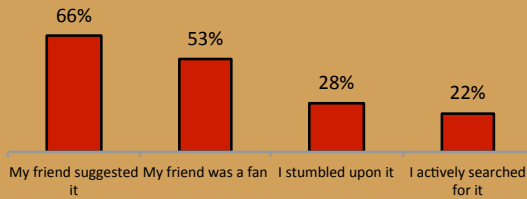
HOW ORGANIZATIONS CONTACT MILLENNIALS:

71% — Messages
60% — Event invitations
44% — News feed
39% — Wall posts
8% — Facebook chat
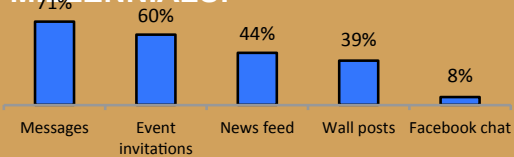
42% HAVE LEFT A FACEBOOK GROUP OR FAN PAGE

91% ARE MEMBERS OF A:

facebook. Group

83% RARELY OR NEVER ACCEPTED FRIEND REQUESTS FROM STRANGERS

91% RARELY OR NEVER ACCEPTED FRIEND REQUESTS FROM "STRANGER" ORGANIZATIONS

WHY MILLENNIALS SAID THEY LEFT GROUPS OR PAGES:

- Annoying or excessive notifications
- I was cleaning my Facebook account
- I was no longer interested in the group
- I no longer belong to the group [offline]
- I disagreed with some of the content and didn't want to be affiliated anymore

Online Focus Groups Exploring the Relationships Millennials have with Brands

MOST TALKED ABOUT BRANDS

FOREVER 21 · Wawa · OREO · PACSUN · SEPHORA · dermalogica · Red Bull · Chipotle · HERSHEY'S · LOFT · Skittles · Special K

MAIN INDUSTRIES:

Retail 35%
Food and Beverage 33%
Nonprofit 11%
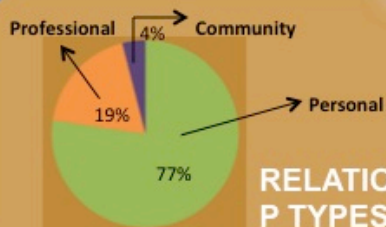
METHODOLOGY

3 online focus groups with 75 respondents (groups of 18, 28 and 29 19-29 years olds).

RELATIONSHIP TYPES

Professional — 4% — Community
19%
Personal
77%

WHY MILLENNIALS… STAY FRIENDS

- "They constantly have celebrity endorsements as well as giveaways."
- "Comments that customers post are personally responded to within a timely manner."
- "Pictures and text are both important."
- "Frequently post a variety of content."

BREAK-UP

- "It's main features are selling products."
- "The page is basically the same as their website."
- "Don't allow posts or don't respond to comments."
- "Post were all kind of the same or too long."

Understanding Motivations and Antecedents of Public Engagement on Corporate Social Network Sites Pages

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Abstract

Social networking sites (SNSs) such as Facebook provide unlimited means for internet users to interact, express, share and create content about anything, including companies. Public engagement with corporate SNS pages thus has significant consequences for the companies. This study examined publics' level and type of engagement with corporate SNS pages and explored publics' motivations and antecedents that drive such engagements. Given the participatory and communal nature of SNSs, this study examines how social relationship factors relate to consumer engagement with corporate SNS pages. Specifically, a conceptual model that identifies para-social interaction, perceived credibility, and community identification as antecedents to public-organization engagement on SNSs was tested. A Web survey was conducted with college student sample. The results confirmed para-social interaction and community identification. Managerial implications are provided.

Introduction

Leading today's media-centered lifestyle, social media are revolutionizing how individuals interact with companies. In the Web 2.0 era, interactive and social media have transferred the power of shaping the image and meanings of companies from the hands of corporate communicators to the words of publics' online connections (Muntinga, Moorman, and Smit 2011) and changing the ways how company-related content is created, distributed, and consumed. It has been argued that people now use social media more frequently than corporate websites when they search for information on a company, brand, or product (DeiWorldWide 2008). At the same time, social media offer unprecedented advantages for corporate communicators as social media enable organizations and companies to reach online stakeholders in their social communities and build relationships with individuals and publics at a more personal level (Kelly, Kerr, and Drennan2010). Consequently, companies are striving to employ an extensive array of interactive media channels to engage with their stakeholders (Avery et al., 2010). Among the many varieties of social media including blogs, cooperative projects (such as Wikipedia), social networking sites (such as Facebook), content communities (such as YouTube), virtual social worlds (such as Second Life), and microblogging (such as Twitter), SNSs are considered as the driving force of the digital media revolution (Vogt and Knapman 2008). Recent media survey reports that SNSs now have outperformed email as the most popular online activity (Nielsen Online 2009). The paradigm shift makes it imperative to understand how and why consumers engage with companies on SNSs in order to effectively cultivate relationships with today's net-savvy publics. This current study focuses on corporate Facebook pages to study public-organization engagement because Facebook is currently the most popular SNS in the United States with over 750 million active users worldwide (Facebook 2011).

With SNSs' rapid growth over a short period of time, academic research on the topic has struggled to keep pace. Recent studies have begun to investigate how companies engage with their publics using SNSs (e.g., Bortree& Seltzer, 2009; Smith, 2010; Men & Tsai, 2011; Waters et al., 2009). However, most of the prior investigations analyzed SNSs from the viewpoint of public relations managers and focused on communication strategies utilized by the corporate communicators. Important theoretical considerations regarding the antecedents of publics' interactions with organizations on SNSs have not been addressed.

The objective of this study, therefore, is to provide a conceptual framework to explain how and why consumers interact with companies on the corporate SNS pages to advance the theoretical knowledge of the mechanisms underlying public engagement on social media. This investigation is based on a multifold strategic and theoretical framework, including uses and gratification theory in the social media context (e.g., Muntinga et al. 2011) and social media engagement (Muntinga, Moorman and Smit 2011). Given that the purpose of SNSs is relationship building and maintenance, the study empirically tests a model that explores relationship-oriented factors including para-social interaction, perceived credibility, and community identification as key precursors of public engagement on SNSs. This study thus will provide theoretical contributions to the literature on public relations and corporate communications on social media. Based on the findings, we provide guidance for organizations to better address publics' needs and interests to capitalize on the interactive, communicative, and collaborative characteristics of SNSs.

Theoretical Framework

Consumer Engagement

Ferrazzi and Raz (2010) argue that social media is the most effective tool for relationship building due to its capability for realizing and enhancing two-way conversations with individuals as well as the publics. In order to cultivate high-quality relationships, it is imperative to encourage individuals to engage with a company's SNS page. This study thus focuses on SNSs as an emerging venue for public-organization engagement.

The impact of audience engagement with the media context on audience members' attitudes toward the messages featured within has been well documented in corporate communication research. Scholars argue that engagement is antecedent to such outcomes as usage, affect, and responses to communication messages (Calder, Malthouse and Schaedel 2009). Engagement is particularly relevant in the case of SNS communications. As social networking sites are relationship-centric and inherently collaborative and participatory, engagement with someone's SNS page—including that of an organization—naturally leads to relationship cultivation. Communicating with publics on SNSs through wall posts enables users to engage with the company by commenting, liking, and sharing with their social connections. Yet, prior studies exploring public engagement tended to focus on the strength of engagement and did not explore the nature and specific types of engagement behavior. In this study, we pay special attention to not only the level of engagement but also the types of activities publics are engaged in when visiting corporate SNS pages.

This study employs a behavioral construct of consumer usage of SNS pages to measure consumer engagement. Based on Muntinga, Moorman and Smit's (2011) typology of consumers' online brand related activities, public engagement with SNSs can be examined in three continuous levels, ranging from the lowest level of consuming the content on corporate SNS pages (e.g., viewing videos and pictures, reading product reviews), contributing to the page content (e.g., rating products or brands, engage in wall post conversations, commenting on the videos or pictures posted), and the highest level of creating that involves sharing and uploading user generated content (UGC) on corporate SNS pages. Using the social media-specific typology, the following research question is raised:

RQ1: To what extent are publics engaged in corporate SNS pages?

Motivation

In order to provide content that better engaged with SNS users, it is important to examine publics' motivations of interacting with companies on SNSs. The rich literature on uses and gratification (UG) theory has illuminated the crucial role of motivations in dictating individuals' media choice and usage. Based on the UG theory, recent studies have explored motivations for using SNSs in general and report that while the key motivations for media usage remains applicable for social media—including entertainment, social interaction, personal identity, and information (Bumgarner 2007; Boyd 2008; McQuail's 1983)—remuneration and empowerment emerge as original categories of motivations specific to SNSs. To be specific, entertainment refers to the gratifications for escaping and diverting from daily routines, relaxation, enjoyment, and emotional relief (Park et al. 2009; Shao 2009). Social interaction or integration involves achieving a sense of belonging, having supporting from peer groups, and enhancing interpersonal connections (Kaye 2007; Daugherty et al. 2008). Personal identity is concerned with one's self-identity, involving self-expression, identity management, and self-fulfillment (Bumgarner 2007;

Papacharissi 2007). Information pertains to information seeking, including searching for advice, opinions, and information exchange (Kaye 2007; Park et al. 2009). Beyond the four key motivations for media usage, recent social media studies report remuneration as a key motive of, participating in online communities where users seek reward and benefits (e.g., economic incentives such as coupons and promotions) that is constantly shared and distributed through online social networks (Wang &Fesenmaier 2003). Additionally, as social media allows consumers to interact with marketers and fellow users directly with great ease. Thus social media serve as an important platform for consumers to voice their opinions to demand improvement of product and service. The motive of empowerment thus refers to consumers' uses of social media to exert their influence to enforce excellence. Based on the growing literature on social media usage motivations, we raise the second research question:

RQ2: What are publics' motivations of using corporate SNS pages?

Antecedents of Consumer Engagement
Para-Social Interaction

Initially applied to the relationship between audience and television characters, para-social interaction (PSI) refers to audiences' illusion of an intimate, personal relationship with media personality who can be real (e.g., show hosts) or fictional (Horton and Wohl, 1956; Russell and Stern, 2006). Through frequent and prolonged para-social interactions, a viewer feels connected with a character in a TV show, film, novel, and even video game (Xu and Yan 2011). For instance, viewers may feel connected to the TV characters in a personal manner, and feel sad and lost when the TV show is not on. While PSI has been applied to study audience's relationship with mediated characters in traditional media that only allows one-way communication, the construct can be highly useful for understanding public-organization interactions in the SNS context. Due to the social and communal atmosphere on SNSs, corporate communicators often take on the tone of a caring friend to interact with fans and followers, while at the same time, the corporate communicator remains to be an anonymous brand representative without revealing his or her real identity. For instance, the corporate communicator of Clean & Clear, a skin care line targeting young girls, posted contents and comments about the teen pop icon Justin Bieber on the brand's Facebook page and adopted a tone of an excited young female fan, attempting to persuade their Facebook fans to perceive the corporate communicator as close friend. In other words, corporate communicators strive for public-organization interaction that resembles the face-to-face interpersonal relationships. Scholars also suggest that when reading corporate communication narratives that aim to initiate and cultivate social relationships, audiences prefer dialogues with a person in intimate tones (Yang, Kang, and Johnson 2010). Thus, distinct from tradition definitions of PSI that is limited to mass media for one-day communication and one-sided interpersonal connection, in the current study, we follow Thorson and Rodgers (2006) approach and redefine para-social interaction as users' interpersonal involvement with a media personality including SNS corporate communicators through mediated communication.

Scholars have just begun to explore PSI for social media communications, but these recent investigations have been confined to blogs. Thorson and Rodgers (2006) report that PSI mediates the effects of a political candidate's website as a form of eWOM.In their study comparing consumer response to brand publicity on blogs and online magazines, Colliander and Dahlén (2011) similarly found that blogs' effects are mediated by PSI andargue that blog readers

often perceive the blogger as a fashionable friend. Compared to traditional media, social media communication entails a high level of PSI, particularly for SNSs where frequently updated posts and responses to user comments and questions can reinforce PSI. Typically on SNSs, users observe how the corporate communicator interact with other SNS visitors and come to know the projected personality of the corporate communicator, including his or her interests and likes and dislikes through the wall posts. In the context of online forums, such communication has been found to generate PSI (Ballentine and Martin, 2005) and similar effect is expected apply to SNSs as well.Scholars further suggest that strong PSI can enhance attitudes and intentions, and communication from media sources of which perceived PSI is high will generate positive effects similar to that word-of-mouth communications. As PSI is indicative of active, involved media used (Rubin 2002), PSI with corporate communicators should contributes to engagement with corporate SNS pages.

> **H1**: Users' para-social interaction with the brand SNS communicators positively affects their engagement with brands' SNS pages.

Perceived Credibility

The perceived credibility of the information posted on corporate SNS pages is an essential factor to enhance engagement and capitalize on the power of SNSs in generating positive electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM). In the public relations literature, credibility has previously extensively examined from three key perspectives: source credibility, message credibility, and medium credibility (Metzger et al. 2003). For medium credibility earlier studies in the 1970s reported television as the most credible source of information, followed by newspapers (Abel & Wirth, 1977). Recent study showed that newspapers surpassed the credibility for TV (Kiousis 2001), while Internet in general is considered a credible medium (Johnson and Kaye 1998). Existing online media studies are primarily concerned with blogs. Johnson and Kaye (2004) argue that there is an inherent peer-review mechanism on blogs as mistakes are likely to be spotted and corrected by blog readers, enhancing the credibility. Even for personal opinion blogs, the blog readers still tend to believe the blogs to be credible, even more so than other news media including online and print news magazines. In other words, to many blog readers, blogs are the most credible source of information (Johnson and Kaye 2004). On a similar token, there exists a similar peer-review mechanism on corporate SNS pages where users can voice their candid opinion and offer corrections. Thus it is possible that for users who visit the corporate SNS page, they may perceive the SNS page as a credible information source.

In terms of source credibility, prior studies has focused on the expertise or trustworthiness of a communicator McCroskey and Richmond, 1996; Yang et al. 2010). For SNS communications, when sharing and passing along brand-related information to their online contacts, users are likely to take the credibility of information source into considerations. Moreover, instead of turning to companies' official websites, publics are now turning to corporate SNS pages for company and product information (DeiWorldWide 2008) because the SNS environment serves as an open forum for the corporate communicator to openly and directly address questions and concerns and for users to share their opinions and experiences with the company. Thus the credibility of information provided by both the corporate communicator as well as fellow users should be considered. This study evaluates the perceived credibility of information on corporate SNS pages and considers the credibility of both corporate communicator and SNS user:

H2: Users' perceived credibility of information on corporate SNS pages positively affect their engagement with brands' SNS pages.

Social Identity and Community Identification

Social networking sites are cyber communities where users feel an intrinsic connection to other members (Wellman and Gulia 1999). From the perspective of corporate communication, it is important to manage a company's SNS page as a virtual community, different from a company's official website or online forums, to effectively engage, collaborate with, and advance relationships with (Dholakia, Bagozzi, and Pearo 2004). Corporate SNS pages themselves are important brand communities where people socialize with not only the corporate communicator but also with other users who share the similar company preference. In addition, user-generated content, such as other users' product reviews, greatly enriches the attractiveness and informativeness of companies' SNS pages. Users who "liked" the same corporate SNS page also often "like" and comment on each other's posts on the company's SNS page, inducing active interaction and group dynamics. In other words, a corporate SNS page is engaging not only because of the useful or entertaining information provided by the corporate communicator, but also the communal environment where publics can exchange information with and provide support for each other.

Furthermore, people form and manage social identities through their group affiliation and community participation. Dholakia, Bagozzi, and Pearo (2004) define social identity as "an identification with the group in the sense that an individual comes to view himself or herself as a member of the community" (p. 245). As activities of joining a fan page and liking a company's profile page are often visible to one's online connections, such activities illustrative how users express their social identity in relation to the brand communities they belong to. In their study about online purchases, Bagozzi and Dholakia (2002) further suggest that people who share the same social identity based on their membership of the same online community (e.g., an e-commerce website) tend to develop a group attitude and tendency to follow group norms and to maintain group dynamics, such as actively participating in community conversations and activities (Bagozzi and Dholakia 2002). In other words, community identification should stipulate group-oriented attitudes and behaviors including community engagement (Zeng, Huang and Dou 2009). This line of reasoning leads us to hypothesize that when user develop a sense of community identification with the brands' SNS pages, their engagement deepens.

H3: SNS users' community identification with brands' SNS pages positively affect their engagement with brands' SNS pages.

Methodology

To answer the research questions and test the hypotheses, a quantitative survey was used. In November 2011, a paper-and-pencil survey was conducted with students enrolled in three communication courses at a private University in the southeast of the United States. According to Pew Research Center (2011), social networking sites are most popular with young adults under age 30. Specifically, research suggest that people between the ages of 18 and 24 are the most active social media users (Akarand and Topçu 2011;). Being a digital generation growing up with digital media, their usage of SNSs has been an integral part of their social lives. Thus college students were selected as the study population. Additionally, with their attractive demographic background of being young, and well-educated and their early adopter attitudes

(Tufte 2003), college students represent a important group of online targeting for companies' corporate communication campaigns.

Students' survey participation was voluntary while those who completed the survey received extra credits as incentives. In total, 112 undergraduate students completed the online survey. The average age of the respondents was 20 years old. Among the respondents, 52.7% were male and 47.3% were female. Around 94% of the respondents have used Facebook for more than 3 years while 87.5% of them spent at least one hour per day on Facebook. More importantly, 91% of respondents have visited or liked at least one company's Facebook page.

The questionnaire included one screening question (i.e., "Have you visited any companies' Facebook pages?"), three-part seven-point Likert scale questions measuring motivations of visiting companies' Facebook pages, and attitudes toward companies' Facebook pages in terms of information credibility, relationship between users and corporate page administrators, sense of community, and engagement activities on corporate pages. Demographic information such as age, gender, length, and frequencies in using Facebook was also collected. For pretesting, a panel of five students with research experience was invited to review the questionnaire and give feedback on the wording of the questions to ensure content validity. Based on their comments, only minor wording changes were made for clarification.

Measures

All the measurement items used in this study were adopted from prior studies and adapted to fit the SNS context. Specifically, the measure of public engagement ($\alpha = .85$) with companies SNS pages was adapted from Muntinga, Moorman, and Smit (2011). Respondents were asked how often they participate in activities on companies' Facebook pages such as "viewing video," "reading companies' posts, user comments or product reviews," "using on line tools, such as playing online games, downloading widgets, etc," "rating products, brands, and companies," "engaging in conversations such as commenting, asking, and answering questions," "sharing posts," "recommending the page to other Facebook contacts," and ""uploading product-related pictures, video or audio." The measure of para-social interaction ($\alpha = .85$) was adapted from Colliander and Dahlen (2011). Six items (e.g., "I feel the company's Facebook representative is like an old friend," "The company's Facebook representative makes me feel comfortable, as if I am with friends.") were used to gauge the perceived interpersonal relationship between users and the companies Facebook administrators. Six items adapted from Collander and Dahlen (2011) were used to measure perceived credibility ($\alpha = .84$) of companies' Facebook pages. Participants were asked whether they think corporate posts as well user posts are convincing, believable, and unbiased. Community identification with companies' Facebook pages was measured with five items ($\alpha = .78$, e.g., "I am a valuable member of companies' Facebook communities," "my identity is similar to that of others in companies' Facebook communities," "I have sense of strong belonging to companies' Facebook communities") adapted from Zeng, Huang and Dou (2009). Additionally, 15 items adopted from Muntinga, et al. (2011) were applied to examine user gratification and motivation in liking or visiting companies' Facebook pages. Seven-point Likert scale questions were asked to investigate why users visit companies' pages, and to what extent they use them for entertainment, interaction with like-minded others, gaining recognition from peers, seeking for information, exerting influence on others and the company, and gaining rewards or benefits such as free samples, product discounts, or promotion prizes.

Results

Descriptive analysis demonstrated in Table 1 shows that although most respondents follow companies' Facebook pages, their average engagement level was relatively low (M = 2.92, SD = 1.03, and N = 112). Likewise, participants in the sample exhibited low community identification with corporate Facebook pages (M = 3.04, SD = 1.26, and N = 112) which indicates that average users neither feel senses of attachment or belongingness to communities based on corporate SNS pages nor did find similarity with other fans or followers of the companies they liked. In addition, a less positive to neutral attitude was detected regarding the perceived credibility of information posted on companies' Facebook pages (M = 3.76, SD = .98, and N = 112). Most users do not fully believe corporate posts or user posts to be trustworthy, convincing or unbiased. Moreover, a low para-social interaction level was found between participants and companies' Facebook page administrators (M = 3.07, SD = 1.12, N=112) which shows that most users have not considered their interactions with companies' Facebook as personal or intimate for meaningful relationships.

Table 1
Descriptive of para-social interaction, perceived source credibility, community identification, and level of engagement, (Mean, Standard Deviation, and Correlations)

	Alpha	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
1. Para-Social Interaction	.85	3.07	1.12	1.00			
2.Perceived Credibility	.84	3.76	.98	.40**	1.00		
3.Community Identification	.78	3.04	1.26	.63**	.34**	1.00	
4. Engagement	.85	2.92	1.03	.46**	.16	.57**	1.00

*Correlation is significant at p<.05 (2-tailed); ** Correlation is significant at p<.01 (2-tailed).

Public Engagement with Companies' Facebook Pages

As shown in Table 2, although participants in the sample were engaged in different activities on companies Facebook pages, their overall engagement level was relatively low. People who have visited companies' Facebook profile were most likely to join or follow the page (M=4.55, SD=1.53), followed by engagement activities of consuming content on companies Facebook pages, such as viewing pictures (M=3.70, SD=1.52), reading companies' posts, user comments, or product reviews (M=3.56, SD=1.54), watching videos (M=2.67, SD=1.41), sharing companies Facebook posts to ones' own page (M=2.57, SD =1.52), and rating products, brands or companies (M=2.55, SD=1.50). Users seldom reach the higher levels of engagement contributing or creating activities such as writing product reviews (M=1.90, SD =1.39), uploading product related content (e.g., video, audio, pictures or images, M=2.26, SD =1.58), engaging in conversations with the page representative or other users (M= 2.26, SD =1.58), or recommending companies' Facebook pages to their personal network (M = 2.38, SD= 1.62).

Table 2
Descriptive of engagement level

	Mean	SD
1.Watching video on companies' Facebook page	2.67	1.41
2. viewing pictures on companies' Facebook pages	3.70	1.52
3.reading companies' posts, user comments, or product reviews	3.56	1.54
4. rating products, brands, and companies	2.55	1.50
5. liking/joining (e.g., becoming a fan of or following) a company's Facebook page	4.55	1.53
6. engaging in conversations on companies' Facebook pages (e.g., commenting, asking, and answering questions)	2.26	1.58
7. sharing companies' Facebook posts on my own Facebook page (e.g., video, audio, pictures, texts)	2.57	1.52
8. recommending companies' Facebook pages to my Facebook contacts	2.38	1.62
9. uploading product-related video, audio, pictures or images	2.26	1.58
10. writing product reviews or brand related articles	1.90	1.39

Public Motivations of Using Companies' Facebook Pages

To answer the second research question, we examined users' motivations and gratifications in visiting or liking companies' Facebook pages, that is, why people consume content and engage in other activities on companies' Facebook pages. As shown in Table 3, most people liked a company's Facebook page or just visited its page mainly for the practical purpose of remuneration (M = 4.82, SD = 1.81, N =112), expecting to gain certain economic incentives (e.g., discounts, free samples, and sweepstakes prize), and job-related benefits such as information for job applications. The second most prominent motivation again is based on practical considerations of seeking product/brand/company related information (M = 4.57, SD = 1.30, N = 112). Beyond these practical reasons, users also visitor like companies Facebook pages for entertainment (M= 3.96, SD = 1.58, N = 112). Results suggest that users appreciate the entertainment value of corporate SNS pages as somewhere they can escape or be diverted from daily routines for relaxation, passing time or aesthetic enjoyment. This also explains the reason why most users engage in activities such as viewing pictures, watching videos, and reading posts.

Table 3
Descriptive of user motivations in visiting/liking companies' Facebook page

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Entertainment	3.96	1.58	112
Social Interaction	3.02	1.57	112
Personal Identification	3.01	1.48	112
Information	4.57	1.30	112
Empowerment	2.75	1.41	112
Remuneration	4.82	1.81	112

An important finding, however, is that people generally do not visit or follow a company's Facebook page for the purpose of social interaction (M= 3.02, SD = 1.57, N = 112), such as to connect with like-minded fellow customers or gain a sense of belongingness from the fan community. Likewise, they do not think expressing themselves and gaining recognition from peers (M= 3.01, SD = 1.48, N = 112), nor exerting influence on a company as important reasons for engaging with a company's Facebook page.

Antecedents of Public Engagement

To test the hypotheses about the influence of para-social interaction, perceived source credibility, and users' community identification on publics engagement with companies' Facebook pages, a hierarchical multiple regression was conducted, with usage variables ("length of usage," "daily use time," "number of corporate pages followed") entered in the first step, independent variables of para-social interaction, perceived source credibility, and community identification entered in the second step. Preliminary analysis indicated that multicollinearity for all sets of independent variables in the regression models was low (tolerance[1] ranged from .48 to 1.00).

As shown in Table 4, hierarchical regression analysis for public engagement with companies' Facebook pages revealed that the linear combination of user tenure in using Facebook, length of daily usage, and number of corporate pages followed, jointly explained around 8% of the variance in public engagement with companies' Facebook pages (F change (3, 105) = 2.94, p = .037, $\Delta R2$ = .08). Number of pages followed or liked was found to be a significant predictor for public engagement with corporate Facebook pages (t = 2.42, p = .02, β = .24).

After controlling for the influence of the above usage variables, para-social interaction, perceived information credibility, and users' community identification jointly explained 31% of the variance in public engagement with companies' Facebook pages (F change (3, 102) = 17.36, p< .001, $\Delta R2$ = .31).Specifically, para-social interaction (t = 2.03, p<.05, β = .21) and community identification (t = 4.39, p<.001, β = .45) were both found to be significant positive predictors of public engagement. Specifically, users' feeling of para-social interaction with companies' Facebook representatives uniquely explained around 16% of the variance in public engagement activities, after controlling for effects of usage variables, perceived source credibility, and community identification. Users' identification with the company's Facebook community uniquely explained 34% of the variance in public engagement, after controlling for usage variables, perceived source credibility, and para-social interaction. Contract to our expectations, however, users' perception of source credibility on companies' Facebook pages was found to demonstrate no significant effects on publics' level of engagement in activities on corporate pages.

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[1]Tolerance is a measurement of the degree of independence each variable (IV) has from the other IVs. Its value ranges from 1 (complete independence) to 0 (complete dependence). Higher value indicates lower multicollinearity. The common rule of thumb for large tolerance is .10 (Cohen et al., 2003).

Table 4
Results of hierarchical regression analysis of media dependency, para-social interaction, perceived source credibility, community identification, and engagement on organization-public relationships(OPRs)

Independent Variables (IVs)	DV: Public Engagement		
	$\Delta R2$	β	Part
Model 1:	.08*		
Length of usage (yrs)			
Daily use time			
Number of pages followed/liked		.24**	.23
Model 2:	.31***		
1. Length of usage (yrs)			
2. Daily use time			
3. Number of pages followed/liked		.17	.16
4. Para-Social Interaction		.21*	.16
5. Perceived Source Credibility			
6. Community Identification		.45***	.34

Notes: * p < .05, one-tailed test; **p < .01, one-tailed test; ***p < .001, one-tailed test; N = 112; DV: dependent variable

Discussion

The purpose of the current study is to explore why and how publics engage with brands or companies' activities on SNSs. We investigated various motivations and gratifications that drive SNS users to visit or like corporate SNS pages. We also examined how the antecedent factors of para-social interaction, perceived source credibility, and community identification influence public engagement with corporate SNS pages.

The first research question is concerned with publics' level of engagement with corporate SNS pages. It is found that most college-age users have not been meaningfully engaged with companies' SNS pages. Respondents did not actively partake in the even one-way communication for receiving and consuming information on companies' SNS pages, such as viewing pictures, watching videos, and readings posts, let alone participated in higher level of interactive and dialogic activities such as commenting, asking and responding to questions, sharing posts to their personal network, or creating and uploading user-generated content. The results indicated that although social networking sites have been increasingly adopted by companies to build and maintain relationships with the publics, the effectiveness of companies' SNS communication in public engagement remains to be questioned. The interactive, communicative, and social potential of SNSs have not been fully realized.

In addition, although communication scholars have pointed out the advantage of SNSs in increasing the personalization of companies and brands which in turn facilitates relationship building with online publics (e.g., Hinson & Wright, 2011), findings indicate that more efforts are needed to utilizing this advantage. Most respondents do not have para-social interactions or perceive an interpersonal relationship between themselves and the corporate SNS communicators. Likewise, publics do not feel a high level of communal belongingness or identification with corporate SNS pages. Typically, they do not feel connected with other members who share the same brand or company preference. It appeared that respondents' act of liking a company's SNS page constitutes an expression of personal interests reflecting self-identity rather than fulfilling a social need based on a collective social identity. Therefore, identity factors in relation to self-identity maintenance and performance vis-à-vis collective social identity construction and fulfillment demand theoretical revisiting.

The second research question addressed the publics' motivations of using corporate SNS pages. Consistent with Wang and Fesenmaire's (2003) findings that remuneration constitutes the number one motive driver of participating in online communities, this study showed that people follow or visit a company's Facebook page mainly to seek for economic incentives. Other dominant motivations revealed in this study are information and entertainment. People commonly use corporate SNS page as a platform to ask for advice, search for product or promotional information, exchange information with other members, as well as for fun and leisure. Since SNS is a multi-media tool that easily integrate pictures and multimedia messages, the content on corporate SNS pages is usually more entertaining and enjoyable than those on companies' official websites. Unexpected, according to the results, what drives publics to visit or follow a company's Facebook page is not about connecting with like-minded folks who share common company/brand/product preference, to gain social support, or to manage their social identity. Also, scholars have argued that social media have provided publics a powerful channel to voice their opinions and reinforce product and service excellence due to its viral power (e.g., Wang and Fesenmaier, 2003; Kaye, 2007). However, the current study indicated that exerting influence and consumer power is not a key motivation to drive public traffic to companies' SNS pages.

This study also examined the effects of antecedents of para-social interaction, perceived source credibility, and community identification on public engagement with corporate SNS pages. The results showed that para-social interaction has a medium effect on publics' engagement level. When an intimate personal relationship with the company's Facebook communicator is perceived, publics are more likely be more engaged in activities on companies' Facebook pages. Publics' identification with the corporate SNS community also plays a significant role in influencing public engagement. Users who perceive more similarities with other users visiting the same corporate SNS pages and feel sense of belongingness to the community tend to demonstrate higher engagement. Yet, contrary to our hypothesis, source credibility was not found to be a significant antecedent of respondents' engagement with corporate SNS pages. This unexpected finding demands further research consideration, especially when publics' information-seeking motivation of visiting corporate SNS pages is taken into account. It is likely that today's media savvy publics now have a wide-ranging selection of information sources—from traditional media to digital channels including corporate official websites, consumer review websites, online forums, blogs, Wikipedia, and micorblogging sites—that they may seek information from multiple sources and corporate SNS pages is just one of the options. As a new social platform that enables the publics to converse directly with companies, SNSs are used by publics to seek for information, remuneration, and entertainment even they realize the information posted by the company might be biased and the messages serve specific commercial purposes. Nonetheless, as SNSs are built around social connections, relationship-oriented factors beyond the ones analyzed in the current setting, including susceptibility to interpersonal influence (Chu and Choi 2011) and relational tendencies (Greenwood and Long 2011) would shed insights on the theoretical mechanism underlying public-organization engagement on SNSs.

Conclusion

As one of the earliest empirical attempts to understand public engagement with corporate SNS pages, the current study contributes to the growing literature of public engagement on social media and provides important theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, this study adds to the growing body of knowledge on public relations on social media. Distinct from previous studies that approach the topic from the organization's viewpoint and examined corporate communications strategies, this study focuses on SNS users' perspective to understand how and why publics choose to interact with companies' social media activities, and what factors drive their engagement. In the growing public relations literature on social media, content analysis is currently the most common method and scholars have analyzed corporate or public SNS posts, or microblogging "tweets." However, content analysis is descriptive in nature and falls short in capturing publics' motivations, attitudes, opinions, and experiences. The current study fills the research gap by first evaluating college-age users' level and motivations of engagement with corporate SNS communication, and then investigating the role of relationship-oriented factors as antecedents of engagement.

For managerial implications, while it has been widely speculated that because of the popularity of social media, publics' role has transformed from consumers of corporate-provided content to content creators themselves, the lower level of engagement found in this study suggest that companies cannot take the trend for granted and expect users to actively contribute to the corporate page content. Even though users have liked or followed the company's Facebook page, they may not be adequately engaged in actively contributing and creating original content to

enrich the SNS communication. Corporate communicators have to craft engagement strategies specifically for encouraging users to share user-generated contents, including product reviews, product-related tips, and product-related pictures and videos. For instance, a fashion retailer can organize fashion contests on its SNS page, encourage users to share photos of their holiday party outfit. Users' creating, sharing, and contributing activities would allow organic community dynamics to emerge, enriching the content of the corporate SNS pages and pulling members together for stronger communal identification and engagement. Evaluations of social media campaigns should also go beyond message reception to include measurement of different levels and types of engagement.

Findings about the key reasons of why publics visit or like a company's SNS page can help organizations better address the publics' needs and interests, thus stimulating engagement, cultivating positive public attitudes and build quality relationship. Remuneration was found to be the primary motivation of visiting a company's SNS page, consumer promotion campaigns such as sales, free samples, coupons, sweepstakes, and contests should be publicized. Information emerged as another major motivation. For example, before one makes a purchase decision, he or she may visit the company Facebook page to understand whether the product or brand is well liked by its users, to find out opinions and advices from other users, and to see if the company is responsive and attentive to its existing customers. Thus it is essential to frequently distribute and update information about product, promotion, company as well as any other useful educational content (e.g., sportswear company sharing tips on warm-up exercises to avoid sports injury). Indeed, studies have shown that information dissemination is one of the major corporate communication activities on corporate SNS pages (Men and Tsai 2011; Tsai and Men 2012). However, only a small portion of companies respond to users' enquiries or comments. Thus, communication professionals should better utilize the two-way dialogic feature of SNSs to satisfy publics' information needs. At last, in order to fulfill the social purpose of SNS communications and address consumers' needs for entertainment, corporate communicators should also incorporate in their SNS communications a variety of entertaining and enjoyable content, such as riddles and jokes, daily horoscopes, music videos of the brand endorsers, and human-interest stories, in other words, what typical users would find interesting to post and share on their personal SNS profiles. In other words, corporate communicators should focus on content, applications, and SNS promotions that are educative, informative, and entertaining and provide economic incentives to keep users engaged.

Furthermore, through demonstrating the impact of para-social interaction and community identification on public engagement, this study provides guidelines to enable communication professionals to interact with online stakeholders and manage SNS communications effectively. Specifically, corporate communicators should play the role of a caring friend, and communicate in a personal and friendly tone. As shown in the descriptive results, college-age users' feeling of identification with corporate SNS community was fairly low. Hence, communication efforts should also focus on enhancing users' identification with other members of the brand community, with whom they share similar company preferences and interests to cultivate community identification which in turn boosts publics' level of engagement. For example, companies can initiate social media campaigns that stimulate sharing and collaboration among Facebook fans.

Despite the pioneering status of this study, several limitations should be noted and addressed in future research. First, although college-age users constitute one of the major constituents of Facebook population and target audience of corporate SNS communication,

future research should include working professionals and other age groups, such as the 25 to 34 years-old group who are active on another major SNS site, LinkedIn (RapLeaf 2008), and the middle-aged groups that show the largest growth in Facebook demographics (Akar and Topçu 2011) to provide a more holistic understanding of public engagement on social media. Additionally, the current study focuses on public engagement and explored the antecedent of engagement. However, it did not relate it to possible outcomes, such as organization-public relationship, positive word-of-mouth behaviors, or other types of advocacy. Future research should link the antecedent factors, public engagement process, as well as relational and attitudinal outcomes. This study also focused only on a one leading social network site, Facebook. Consider that the features and purposes of many SNSs vary, future studies should focus on other popular SNS examples such as MySpace and LinkedIn to gain a holistic understanding of public-organization engagement on SNSs.

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Using the Heuristic Systematic Model to Investigate a Possible Emerging Trend: How Public Relations Spokesperson Gender and Ethnicity Effect Audience Perceptions of Spokesperson, Organization and Message Credibility.

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Abstract

This study focused on discovering the effect of source ethnicity and gender, under different news conditions (crisis and benign news), on audience perceptions of credibility of a spokesperson, the organization and the message. The study also observed the workings of the Heuristic-Systematic Model by providing participants with varying degrees of information and evaluating the effects of the same on spokesperson, organization and message credibility. Participants included 394 participants of mixed gender, ethnicities and ages. The study found that type of news had the most statistically significant effects on audience perceptions of spokesperson, organization and message credibility, altruism and importance. Analysis revealed that gender of the spokesperson had statistically significant effects on audience perceptions of organization altruism, and the interaction of news type and spokesperson ethnicity had statistically significant effects on audience perceptions of organization altruism. The study found that ethnicity and gender do not have any statistically significant effects on audience perceptions of spokesperson, organization and message credibility

Introduction

Public relations practitioners have traditionally ranked low on credibility and trust scales (Schramm & Roberts, 1971; Callison & Zillmann, 2002). Most of the traditional PR source-credibility research has focused on manipulating either the organization or the message. This study explores source credibility by manipulating source-characteristics and the source itself. Although this manipulation is limited to ethnicity and gender, it does open up a new approach to studying PR source credibility by manipulating various basic demographic source characteristics. Through the findings of this study, the researchers hope to find how to possibly gain some of the lost credibility and trustworthiness of PR spokespersons by identifying the appropriate demographic source characteristic to modify and/or change. This study focused on discovering the effect of the interaction of source ethnicity and gender on the perceptions of credibility of a PR spokesperson, the organization and the message in the minds of the audience. The secondary focus of the study was to assess what kind of message had what effect on perceptions of credibility in the minds of the audience when a particular message type is combined with variations in source-ethnicity and gender. Source-ethnicity was limited to Caucasian and Hispanic spokespersons while message types were limited to crisis news stories and benign news stories. The study also tested the assumptions made by the Heuristic Systematic Model to investigate a possible emerging trend.

Review of Literature

In today's highly competitive and global business environment, effectively managing a crisis is extremely important to an organization's survival and success (Barton, 1993; Fink, 1986). According to Pearson and Mitroff (1993), organizational crisis is "an incident or event that poses a threat to the organization's reputation and viability. A crisis places the survival of the organization in serious risk" (p. 49). The concept of source credibility has been around from ancient times. It has been linked to the study of persuasion and rhetoric since the time of the ancient Greeks. One of the most fundamental and comprehensive studies of persuasion was conducted by Aristotle and collected in the *Rhetoric* (Goodwin, Coleman & Goodwin, 1993, p. 41).

Hovland, Janis, and Kelly (1953) have been credited for being the founders of modern source credibility theory. They identified perceived trustworthiness and perceived expertise of the source as the main dimensions of source credibility. The more the perceived trustworthiness and expertise of the source, the more credibility will be bestowed upon that source by the audience and more importance will be given to the information being transmitted by that source. A study conducted by Eagly, Wood, and Chaiken (1978) concluded that biases attributed to information sources affect the way receivers judge the source and the information being presented. According to Eagly et al., receivers make assessments in their minds regarding the sources' reasons and motivation for taking a particular position on an issue. This explanation for the communicator's behavior greatly influences the amount of credibility attached to him or her in the minds of the receivers.

In times of crisis, usually, the spokesperson will deliver an official crisis response and will explain the amount of organizational involvement or responsibility for the crisis (Benoit, 1995; Coombs, 1998). The account of the crisis generally determines how members of the organization's public will assess the organization's behavior (Coombs, 1999). Research also suggests that the choice of company spokesperson, especially in times of crisis, should always take into account the credibility of the spokesperson in addition to the severity and complexity of

the crisis (Caponigro, 1998; Elsbach & Sutton, 1992). It is thus important for large organizations to be careful and consider many factors before selecting a spokesperson to represent the company, especially in times of crisis, in order to be assured that the chosen spokesperson will score high on credibility ratings with the organization's publics. Another reason for carefully choosing a spokesperson is because during times of crisis, an organization's credibility is also under immense scrutiny (Arpan, 2002). The quality and type of communication being broadcast by the organization becomes a crucial factor in determining the organization's continuing fate in terms of credibility and trustworthiness among its publics.

In an experiment conducted in 2007, Appiah found that when the website featured a testimonial by an African American character, African American browsers identified more strongly with the character, the website, and the product on sale (laptop computer). These browsers were also more likely to believe that the site was targeting them and they recalled more product information from the website that contained testimonial from an African American character. The opposite was true when the website featured testimonial from a Caucasian character and the browsers were African American. On the other hand, the study found that Caucasian browsers had no difference in their reactions when the website featured an African American character testimonial, a Caucasian character testimonial, or no testimonial. Appiah (2007) also has found stronger media effects when the target audience is a racial minority group. Thus, according to Beaudoin and Thorson (2006), "it would be expected that race would play a stronger role in predicting the media responses of African Americans than of Caucasians" (p. 160). Additional source characteristics that have been found to be related to perceptions of message credibility are credibility, attractiveness and similarity (Perloff, 1993). Also, Williams, Qualls, & Grier (1995) also have suggested that source ethnicity may be related to message credibility as it is a part of the source-effect category of similarity. According to Arpan (2002), "most research addressing perceived similarity between the source and message recipient(s) has measured perceived ideological or attitudinal similarity, rather than cultural or ethnic similarity" (p. 316).

The ethnic make-up of the U.S. is changing rapidly in terms of both the population at large, and the educated and experienced workforce entering various professional fields. As of October 2006, the U.S. population crossed 300 million. The population of Hispanics in the U.S. as of July 2005 was 43 million, or roughly 14% of the total population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006) and this number is expected to grow rapidly in the coming years. Today, this group of Hispanic consumers has an estimated spending power of $800 billion (UGA Selig Center, 2011) which makes them very valuable to all types of organizations and marketers as they spend more than any other minority group in the U.S. According to Sha (2006), "the existence of many cultures [in the United States] implies a need for public relations practitioners to acknowledge the possibility of differences in salient cultural identities and the need to communicate with internal and external publics whose cultural identifications may differ from those of the practitioner or the organization" (p.53).

Kelman's (1961) identification theory states that people evaluate their extent of similarity with an information source during interaction and communication. Recently, there has been significant research in advertising and source ethnicity. These studies have suggested that "the degree to which an audience identifies with their own ethnic group can determine the persuasiveness of sources of different ethnic backgrounds" (Arpan, 2002; p. 319). More specifically, several studies have concluded that participants who identified strongly with a certain ethnic group have a better attitude toward communication delivered to them by a source

belonging to the same ethnicity (Deshpande & Satyman, 1994; Whittler, 1991; William & Qualls, 1989). According to Feick and Higie (1992), when individuals are exposed to a media character with whom they share some personal characteristics, they generally infer that they will share with the media character other characteristics as well. Consequently, in 2002, Grunig added ethnic diversity to his paradigmatic public relations' excellence model. According to Deshpande and Stayman (1994), if a person is in the ethnic minority in a society, that person's ethnicity will be a more apparent cue to them. On the other hand, members of the majority ethnic group will be less aware of such cues. Also, other researchers have found that people with strong ethnic identities pay more attention to details such as accents and can hence discern whether the speaker(s) belongs to an ethnic out-group or not (Phinney, 1992).

Gender has also found to play a role in public relations and spokesperson credibility. Almost 70% of public relation practitioners and 70%-80% of college students studying public relations are women. However, in spite of this overwhelming number of women in the field, most senior management positions in public relations are occupied by men. There is also a significant difference in salaries and opportunities for promotions in case of women as compared to men. Generally, in public relations, men get better salaries and more opportunities for promotions than do women (Aldoory & Toth, 2002). According to Brunner (2006), there is a significant amount of gender divide within the field of public relations beginning with a clear under-representation of women in introductory public relations textbooks and extending well into the profession. Brunner (2006) stated that the portrayal of public relations spokespersons in various media may be a cause for this discrimination. Brunner (2006) also suggested that the differences in portrayals starts at the college education level where male and female public relations practitioners are portrayed differently leading to further and more serious discriminations throughout the field. In her study, However, few studies have been conducted to test the effects of spokesperson gender on audience perception of credibility.

Hispanics will constitute almost 25% of the U.S. population and with such a rapidly growing population it is safe to assume that the Hispanic market is where future growth in public relations will take place (Wilcox & Cameron, 2012). Also, while there have been numerous studies that have examined the effects of ethnicity and gender of individuals on the probability of being covered in the media, at various levels (Gibbons, 1993; Grose, 2006; Niven, 2004; Sylvie, 1999), there has been little research on the effects of ethnicity and gender of spokespersons, on perceived credibility in the minds of the audience. The present study explored the influence of ethnic and gender information in news stories which is presented solely from identifiers like names and titles of spokespersons of different ethnicities and gender. In other words, the effects of extra-textual information implied through the use of basic identifiers on audience cognitions were explored.

The Heuristic-Systematic Model (HSM)

Due to the concept of "bounded rationality," cognitive constraints prevent humans from fully processing all available information, or considering all possible outcomes, or even operating rationally when making decisions (Simon, 1955). "Although rooted originally in the context of persuasion research in social psychology, the dual-process theories have been referred to by several authors as relevant to information processing and decision-making" (Chaiken, Liberman, & Eagly, 1989, p. 235). The *heuristic-systematic model* was proposed by Chaiken in 1987 to explain the cognitive information processing of messages in persuasion contexts. According to Chaiken (1987), when people engage in a communication and/or cognitive process,

one of their prime aims is to establish the validity of the information they are receiving. The information they are receiving should fit well with their own judgments as well as with the relevant facts. According to Chaiken (1987), the two cognitive pathways enabling this process are systematic processing and heuristic processing. According to Eagly and Chaiken (1993), systematic processing is "a comprehensive, analytic orientation to information processing in which perceivers access and scrutinize a great deal of information for its relevance to their judgment task" (p. 326). Systematic processing requires more cognitive involvement and effort as receivers have to form logical and factual arguments and closely evaluate issues in order to judge the validity of the position presented in the message (Chaiken, 1987).

According to Eagly and Chaiken (1993), heuristic processing is conceptualized as "a more limited mode of information processing that requires less cognitive effort and fewer cognitive resources than systematic. *Heuristics can be defined as learned procedural knowledge structures*" (p. 327 & 329). When operating simultaneously, both processes (systematic and heuristic) can exert both independent and interdependent effects on judgments (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). Hence, if an individual's heuristics contain skewed prior knowledge or attitudes, it may have an adverse effect on systematic processing and may eventually adversely affect the judgment process (Tamborini et al., 2007). Eagly and Chaiken (1993) concluded that if a task is extremely important, factors such as credibility seem to affect judgment, leading to skewed processing of information and consequent decision making. This also indicates that the complexity of a cognitive task may be affecting the processing option we choose.

Eagly and Chaiken (1993) also described the *HSM principle of least effort and sufficiency*. According to this principle, individuals are constantly trying to strike a balance between satisfying motivational concerns and minimizing efforts required to process information. Individuals will rely more on heuristic processing as compared with systematic processing if they believe that this can yield a judgment of sufficient confidence. People will rely more on heuristic processing of information as it requires less effort than systematic processing and if judgments based on heuristic cues seem sufficient, they will not be motivated to make the effort of processing the information using systematic processes. Most of the time, the process of relying more on heuristic cues is relatively natural, and occurs automatically.

Methods and Procedure

The purpose of this study was to determine whether ethnicity and gender of an organization's public relations spokesperson have any effect on the audience's perceptions of the credibility of that spokesperson, the organization, and the message – under different message conditions. This study also tested the assumptions of the Heuristic-Systematic Model as it relates to the ethnicity and gender of the spokesperson and whether heuristic or systematic processes were used to judge spokesperson, company, and message credibility when spokesperson gender and/or ethnicity and news type was identified to various. The operational definitions of the variables in this study are as follows:

Ethnicity – "Ethnicity is a social construction that indicates identification with a particular group which is often descended from common ancestors. Members of the group share common religious, cultural, and/or geographic traits (such as language, religion, geographic location, and dress) and are an identifiable minority within the larger nation-state." (The Truman Education Center, 2006). For the purpose of this study, only two ethnic groups were included, Caucasian and Hispanic. Ethnicity was measured on a nominal scale.

Credibility – Grounded in Aristotle's concept of ethos, McCroskey and Young (1981) defined the concept credibility as *believability*. "Credibility is the *reasonable grounds for being believed*. One who is credible is trustworthy. We have confidence in a person's character and competence" (We Build People Organization, 2006). Credibility can also be defined as "the judgments made by a message recipient concerning the believability of a communicator" (Callison, 2001, p. 220). An existing credibility scale used in previous research (Mohammed-Baksh, Choi & Callison, 2007; McCroskey & Young, 1966) was used to measure credibility.

Research Questions

This experimental study was conducted with three sets of independent variables, spokesperson ethnicity (Caucasian, Hispanic and no ethnicity identified), spokesperson gender (male, female and no gender identified) and type of news (benign and crisis news) and six dependent variables (spokesperson credibility, spokesperson altruism, organization credibility, organization altruism, message credibility and message importance to the audience). The study with a 3 x 3 x 2 factorial design investigated the main, 2-way interaction, and 3-way interaction effects of the independent variables, resulting in the following 21 research questions:

RQ1: What effect does ethnicity of the organization's spokesperson have on audience perceptions of spokesperson credibility and spokesperson altruism?
RQ2: What effect does ethnicity of the organization's spokesperson have on audience perceptions of organization credibility and organization altruism?
RQ3: What effect does ethnicity of the organization's spokesperson have on audience perceptions of message credibility and message importance?
RQ4: What effect does gender of the organization's spokesperson have on audience perceptions of spokesperson credibility and spokesperson altruism?
RQ5: What effect does gender of the organization's spokesperson have on audience perceptions of organization credibility and organization altruism?
RQ6: What effect does gender of the organization's spokesperson have on audience perceptions of message credibility and message importance?
RQ7: What effect does type of news have on audience perceptions of spokesperson credibility and spokesperson altruism?
RQ8: What effect does type of news have on audience perceptions of organization credibility and organization altruism?
RQ9: What effect does type of news have on audience perceptions of message credibility and message importance?
RQ10: What interaction effect do the spokesperson's ethnicity and gender have on audience perceptions of spokesperson credibility and spokesperson altruism?
RQ11: What interaction effect do the spokesperson's ethnicity and gender have on audience perceptions of organization credibility and organization altruism?
RQ12: What interaction effect do the spokesperson's ethnicity and gender have on audience perceptions of message credibility and message importance?
RQ13: What interaction effect do the spokesperson's ethnicity and the type of news have on audience perceptions of spokesperson credibility and spokesperson altruism?
RQ14: What interaction effect do the spokesperson's ethnicity and the type of news have on audience perceptions of organization credibility and organization altruism?

RQ15: What interaction effect do the spokesperson's ethnicity and the type of news have on audience perceptions of message credibility and message importance?

RQ16: What interaction effect do the spokesperson's gender and the type of news have on audience perceptions of spokesperson credibility and spokesperson altruism?

RQ17: What interaction effect do the spokesperson's gender and the type of news have on audience perceptions of organization credibility and organization altruism?

RQ18: What interaction effect do the spokesperson's gender and the type of news have on audience perceptions of message credibility and message importance?

RQ19: What interaction effect do the spokesperson's ethnicity and gender, and type of news have on audience perceptions of spokesperson credibility and spokesperson altruism?

RQ20: What interaction effect do the spokesperson's ethnicity and gender, and type of news have on audience perceptions of organization credibility and organization altruism?

RQ21: What interaction effect do the interaction of spokesperson's ethnicity and gender, and type of news have on audience perceptions of message credibility and message importance?

Research Design

The three independent variables of this study were (1) the ethnicity of the public relations spokesperson (limited to Hispanic, Caucasian & no ethnicity identified), (2) the gender of the spokesperson (male, female and no gender identified), and (3) message type (crisis and benign message conditions), which constituted a 3 x 3 x 2 factorial experiment. Nine stimulus articles created for either the benign and crisis condition (totaling 18 messages) were used for the 18 experimental conditions created in this fully crossed design. Each research participant was randomly assigned (by the computer software) to one of the 18 possible experimental conditions. The participants evaluated the message in relation to each article and the evaluations were primarily based on perceptions of credibility and altruism of the spokesperson and the organization and the credibility and importance of the message. Figure 1 (Appendix A) is a graphical representation of the randomized posttest-only control group design.

The 18 experimental conditions in the study included crisis news with a Hispanic male spokesperson's name; negative news with a Caucasian male spokesperson's name; negative news with gender-neutral Hispanic name; negative news with only source's male gender identified; negative news with a Hispanic female spokesperson's name; negative news with a Caucasian female spokesperson's name; negative news with only spokesperson's female gender identified; and negative news with gender neutral Caucasian name; and negative news with neither the ethnicities nor the gender of the spokesperson identified. Additionally, nine similar conditions with benign company news will also be created for a total of 18 message conditions. Appendix B is a graphical representation of the study conditions within a single news type (either benign or crisis news).

Population & Research Participants

The population of interest in this study consisted of people who constitute the audience for general news. Although the experimental conditions used print media (images of newspaper articles delivered over the Internet), the results of this study can be generalized to people consuming news through any of the traditional sources, including the internet. Participants included 720 students, faculty, staff and administrators of mixed gender and ethnicities at a large

Midwestern University. Around 55% of the participants were college students and the remaining were staff, faculty and administrators affiliated to the same university system. College students were deemed appropriate for this study because research has found that newspaper readership is related to the amount of education achieved, and that 68% of people with college degrees read newspapers (Callison, 2001; Robinson & Levy, 1996; Reina, 1995). Also, college students are active consumers of the Internet and also consume news online. Hence the researchers concluded that college students were a fair representation of present and future news consumers.

Stimulus Material

Information source type was manipulated by creating nine sets of crisis messages and nine sets of benign messages for a company (Requip Pharmaceuticals). One set was created in a way that the spokespersons' ethnicity and gender was identified as Caucasian male while the second set had the same message but the spokesperson's ethnicity and gender was identified as Hispanic male. The third and fourth sets were Caucasian female and Hispanic female respectively. The fifth and sixth sets were created in a way that only the spokesperson gender was identified and there is no indication of spokesperson ethnicity and the seventh and eighth sets used gender-neutral names to identify ethnicity without indicating any gender. The ninth set did not identify the spokesperson's ethnicity or gender. The same nine conditions, but with benign company news, were also created totaling 18 sets of messages. Spokespersons in the treatment conditions were identified as "*Director, Public Relations.*" The message, spokesperson title and the name of the organization chosen was held constant in all message conditions, while only the spokesperson's name and gender differed through the conditions. The research focused on finding effects of associating message source with source ethnicity and gender on credibility perceptions of the source and the related organization by a mixed audience.

Across all conditions, one existing organization in a fictitious crisis was used. The brand in crisis was Requip (medication for restless leg syndrome) and the news listed 30 people having symptoms of stroke after consuming the medication. Under the Caucasian spokesperson condition, the names of the spokespersons were *Michael Smith* and *Jennifer Smith*. Under the Hispanic spokesperson condition, the names of the spokespersons were *Mario Lopez* and *Maria Lopez*. The gender-neutral names used were *Pat Smith* for the Caucasian condition and *Pat Lopez* for the Hispanic condition. The job title of *Director, Public Relations – Requip Pharmaceuticals* was held constant across the message conditions and followed the names. The gender only conditions referred to the company spokespersons only as "*She*" or "*He*" and did not mention any names. The control message condition contained only the message without any author identified and no reaction from the company.

The names of the spokespersons were selected by a panel of experts made up of 20 University faculty members from a selection of several Caucasian and Hispanic names in a way that the choices reflected the most typical ethnic selection as assessed by the experts. All the articles were created using Adobe InDesign software and were uploaded into the computer software *SawTooth*. The articles were made to look exactly like an original black and white newspaper article scanned into a computer. One dummy article with benign news and no source identified were also created for this study. The neutral article was about Jet Blue Airlines announcing new flights to Brazil. The neutral article was created and included in the stimulus material to disguise the real purpose of the study and to make all of the news stories appear more realistic.

Procedure

All the experiments were completed by the participants on their personal or work computers. Once the participants agreed to participate, they were required to log on to the study website where they saw one of 18 coded stimulus packets which the computer randomly assigned to them. Each packet revealed by the computer contained one of the 18 treatment articles, in addition to one dummy article and a few questionnaires. The neutral article was always placed before the treatment article. The dummy article was followed by a dummy questionnaire and the treatment article was followed by a set of questionnaires to assess credibility perceptions and to gather some additional demographic information.

With the stimulus packets randomly revealed by the computer, the participants were informed that the articles were taken from the Associated Press newswire and scanned into the computer for the purpose of this study. Participants were told that they were participating in a news evaluation study and that they would be required to read a few newspaper articles and answer a few questionnaires at the end of each article. After reading each article, participants answered a set of dummy measures included to disguise the purpose of the study. Once the dummy questionnaires were answered, participants were required to complete five additional pages of measures (including demographic information) designed to gauge perceptions of credibility of the spokesperson, the message and the organization. Also, to encourage participants to read the articles, there was a yes/no button created at the end of each article that asked the participants whether they had read the articles completely. This also helped the software link the responses to the right stimulus condition. The entire participation process lasted for an average of 10-15 minutes.

Evaluation of specific message source/spokesperson: After reading the dummy and the experimental articles, participants were asked to respond to questions designed to reveal each participant's perceptions about the spokesperson, the organization and the message. Credibility scales and measures used in previous credibility research were used as guides (Mohammed-Baksh, Choi & Callison, 2007; McCroskey & Young, 1981) to create several 11-point semantic differential scales ranging from 0 (not at all) to 10 (extremely). The same scales were used for evaluating the audiences' perceptions of the spokesperson and the organization. Items in the spokesperson and organization evaluation scale included, *just, honest, trustworthy, concerned about community, accurate in disclosures, involvement in social causes, cares about people, good, pleasant, credible, virtuous, responsible, caring, only interested in company profits* and *selfish*.

Evaluation of the message: Participants were asked to rate the organization's message on an 11-point semantic differential scale based on previous research (Mohammed-Baksh, Choi & Callison, 2007; McCroskey & Young, 1981) to reveal each participant's perceptions about the message in terms of credibility. Items in the message evaluation scale included, *message is true, tells the whole story, is accurate, can be trusted, is factual, is credible, this message is of importance to me, is of significance to me*, and *is urgent*.

Qualifier questions/ Manipulation check: The last four questions immediately followed the demographic questions and were used to assess whether the participants noticed the manipulations that were implemented in the stimulus material for the purpose of manipulation check. These questions included: "*Did you notice the gender of the company spokesperson in the articles you just read?*" and "*what was the ethnicity of the spokesperson,*" and "*Did you notice the ethnicity of the company spokesperson in the articles you just read*?" and "*what was the gender of the spokesperson.*" These qualifier questions were included in the survey to assess

whether participant responses were a direct result of the manipulations of the independent variable in the stimulus material. If only a small portion of the participants noticed correctly the gender and ethnicity of the spokesperson, the manipulation of the independent variable did not function as expected, which would be a threat to the internal validity of the study. It could be argued that the inclusion of a control condition eliminates the need for any qualifier questions. However, a separate group of individuals were exposed to the control conditions and the qualifying questions were included as a check-measure for individual participants in the treatment conditions.

Data Analysis

After data collection, responses to items consisting of each of the subscales were averaged to generate an overall measure of a factor in a factorial structure established in previous research (Mohammed-Baksh, Choi & Callison, 2007). Reliability of the scales were examined and data were submitted to 3-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) to find effects of spokesperson's gender, ethnicity, and type of message on participants' perceptions of credibility and altruism of the spokesperson and credibility and importance of the message. Effects of the full-model MANOVA, including the main effects and 2-way and 3-way interaction effects were examined. For analyses that yielded significant main effects across experimental conditions, Tukey HSD pair-wise post-hoc tests were performed to find patterns of the difference between among the three levels of the variables. When analysis yielded statistically significant interaction effects, simple main effects analysis was performed to find cell differences.

Results

The purpose of this study was to examine the main effects and interaction effects of spokesperson ethnicity, gender and the type of message on audience perceptions of credibility and altruism of the spokesperson and the organization, and on credibility and importance of the message. The chapter will contain the description of the participants, data preparation for analysis, manipulation check, and results of hypothesis testing.

Demographics of Participants

A total of 394 subjects participated in this study. Participants were a mix of college students, faculty, staff and administrators of mixed gender and ethnicities. All participants were recruited from the University system. A total of 159 male and 235 females participated in this study. Of the 394 participants, 284 were Caucasians, 60 were Hispanics, nine African Americans, 27 were Asians, and 14 identified themselves in the "other" category. Of the 394 participants, 222 were between the ages of 18 and 23 years, 68 were between the ages of 24 and 29 years, and 104 were over 30 years of age. Demographic characteristics and the number of participants were almost evenly distributed across 16 conditions, and had at least 12 responses in two conditions. Demographic characteristics of all participants are summarized in Table 1 (pg. 24) and distribution of subjects across conditions is summarized in Table 2 (pg. 24).

Data Preparation

Credibility scales from previous research (Mohammed-Baksh, Choi & Callison, 2007) were used for this study to measure the dependent variables. Data reduction for this study was based on results of the factor analysis conducted on data of previous research (Mohammed-Baksh, Choi & Callison, 2007). The factor analysis used in previous research yielded two factors

for spokesperson and organization credibility: *spokesperson/organization credibility* and *spokesperson/organization altruism*. The factor analysis on the scales from previous research also yielded two factors for message credibility: *message credibility* and *message importance*.

All measures included multiple items on 11-point semantic differential scales with possible scores ranging from 0 to 10 (with 0 being the least and 10 being extremely high). Items that loaded high on a certain factors were summed up and averaged to create a new factor score. It should be noted that the factors of *spokesperson altruism* and *organization altruism* were made up of two items, *"only interested in company profits"* and *"selfish."* As the abovementioned factors were both made up of negative items, a lower total point rating on these factors translates into a higher mean altruism score for the spokesperson and the organization. Findings reported in this study are of the mean *altruism* score and are hence, an indication of positive audience perceptions. For the remaining factors of *spokesperson credibility, organization credibility, message credibility* and *message importance*, a higher score was an indication of more positive perceptions.

Items that highly loaded on the variable of *spokesperson credibility* included *just, honest, trustworthy, concerned about community, accurate in disclosures, involvement in social causes, cares about people, good, pleasant, credible, virtuous, responsible*, and *caring*. Responses of participants in the current study to the items showed a high degree of internal consistency (α = .97). Two items of *only interested in company profits* and *selfish were* highly loaded on the variable of *spokesperson altruism*. The inter-item consistency for this factor was high as well (α = .81).

Same items as *just, honest, trustworthy, concerned about community, accurate in disclosures, involvement in social causes, cares about people, good, pleasant, credible, virtuous, responsible*, and *caring* were included in the factor of *organization credibility*. The scale showed a high degree of internal consistency (α = .94). The variable of *organization altruism* included two items of *only interested in company profits* and *selfish*. The inter-item consistency for this factor was also found to be high (α = .82).

The variable of *message credibility* included items like *message is true, tells the whole story, is accurate, can be trusted, is factual,* and *is credible*. The scale showed a high degree of internal reliability (α = .95). The variable of *message importance* included items like *this message is of importance to me, is of significance to me*, and *is urgent*. The internal reliability coefficient of the scale was high as well (α = .78).

Manipulation Check

Manipulation check was performed to examine if the manipulation of the independent variable functioned as expected. For the current study, it meant whether readers remembered noticing the gender and ethnicity of the spokesperson that were manipulated to vary across the 18 message conditions. Four questions were inserted at the end of the questionnaire that asked participants (a) whether they noticed the gender (or ethnicity) of the spokesperson? And (b) if they did, what was the gender (or ethnicity) of the spokesperson? The number of participants who noticed the gender (or ethnicity) of the spokesperson and correctly recalled the information are summarized in Table 3 (pg. 25).

Data Analysis

Variables of spokesperson credibility, spokesperson altruism, organization credibility, organization altruism, message credibility and message importance of Requip pharmaceuticals

were subjected to 3-way multivariate analysis of variance with spokesperson's ethnicity (Hispanic, Caucasian, and no ethnicity identified), spokesperson's gender (female, male, and no gender identified) and type of message (benign message and crisis message) as independent variables. Main effects, 2-way interaction effects, and 3-way interaction effects generated from the MANOVA are reported below to answer the research questions.

Research Question One asked "What effect does ethnicity of the organization's spokesperson have on audience perceptions of spokesperson credibility and spokesperson altruism?" Analysis found no statistically significant main effects of spokesperson's ethnicity on audience perceptions of spokesperson credibility, $F (1, 376) = 2.05$, $p = 0.13$, and spokesperson altruism, $F (2, 376) = 0.86$, $p = 0.42$. Research Question Two asked "What effect does ethnicity of the organization's spokesperson have on audience perceptions of organization credibility and organization altruism?" Analysis found no statistically significant main effects of spokesperson's ethnicity on audience perceptions of organization credibility, $F (2, 376) = 0.53$, $p = 0.59$, and organization altruism, $F (2, 376) = 0.70$, $p = 0.50$. Research Question Three asked "What effect does ethnicity of the organization's spokesperson have on audience perceptions of message credibility and message importance?" Analysis found no statistically significant main effects of spokesperson ethnicity on audience perceptions of message credibility, $F (2, 376) = 1.14$, $p = 0.32$, and message importance, $F (2, 376) = 0.98$, $p = 0.38$. In other words, when the audiences were forming their perceptions about the company message credibility and importance, the spokesperson's ethnicity was not a factor that affects the process. Research Question Four asked "What effect does gender of the organization's spokesperson have on audience perceptions of spokesperson credibility and spokesperson altruism?" Analysis found no statistically significant main effects of spokesperson's gender on audience perceptions of spokesperson credibility, $F (2, 376) = 0.39$, $p = 0.68$, and spokesperson altruism, $F (2, 376) = 2.01$, $p = 0.14$.

Research Question Five asked "What effect does gender of the organization's spokesperson have on audience perceptions of organization credibility and organization altruism?" Analysis found no statistically significant main effects of spokesperson's gender on audience perceptions of organization credibility, $F (2, 376) = 1.40$, $p = 0.25$. This means that when audiences were forming opinions about organization credibility, the spokesperson's gender was not a significant influencing factor. However, analysis revealed statistically significant main effects of spokesperson's gender on audience perceptions organization altruism, $F (2. 376) = 4.77$, $p < 0.05$, Partial $\eta^2 = 0.025$. Further, Tukey HSD post-hoc analysis revealed significant pair-wise differences between male (M = 4.94, SD = 1.91) and female (M = 5.53, SD = 2.03) spokespersons (p < 0.05). Pair-wise comparison also revealed significant differences between male (M = 4.94, SD = 1.91) and no gender identified (M = 5.72, SD = 2.17) spokespersons (p < 0.05). Analysis revealed that audience's perception of organization altruism were being influenced by the spokesperson's gender and further pair-wise comparisons revealed that organization altruism was rated higher when the spokesperson was male as opposed to when gender was not identified or when the spokesperson was female respectively.

Research Question Six asked "What effect does gender of the organization's spokesperson have on audience perceptions of message credibility and message importance?" Analysis revealed no statistically significant main effects of spokesperson's gender on message credibility, $F (2, 376) = 2.12$, $p = 0.12$, and message importance, $F (2, 376) = 0.31$, $p = 0.73$.

Research Question Seven asked "What effect does type of news have on audience perceptions of spokesperson credibility and spokesperson altruism?" Analysis found statistically significant main effects of type of news on audience perceptions of spokesperson credibility, F

(1,376) = 17.02, *p* < 0.001, Partial η² = 0.043, with spokesperson credibility being higher in the benign news condition (M = 5.59, SD = 1.44) than in the crisis news condition (M = 4.91, SD = 1.56). Audiences tend to assign more credibility to spokespersons in the benign message conditions than they do to spokespersons in crisis message conditions. However, analysis found no statistically significant main effects of type of news on audience perceptions of spokesperson altruism, *F* (1, 376) = 1.50, *p* = 0.22. This means that the audience perceptions of spokesperson altruism were not significantly influenced by the type of news they were reading.

Research Question Eight asked "What effect does type of news have on audience perceptions of organization credibility and organization altruism?" Analysis revealed statistically significant main effects of type of news on audience perceptions of organization credibility, *F* (1, 376) = 29.34, *p* < 0.001, Partial η² = 0.072, with organization credibility being higher in the benign news condition (M = 5.74, SD = 1.78) than in the crisis news condition (M = 4.75, SD = 1.75). Analysis also revealed significant main effects of type of news on organization altruism *F* (1, 376) = 7.47, *p* < 0.01, Partial η² = 0.019, with organization altruism being higher in the benign news condition (M = 5.13, SD = 2.13) than in the crisis news condition (M = 5.67, SD = 1.95). In other words, the type of news significantly affected audience perceptions of organization credibility and altruism. Further analysis revealed that organization credibility and altruism were both rated higher in the benign news condition than in the crisis news condition.

Research Question Nine asked "What effect does type of news have on audience perceptions of message credibility and message importance?" Analysis found statistically significant main effects of type of news on audience perceptions of message credibility, *F* (1, 376) = 6.55, *p* < 0.05, Partial η² = 0.017, with message credibility being higher in the benign message condition (M = 5.58, SD = 1.88) than in the crisis news condition (M = 5.16, SD = 1.67). Analysis also found statistically significant main effects of type of news on audience perceptions of message importance, *F* (1, 376) = 39.92, *p* < 0.001, Partial η² = 0.096, with message importance being higher in the crisis message condition (M = 4.03, SD = 1.94) than in the benign news condition (M = 2.83, SD = 1.83). Analysis revealed that audiences found the crisis news significantly less credible than benign news. However, across conditions, audiences found crisis news significantly more important than benign news.

Research Question Ten asked "What interaction effects do the spokesperson's ethnicity and gender have on audience perceptions of spokesperson credibility and spokesperson altruism?" Analysis found no statistically significant interaction effects of spokesperson's ethnicity and gender on audience perceptions of spokesperson credibility, *F* (4, 376) = 0.44, *p* = 0.78, and spokesperson altruism, *F* (4, 376) = 1.26, *p* = 0.28. Research Question 11 asked "What interaction effects do the spokesperson's ethnicity and gender have on audience perceptions of organization credibility and organization altruism?" Analysis found no statistically significant interaction effects of spokesperson's ethnicity and gender on audience perceptions of organization credibility, *F* (4, 376) = 0.30, *p* = 0.88, and organization altruism, *F* (4, 376) = 0.60, *p* = 0.67. Research Question 12 asked "What interaction effects do the spokesperson's ethnicity and gender has on audience perceptions of message credibility and message importance?" Analysis found no statistically significant interaction effects of spokesperson's ethnicity and gender on audience perceptions of message credibility, *F* (4, 376) = 0.60, *p* = 0.66, and message importance, *F* (4, 376) = 1.70, *p* = 0.15. Research Question 13 asked "What interaction effect do the spokesperson's ethnicity and the type of news have on audience perceptions of spokesperson credibility and spokesperson altruism?" Analysis found no statistically significant interaction effects of spokesperson's ethnicity and type of news on audience perceptions of spokesperson

credibility, $F(2, 376) = 0.32$, $p = 0.72$, and spokesperson altruism, $F(2, 376) = 0.17$, $p = 0.84$. Research Question 14 asked "What interaction effect do the spokesperson's ethnicity and the type of news have on audience perceptions of organization credibility and organization altruism?" Analysis found no statistically significant interaction effects of spokesperson's ethnicity and type of news on audience perceptions of organization credibility, $F(2, 376) = 0.13$, $p = 0.88$.

However, analysis revealed statistically significant interaction effects of spokesperson's ethnicity and type of news on audience perceptions of organization altruism, $F(2, 376) = 3.00$, $p = 0.05$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.016$. Following the significant interaction effect, the simple main effects of type of news within ethnicity groups and simple main effects of ethnicity within the type of news were examined. Descriptive statistics of the dependent variable of organization altruism were grouped by the independent variables of spokesperson's ethnicity and type of news and presented in Table 4 (pg. 25). When the data were split by type of news to examine the ethnicity effects, the F-test for the benign news condition was significant, $F(2, 388) = 4.52$, $p = .02$, partial $\eta^2 = .02$. Post-hoc comparisons between the three groups who read the benign news announced by spokesperson with different ethnicity information revealed that audience of the Hispanic spokesperson rated the organization altruism (M = 5.71) significantly lower than the audience who read the benign news featuring the Caucasian spokesperson or spokesperson whose ethnicity was not identified. The F-test for the crisis new condition was not significant, $F(2, 388) = .30$, $p = .74$. When the data were split to examine the effect of Type of News on participants' perception of organization altruism, it was found that the type of news, benign vs. crisis, announced by a spokesperson with Hispanic ethnic background did not affect participants' perception of organization altruism. However, the crisis news announced by a spokesperson with Caucasian ethnic background or a spokesperson whose ethnic background unidentified elicited lower level of organization altruism than the benign news announced by the spokesperson. Table 4 (pg. 25) is a summarization of descriptive statistics of organization altruism for the interaction effects of ethnicity and type of news.

Research Question 15 asked "What interaction effect do the spokesperson's ethnicity and the type of news have on audience perceptions of message credibility and message importance?" Analysis found no statistically significant interaction effects of spokesperson's ethnicity and the type of news on message credibility, $F(2, 376) = 0.64$, $p = 0.53$, and message importance, $F(2, 376) = 0.15$, $p = 0.86$. Research Question 16 asked "What interaction effect do the spokesperson's gender and the type of news have on audience perceptions of spokesperson credibility and spokesperson altruism?" Analysis found no statistically significant interaction effects of spokesperson's gender and type of news on audience perceptions of spokesperson credibility, $F(2, 376) = 1.25$, $p = 0.29$, and spokesperson altruism, $F(2, 376) = 0.15$, $p = 0.86$. Research Question 17 asked "What interaction effect do the spokesperson's gender and the type of news have on audience perceptions of organization credibility and organization altruism?" Analysis found no statistically significant interaction effects of spokesperson gender and type of news on audience perceptions of organization credibility, $F(2, 376) = 0.52$, $p = 0.60$, and organization altruism, $F(2, 376) = 0.06$, $p = 0.95$. Research Question 18 asked "What interaction effect do the spokesperson's gender and the type of news have on audience perceptions of message credibility and message importance?" Analysis found no statistically significant interaction effects of spokesperson's gender and type of news on audience perceptions of message credibility, $F(2, 376) = 0.66$, $p = 0.52$, and message importance, $F(2, 376) = 0.93$, $p = 0.40$. Research Question 19 asked "What interaction effect do the spokesperson's ethnicity and

gender, and type of news have on audience perceptions of spokesperson credibility and spokesperson altruism?" Analysis found no significant interaction effects of spokesperson's ethnicity and gender, and type of news on audience perceptions of spokesperson credibility, F (4, 376) = 0.33, p = 0.86, and spokesperson altruism, F (4, 376) = 0.59, p = 0.67. Research Question 20 asked "What interaction effect do the spokesperson's ethnicity and gender, and type of news have on audience perceptions of organization credibility and organization altruism?" Analysis found no interaction effects of spokesperson's ethnicity and gender, and type of news on audience perceptions of organization credibility, F (4, 376) = 0.49, p = 0.75, and organization altruism, F (4, 376) = 0.28, p = 0.89. Research Question 21 asked "What interaction effect do the of spokesperson's ethnicity and gender, and type of news have on audience perceptions of message credibility and message importance?" Analysis found no interaction effects of spokesperson's ethnicity and gender, and type of news on audience perceptions of message credibility, F (4, 376) = 1.51, p = 0.20, and message importance, F (4, 376) = 1.36, p = 0.25.

Discussion

The goal of this study was to determine the effects of spokesperson ethnicity and gender, and the type of news on audience perceptions of spokesperson credibility, spokesperson altruism, organization credibility, organization altruism, message credibility and message importance. The study also attempted to evaluate effects of spokesperson ethnicity and gender using the Heuristic-Systematic Model (HSM). This was done to assess whether participants would use heuristic cues or systematic thinking processes to form perceptions about spokesperson, organization, and message credibility, under different news conditions. Hence for this study, information on spokesperson ethnicity and gender was made available within the text of the messages to encourage participants to use systematic processing for the variables of spokesperson ethnicity and gender. The research focused on uncovering what mix of spokesperson ethnicity and gender in a particular type of news situation that organizations could leverage to maximize spokesperson, organization and message credibility. No implications are made here for organizations to discriminate against any particular ethnicity or gender, or show preference of any particular ethnic/gender combination under different news conditions.

A relatively unknown organization was used so as to not let prior company reputation affect the dependent variables of the study (Bea and Cameron, 2007). The choice of this particular organization was made in order to mimic a real crisis while at the same time creating a low involvement issue which was intended to increase the amount of attention given by the participants to the source of the message rather than the message itself (Petty, Cacioppo & Goldman, 1981).

The names and titles of the spokespersons in the news stories were chosen to serve as an indication of their ethnic backgrounds and gender. The name and title of the spokesperson were mentioned at least three and five times respectively in the treatment news stories and type of news was made obvious through the content of the news stories, and the (prominent) story headlines. In other words, participants needed to read the article in order to discern the ethnicity and gender of the spokesperson while the headlines of the news articles (*Requip Launches Liquid RLS Medicine and Big Trouble for RLS Pill*) were indicative of the type of news story that followed.

It should be noted that the factors of *spokesperson altruism* and *organization altruism* were made up of two items, "*only interested in company profits*" and "*selfish*." As the abovementioned factors were both made up of negative items, a lower total point rating on these

factors indicate a higher mean altruism score for the spokesperson and the organization. Findings reported in this study are of the mean altruism score and hence, are an indication of positive audience perceptions.

Findings suggest no significant main effects for spokesperson ethnicity on audience perceptions of spokesperson credibility, spokesperson altruism, organization credibility, organization altruism, message credibility and message importance. Although these results contradict findings of some past studies, and some of the principles of the heuristic-systematic model (Appiah, 2007; Arpan, 2002; Beaudoin & Thorson, 2005; Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Ramasubramanian, 2007; Sigall & Ostrove, 1975), they concur with research that suggests that generally, Caucasian audiences do not reveal any clear preference for spokespersons/models of different ethnicities, and members of majority ethnic groups are less aware of ethnic cues (than members of minority ethnic groups) during the decision-making process (Balon, Philport, & Beadle, 1978; Barban, 1969; Choudbury & Schmid, 1974; Deshpande & Stayman, 1994; Schilinger & Plummer, 1972; Tolley & Goett, 1971). As this study had more Caucasian participants (284 of 394) than Hispanic participants (60), these findings could have been the result of the overall ethnic make-up of the sample rather than any other factor. The findings also concur with previous research that has concluded that, in media situations, Hispanics with a higher degree of acculturation display no significant preference for either type of model when the model is either Caucasian or Hispanic and Hispanics with a medium degree of acculturation preferred Caucasian models over Hispanic models (Ueltachy & Krampf, 1997).

This study found that the audience rate organizations with male spokespersons higher than organizations with no gender identified spokespersons and female spokespersons in terms of organization altruism. Findings revealed no significant main effects for spokesperson gender on audience perceptions of spokesperson credibility, spokesperson altruism, organization credibility, message credibility and message importance. However, spokesperson gender was significantly affecting audience perceptions of organization altruism. Analyses revealed that male spokespersons scored highest in organization altruism followed by 'no gender identified' spokespersons and female spokespersons. These findings are consistent with findings from previous research that posited that, as a news sources, the audience places more trust in male spokespersons as compared to female spokespersons (Schudson, 2003).

Results also revealed that type of news significantly affected audience perceptions of spokesperson credibility, organization credibility organization altruism, message credibility and message importance. Benign news always caused spokesperson, organization and message ratings to be higher than crisis news. One reason for this could be that generally, audiences' ratings are dependent on type of news and mostly, crisis messages cause audience to blame the organization and its spokespersons for the crisis. However, all the news articles were created in such a way that they did not assign responsibility for the crisis to the organization. The articles only listed the crisis and implied the organizations involvement with the crisis within the content of the article. The headlines of the news stories however, blatantly linked the organization with the crisis. In such a scenario, it is possible that the participants in this study used the limited information from the headlines as heuristic cues and made their judgment decisions based on heuristic rather than systematic cues, thus supporting the assumptions of the heuristic-systematic model in this case.

The results also revealed no significant interaction effects for spokesperson ethnicity and gender on audience perceptions of spokesperson credibility, spokesperson altruism, organization credibility, organization altruism, message credibility and message importance. It is not

surprising to find these results as each of the factors (ethnicity and gender) individually did not have any significant main effects on the dependent variables, and hence their combination also was not significant.

The interaction of spokesperson ethnicity and type of news did reveal significant effects on audience perceptions of organization altruism. Organization altruism was rated lower for Hispanic spokespersons in the benign news conditions than for no ethnicity identified spokespersons and Caucasian spokespersons in the benign news conditions respectively. Also organizations with Caucasian spokespersons and no ethnicity identified spokespersons in the benign news conditions rated higher in terms of altruism than organizations with Caucasian spokespersons and no ethnicity identified spokespersons in the crisis news conditions. These results suggest that having a Hispanic spokesperson in times of benign news causes perceptions of organization altruism to be lower than when using a Caucasian or 'no ethnicity identified' spokesperson. However, during times of crisis, an organization is rated lower in terms of altruism, regardless of its spokespersons' ethnicities. These findings also suggest that when information is limited and of less importance (benign news condition), participants rely more on heuristic information processing in forming opinions. Hence, we see that in benign news conditions, organization altruism is rated lower for Hispanic spokespersons than no ethnicity identified, and Caucasians spokespersons. Such effects are not observed in the crisis news conditions where there is more important information available and people may be basing their perceptions on facts (systematic thinking) and not on heuristics. The workings of the heuristic-systematic model mentioned above are also apparent when we observe that organization altruism is rated higher when spokespersons are identified as Caucasians and 'no ethnicity identified' in the benign news condition than in the crisis news conditions where systematic thinking seems to be the process that helps form audience perceptions. On the other hand, the study found that the interaction of spokesperson ethnicity and type of news had no effect on audience perceptions of spokesperson credibility, spokesperson altruism, organizational credibility, message credibility and message importance.

The study found no effects of the interaction of spokesperson gender and type of news on audience perceptions of spokesperson credibility, spokesperson altruism, organization credibility, organization altruism, message credibility and message importance. These findings are similar to some earlier studies (Andsager & Mastin, 2003) and suggest that audience judgments about spokespersons, organizations and messages, during times of benign news and crisis news are not based on spokesperson gender.

The study found no effects of the interaction of spokesperson ethnicity, spokesperson gender, and type on news on audience perceptions of spokesperson credibility, spokesperson altruism, organization credibility, organization altruism, message credibility and message importance. These findings suggest that spokesperson ethnicity, gender and type of message in combination cause no differences in audience perceptions about the organization, its spokespersons or its messages. It may be possible that when audience members are exposed to high amount of information, they choose not to use the systematic thinking processes and this information overload causes them to revert to heuristic processing (Chaiken, 1987). Hence, we see no interaction effects of spokesperson ethnicity and gender on the dependent variables of the study, while at the same time observing significant main effects of factors like news type on the same variables. This may be because the headlines of the news articles in this study clearly link the organization to the crisis and the benign news situations. As the headline in the news articles is the most prominent section of the news articles, it may be possible that it is the only aspect of

the manipulation that is aiding heuristic processing. All other factors like spokesperson ethnicity and gender are not readily apparent and required the participants to read the articles carefully and arrive at conclusions about the spokesperson's ethnicity and gender based on the spokesperson's name and titles. All other factors require systematic processing in order to be made apparent. Hence, we see significant main effects for news type and very few main effects for spokesperson gender and interaction effects for spokesperson gender and news type, and no effects for spokesperson ethnicity, and the interaction of spokesperson ethnicity, spokesperson gender and message type.

The spokesperson's ethnicity and gender may not have shown significant main effects on audience perceptions of spokesperson, organization, and message credibility because society has evolved to accept people of different genders and ethnic backgrounds. As the U.S. population becomes more diverse, many minority ethnicities become more mainstream and experience greater acceptance by the mass audience. The same can be said for gender. As women continue to grow professionally in the U.S. society, gender may no longer be an issue that affects how people form opinions and perceptions of credibility. Maybe society has evolved to a point where race and gender are less significant issues of heuristics and the audience does not always consider these when making important judgments.

Additionally, it is possible that spokesperson ethnicity and gender did not significantly affect audience perceptions of spokesperson, organization and message credibility because all participants were affiliated with an institution of higher education with 62% of the participants having some college education and the remaining having attended graduate school or higher. Wagner and Zick (1995) found a negative correlation between the amount of education and racism. The findings of this study could be a result of the fact that the participants were all educated and a part of a large university system.

Finally, the names and titles of the spokespersons, and the type of news stories were the only manipulations of spokesperson identity in this experimental study. A majority of research dealing with source ethnicity and gender uses model photographs, detailed descriptions, accents, and television recordings in addition to names and titles to identify different ethnicities and gender (Appiah, 2007; Arpan, 2002; Balon, Philport, & Beadle, 1978; Barban, 1969; Beaudoin & Thorson, 2005; Choudbury & Schmid, 1974; Deshpande & Stayman, 1994; Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Ramasubramanian, 2007; Sigall & Ostrove, 1975; Schilinger & Plummer, 1972; Tolley & Goett, 1971). It could have been possible that the manipulations of this study were not adequate or obvious enough to be noticed by a majority of the participants thus adversely affecting the results of the study. It is possible that the outcomes of this study are an accurate representation of the perceptions that audience members arrive at after being informed about spokespersons' ethnicity and gender by the use of only ethnicity-specific names and gender-specific titles. There is also the possibility that the manipulations in this study were not obvious enough for the respondents to notice. A stronger manipulation like spokesperson photograph may have yielded different results.

Limitations of the Study

As with any empirical research study, the present study had some limitations. Only two ethnic groups were studied therefore the results of the study were not generalizable to a wider ethnic population of company spokespersons. The entire experiment was conducted online therefore the opinions of people using the internet and participating in this online experiment may not have been an accurate representation of the views of the general population. Also, the

organizational messages were limited to two types of bad/crisis news and benign news stories which do not encompass all types of corporate news stories. Hence, this may affect the generalizability of the study across message types and severity.

This study also did not control for prior perceptions of public relations and organizations in the minds of the participants. The study also did not explore the effects of other spokesperson demographic factors, like age, on credibility perceptions. Demographic factors of the audience also were not included in the study analysis which could reveal some additional interaction effects between spokesperson and audience demographic factors. Finally, because the entire experiment was conducted online, there was little control over the participant's physical and emotional environment and state at the time of participation.

The manipulations of the independent variables in the study, specifically ethnicity and gender were not powerful enough causing many participants not to notice the manipulations. However, the manipulations were created to mimic real-world corporate news articles in times of crisis and benign corporate message where news articles generally only list spokesperson name and title. Nonetheless, the researcher believes that using additional manipulations like spokesperson's photograph would have made the manipulations more powerful and apparent and could have resulted in different findings. Another limitation of this study was that the organization chosen was from the pharmaceutical industry and findings from this study may not be generalizable to organizations from all industries. The organization chosen was intended to have low involvement with the subjects and to encourage participants to notice the different aspects of the story (like the spokesperson's ethnicity and gender, and type of message) using more organizations from different industries could help increase the generalizability of the results.

Although the study has some significant limitations, its findings nonetheless will be extremely valuable for educators, practitioners and organizations engaged in public relations. These findings can be used by practitioners to understand how audience perceptions are formed in a realistic setting and what combination of ethnicity and gender works best in communicating the organization's messages in various news situations.

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Table 1: Participant Demographic Information

Characteristics	n	$\%$
Gender		
Male	159	40.35
Female	235	59.65
Ethnicity		
Caucasian	284	72.08
African American	9	2.29
Hispanic	60	15.23
Asian	27	6.85
Other	14	3.55
Age		
18 – 23	222	56.35
24 – 29	68	17.26
30 +	104	26.39
Education		
Some college education	247	62.69
Graduate school or higher	147	37.31

Total N = 394

Table 2: Distribution of Subjects across Conditions

Gender	Ethnicity	News Type	n in each condition
Male	Caucasian	Benign	22
Male	Hispanic	Benign	17
Male	No ethnicity	Benign	23
Female	Caucasian	Benign	26
Female	Hispanic	Benign	25
Female	No ethnicity	Benign	27
No gender	Caucasian	Benign	22
No gender	Hispanic	Benign	25
No gender	No ethnicity	Benign	12
Male	Caucasian	Crisis	19
Male	Hispanic	Crisis	22
Male	No ethnicity	Crisis	25
Female	Caucasian	Crisis	23
Female	Hispanic	Crisis	26
Female	No ethnicity	Crisis	18
No gender	Caucasian	Crisis	15
No gender	Hispanic	Crisis	27
No gender	No ethnicity	Crisis	20
TOTAL			394

Table 3 Manipulation Check

Condition Characteristic	No. of Experiments with manipulations		No. of Respondents correctly recalling	
	n	*%*	*n*	*%*
Ethnicity				
Hispanic	142	(36.04%)	47	(33.1%)
Caucasian	127	(32.23%)	40	(31.5%)
No Ethnicity Identified	125	(31.73%)	70	(56.0 %)
Gender				
Female	145	(36.80%)	112	(77.2%)
Male	128	(32.49%)	85	(66.4%)
No Gender Identified	121	(30.70%)	42	(34.7%)

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics (Mean/SD/N) of Organization Altruism for Interaction Effects of Ethnicity and Type of News

	Hispanic	Caucasian	Unidentified	Total
Benign	5.71/2.20/67	5.00/2.09/70	4.66/2.00/62	5.13/2.13/199
Crisis	5.53/1.93/75	5.77/1.80/57	5.75/2.12/63	5.67/1.95/195
Total	5.61/2.06/142	5.35/2.00/127	5.21/2.12/125	

Facebook Generation and the Corporate Communications

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Abstract

This paper presents a completed survey developed to understand the way the Facebook generation evaluates corporate communication polices. Using a qualitative method and questionnaires, students graduated from economy and business schools in three Brazilian cities (São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and Belo Horizonte), were questioned about their behavior and use of internet: subjects they are interested in; websites and publications they rely on for information; and social networking they are part of. Also the aim of the survey is to understand how and if this generation is interacting with companies online; whether they follow companies' webpages/profiles in social networking; if they praise or critique companies online; which brands they admire the most and why; and whether they search for information about brands and products. And finally, how they assess these companies' communication strategies. The study was conducted by Aberje – Brazilian Association for Corporate Communications in partnership with Valor Econômico, a Brazilian business newspaper.

Introduction

Computers, mobile devices, the internet and social software are increasingly changing the ways of perceiving distances, time and relationships. Diverse and interconnected players emerge simultaneously with high potential for creation, stimulated by connected platforms that facilitate sharing and disseminate positioning. Whereas before people were seen as passive users of services designed unidirectionally and distributed by few, today they are the players in new interactions, mediated or stimulated by technology, which multiply powers. This reconfigures the communication process in organizations, because it introduces an overview of the development of horizontal interactive networks connected locally and globally that build renewed currents of meaning.

Among the most fundamental characteristics that imply changes and should guide the contact vision of organizations are convergence, the offer of multiplatforms and the diversity of players in this new era. In this scenario, the network, besides being a means of communication, also restructures power relations, which changes the culture, rules of socialization and order of production. If before traditional media had a transmission center and a large number of receivers which were passive and dispersed, with cyberspace there is another form of communication with technological support, co-produced by the interaction among people and consisting of a common memory that feeds on multiple contributions.

A phenomenon of the modern world, social networks are here to stay. Today, with digital inclusion and increased access of various social classes to the internet, social networks have arisen like an avalanche to change social relations among the new generations. Therefore, to learn more about how society behaves in these communication channels, it is essential to become familiar with them.

The term social networks, in the internet environment, is known by its webs of relationships formed in online channels that offer the creation of online communities and interaction of its participants, or users. In these channels members communicate, create communities and share information and similar interests. These connections among people and communities are made up of one or more types of relationships (friendship, family, business, sex, etc.) or through the sharing of beliefs, knowledge or prestige. Users can be individuals, institutions or companies from any sector that want to communicate with consumers, prospective consumers, suppliers, partners and anyone else who wants to be part of the dialogue.

According to Ibope NetRatings, Brazil has 79.9 million internet users, making it the 5th country with the highest number of internet connections. Since the average connect time metric was created, the country has also always obtained excellent scores and has been an ongoing world leader. In July 2009, the time was 48h26min, with the focus on websites, and the last score measured was 69h per person in July 2011.

DATABERJE - Research Institute of the Brazilian Association for Business Communication /Aberje has focused on this situation with a scientific survey that makes it possible to provide some behavior orientation for associated business decision makers. This article discusses the results obtained in a work organized and published in a partnership between Aberje and the Brazilian newspaper Valor Econômico.

The research population consists of students graduated in business administration and economics courses from the schools listed in the General Index of Institution Courses (IGC) in São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and Belo Horizonte, Brazil. Two universities were selected per enrollment, based on ranking, with the inclusion of the College of Economics and Business Administration of the University of São Paulo for its institutional and professional body.

For data collection, we used the technique of quantitative research, with 400 questionnaires in a non-probabilistic sample per part, with a personal approach in selected universities. The period of data collection was from August 10 to September 1, 2011.

Context

Aberje was founded on October 8, 1967. It is a civil, non-profit organization whose purpose is to discuss and promote, in a local and global perspective, business and organizational communication as an administrative, political, cultural and symbolic function of strategic management of organizations and strengthening of citizenship.

To fulfill its purposes, based on the values of democracy, ethics and transparency, it has developed information, communication and relationship activities by promoting approximation and relationships of companies, institutions, and managers and researchers engaged in activities related to business and organizational communication; the establishment and maintenance of channels to publicize the work and information produced by the Association; publication and production of books, inserts, periodicals, videos and other media as well as products related to the preservation, promotion and dissemination of business and organizational communication, relationships, and Institutional memory and culture. It also works with articulation and integration to bring together companies, institutions, managers and researchers involved in corporate and organizational communication; to develop and strengthen the organization's relations with associations from other countries, and to foster relations among associated companies and between them and the Association, including promoting the institutionalization of physical and virtual networks.

Aberje is noted for its promotion of seminars, conferences, debates and lectures, and the sharing of experiences among audience members, experts and researchers in specific market areas and the community at large, spreading knowledge about corporate and organizational communication and exchanging professional experiences. It also develops mechanisms for recognizing outstanding work in the area of corporate and organizational communication in the form of awards, seals and certifications – with the Aberje Award being the most important and in its 39th edition in 2012. The idea is to recognize companies that are standards for quality and efficiency in their area, encourage awareness of business and organizational communication as an administrative, political, cultural and symbolic function of strategic management, offer members a structured set of indicators and an excellence certification process in the fields of management and especially corporate and organizational communication.

The role of Aberje includes at the same time leadership and coordination, whether promoting and defending the public interest in valuing business and organization communication, relationships and culture to the government and society in general, as well as the interests of the Association and business and organizational communication; whether representing the interests of the Association to lawmakers, city, state, federal or international regulators and certifiers. Another pillar of its existence is linked to training, knowledge and innovation through the production, organization and dissemination of knowledge in the field of organizational communication through research and initiatives in education, sharing best practices for post-graduate training, and strengthening the technical, ethical and aesthetic role of the communicator in organizations and society.

Regularly inscribed individuals and companies are associates that develop activities of corporate and organizational communication or contribute directly or indirectly to this purpose. Aberje is organized by a professional and scientific corporate governance and is part of the

deliberative council of communication directors and managers working in 21 different sectors of the economy. The advisory board consists of a body of intellectuals, academics and researchers working in major institutions in the country and the world, thereby strengthening the association's global role.

Several studies have already been conducted in Brazil on the prominence of internet use in relation to other countries. Some data was revealed from ComScore, "Brazil 2012 Digital Future in Focus," such as its leadership in access to blogs, with a growth of 44% in 2011 and an average of unique visitors of 95.6%, ahead of South Korea and Turkey. Last year, Facebook established itself as the social network with the largest number of users in the country (currently 43 million) and also as the one with the greatest increase in total unique visitors, with a rate of 66%, above the 33% of Orkut, a former leader in the country. Brazilians watched 4.7 billion videos online in 2011, totaling a navigation of this interface that this lasted on the average 27.2 hours per person.

The portals have been shown to be a good opportunity to give visibility to brands in Brazil. With an average of 39.2% of connection minutes in 2011, news, information and celebrity sites outperformed social networks, which closed with an average participation of 23%. internet access via mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets also showed growth. In December 2011, total mobile connections reached 1.5% of all internet traffic in the country. Between August and September last year, growth in the number of accesses to the web generated by these devices increased 50%.

The Profile of Users of Social Media in Brazil, conducted by eCMetrics with 2440 users and published in February 2011, indicated that 16% produce content, 22% critique or collect (reproduce), 36% observe, participates or cultivate contacts (most common type), and 26% are characterized as strong online consumers and brand engagers (those who consume or create social media related to brands, products and services). Behavior according to segmentation shows that women between ages 18-34 produce the most content in social media and also critique/comment the most among all classes. Those classified as "joiners" (who adhere to and enjoy participating in activities on social networks) are men between ages 18-34, mostly from classes CDE, while "brand engagers" (engaged with brands) are mostly men and women 35 years and older from all classes.

It should also be noted that social inequality figures in the digital world: among the poorest 10%, only 0.6% have internet access in Brazil, while among the 10% richest that figure is 56.3%. Only 13.3% of blacks use the internet, more than two times less than whites (28.3%). These are important indicators to put the survey data that will be portrayed here into perspective.

Results

Business students represented 53.2% of the respondents, while 46.8% studied economics. Regardless of the course, 28.3% were in the first year of college and 27.3% in the second year. Just over 41% of the interviews were conducted in São Paulo, with 32.5% in Rio de Janeiro and 26% in Belo Horizonte. Men represented 71.5% of the sample and 67.6% were under age 21. 55% were full-time students, with 27.6% doing internships and 17.5% also working.

Students participating in the survey showed a preference for working in private companies, especially in the financial area. Students of economics were more interested in financial institutions than business students, with indices ranging between 49.7% and 30.5%. Mentions in the public sector and socio-environmental area were concentrated in Belo Horizonte, with indices of 12.5% and 5.8%, respectively.

The internet stood out as a source of information and reached 93.3% of the respondents, regardless of their university or the city in which they lived. About 45% stayed connected for more than 3 hours per day. Newspapers came in second place as a source for 46.5% of the mentions. TV was a source of information for 38.7% of students in private universities, compared with 25.6% from public universities. When they sought information, economics and business issues were considered more interesting for 86% of them, with international and the world with 57.5% of the mentions and politics with 47%, followed by sports with 43%. At lower positions in the ranking were topics such as marketing (28.8%), sustainability (23.8%) and communication (17.8%).

Among the digital social networking platforms analyzed, the reason for the name of this group can be understood: it is a generation is based largely on Facebook (92.8%), with Orkut in second position with 53% and then YouTube (50.3%), until we get to Twitter, with 30.5%. Incidentally, in microblogging 59% did not follow any company, but when they were cited by the other ones surveyed, they indicated national organization such as EBX, Bradesco, Vale and Petrobras, and international ones such as Santander, Red Bull and TIM. On Facebook, 76.5% were not fans of any brand, product or company – when mentioned, the organizations were very scattered, ranging from Apple, Google, Smirnoff, Coca-Cola, McKinsey, Loreal, Red Bull and Unilever, in addition to the Brazilian companies GNT (cable TV channel), AmBev, Guaraná Antartica, and Petrobras. It was found that few post just to praise or criticize businesses, in fact they never showed any praise (87%) or critiques (83.8%). Even with few occurrences, the brands in social networks in this sample were Nike and Pepsi, and the critiqued brands were TIM, Oi and NET.

There was a prevalence of interest in the financial sector among the students surveyed. Banking institutions and other agents in this market were cited by 37.9%, with technology in second place (14.7%) and petrochemicals and fuels right after (12.5%). In any case, the most admired company spontaneously mentioned was Apple, followed Google and Coca-Cola and a tie in fourth place among Nokia, Nestle and Mizuno. But it is noteworthy that 22% of business administration students reported that they did not admire any brands, an index that reached 31% among economics students.

Nearly 80% of the students said they were informed about the brand they admire, if added to the replies 'very informed' and 'informed,' and that they get their information through digital means (74%). Among these internet sources, the search engine Google is the most prevalent, followed by Brazilian channels such as the news portals Globo.com and UOL and digital versions of the newspapers Valor Econômico and Folha de S.Paulo. In 70% of cases, they turned to company sites for product information (Portfolio /Launchings /Price/ Technical Specifications) and 22% for institutional information, with the site of the preferred brand receiving visits by 84% of respondents in a linked, natural attractiveness with a very high level of satisfaction – 71% said they find everything they are looking for in this type of channel.

Communication of the preferred brand had 83.3% acceptance of the respondents as worthy of trust, and was evaluated as excellent or good by more than 85%. In any case, it is important to realize that half the students rely more on audited data (46%) as reports and balances, followed press coverage (25.5%). Approximately 67% of respondents indicated innovation as the main theme of impact in building brands. Social responsibility was mentioned more often by women than men, with a variation of more than 14 percentage points – 46.5% and 32.2%, respectively. Corporate values appeared in sixth place, but were disassociated from corporate memory, which appeared in tenth and last place. Asked about the importance of

corporate communication for acknowledging a brand, 81.8% respondents said it was very important.

Encouraged to think about the business cases presented in class by their teachers, the topics discussed most by students were company strategy and management (36%), market /business/ finance (23%), marketing (16%) and sustainability (15.5%), with communication in last place with 2.7% of the mentions.

Conclusion

One of the key findings was the dissociation between the admired brand and professional life: more than half the sample still does not work, but shows interest in being employed in the private sector, especially in the financial sector. Note, however, that when asked about their most admired brand, fewer than 10 students mentioned institutions in this segment. Topics related to human resources were not cited as components in building brands, and were also not associated with admiration.

The main praise for the most admired brands came from innovation and product related attributes, and this scenario was repeated when respondents indicated the origin of the reputation of organizations, with an emphasis on innovation. More established brands, for their part, are emerging as important attributes, such as values and corporate memory, to win admiration. In this interim, respondents highlighted the importance of corporate communication for acknowledging brands, considered themselves well informed about the ones they admire, and evaluated well and confided in their communication. It is worth mentioning that this formation of opinion occurred mainly in the digital environment, since the internet and the company's own sites were the main sources for the respondents.

The student behaves as a consumer in this online universe and, above all, searches for information about the products of the brand he admires. However, when compared with other sources, it is noteworthy that reports and balances are considered the most reliable. The respondents are present on social networks, especially Facebook, but they still are not actively involved in critiques and praise of companies in the virtual environment. Business administration students move through a broader range of subjects and therefore tend to value and be more interested in issues related to corporate communication.

In general, the study showed that internet users in Brazil, and particularly students of the courses mentioned were already involved in the 2.0 web era and have, on the internet, a tool to search for the latest things, entertainment, information and interaction with companies. Brazilian consumers online are willing to dialog with companies and want to be heard and participate in decisions concerning the products and services they use, through social networks and other online services.

The use of different channels and social media tools depends not only on the users' profiles, but also the business category in which they interact. It is therefore very important that companies/brands not only understand the behavior of users of social media in a general overview, but also how these internet users use its specific products and content about them in social media channels.

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Do as I Say or Do as I Do?: An Analysis and Critique of Dialogic Communication Website Strategies of Top Fee-Producing U.S.-Based Public Relations Agencies

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Abstract

The current paper presents a content analysis of a group of 102 websites of major U.S.-based public relations agencies and a critique of how principles of dialogic communication have been applied to these websites. The results suggests that the top billing websites have the capacity to complete the dialogic loop, however a guideline that includes features more specific to their goal and capabilities is needed.

The use of organizational websites as a tool for facilitating two-way communication between organizations and their publics has been studied and advocated widely by public relations researchers (e.g., Kent & Taylor, 1998; Ki & Hon, 2006; Park & Reber, 2008). For example, Kent and Taylor (1998) argue that the nature of the Internet and websites offer a unique opportunity to public relations practitioners to create dialogue with their publics. Park and Reber (2008) and Ki and Hon (2006) make similar arguments as both sets of authors recommend that online strategies should be an important part of the practitioner's tactical arsenal and that practitioners should create a comprehensive set of "best practices" by combining traditional public relations strategies with online strategies.

One popular method of studying ways that organizations use their websites to engage in two-way communication is Kent and Taylor's dialogic communication theory (1998; 2002). This theory articulates principles of communication between organizations and publics that are based in relational communication theory, which itself argues that honest and open discourse is central to good relationships. Kent and Taylor (1998; 2002) also proposed a dialogic communication framework by which researchers can measure the degree to which organizations use websites to facilitate dialogue with their publics. The framework has been applied to a range of organizational type, including nonprofit and activist organizations (Kent, Taylor, & White, 2003; Reber & Kim, 2006; Seltzer & Mitrook, 2007; Taylor, Kent, & White, 2001), *Fortune 500* companies (Esrock & Leichty, 1999, 2000; Park & Reber, 2008), colleges and universities (Kang & Norton, 2006; McAllister-Spooner, 2008; and congressional offices (Taylor & Kent, 2004).

Interestingly, the degree to which public relations agencies *themselves* use their websites to engage in dialogic communication has yet to be explored. We argue that this is a worthwhile endeavor to pursue for several reasons. First, analyzing agency websites will indicate the popularity of dialogic communication website strategies among agencies, while also suggesting the degree to which at least one set of academic recommendations has penetrated the field of public relations. Second, we believe studying how agencies interact with clients and potential clients in a public forum is useful, as the agency-client relationship may require a different set of website communication strategies. In fact, this latter point also provides an opportunity for us to critique dialogic communication as it has been applied to website strategies and to suggest future directions for research. For example, are there conditions in which dialogic communication should take different forms (i.e., agency-client relationships)? If so, what are the implications for dialogic communication theory as it is applied to websites in those instances?

Therefore, the current paper presents a content analysis of a group of 102 websites of major U.S.-based public relations agencies and a critique of how principles of dialogic communication have been applied to these websites. We analyzed the websites of the top 50 agencies in terms of revenue according to the O'Dwyer's ranking of top billing firms, as well as 52 smaller agencies (i.e., 100-151) appearing on the same list. As noted, we used Kent and Taylor's (2002) dialogic theory as a basis for our analysis, and we focused on the five principles of dialogic communication as they are applied to websites (Kent & Taylor, 1998; 2002). Given that agencies that with higher billing are also generally larger, we also suggested that those websites may have different features, so we tested whether systematic differences emerged in a comparison of the two groups of agencies. Finally, we discuss our findings in light of where dialogic theory is currently and where we suggest researchers focus their efforts in the future. In particular, we suggest that an agency-client relationship may represent an example where dialogic communication is appropriate but where that communication style is not enacted via a website.

Review of the Literature

Dialogic Theory

Kent and Taylor (1998) state that the Internet presents an opportunity for organizations to develop true discourse between organizations and their publics and that the terms "dialogue" and "dialogic" are becoming more prevalent in describing ethical and practical approaches to communication in academia and industry as public relations theory and research move toward a two-way relational communication model (Kent & Taylor, 2002).

The Kent and Taylor concept of dialogue is rooted in philosophy, rhetoric, psychology, and relational communication theory. At the heart of dialogic theory is what the authors refer to as "dialogic communication," which is defined as a particular type of relational interaction occurring in a context where a relationship already exists. The authors note that as early as 1974, Johannesen suggested that dialogue is intimately connected with concepts such as honesty, concern for the audience, genuineness, open-mindedness, empathy, lack of pretense, nonmanipulative intent, and encouragement of free expression.

Pearson (1989) applied these ideas to public relations, arguing that Plato was perhaps the first thinker to connect the idea of dialogue to certain desirable and ethically preferable styles of communication. Pearson (1989) also suggested three procedures useful for facilitating dialogue: that no topic should be excluded *a priori* from discussion, that no type of communication be considered *a priori* as inappropriate or irrational, and that during discourse, communicators have the option of changing levels of reflexivity.

Kent and Taylor (2002) synthesized these ideas, and described dialogue as an orientation that includes several overarching tenets of dialogism. These tenets are the first step toward understanding the concepts of the dialogic theory: *mutuality*, or the recognition of organization–public relationships; *propinquity*, or the temporality and spontaneity of interactions with publics; *empathy*, or the supportiveness and confirmation of public goals and interests; *risk*, or the willingness to interact with individuals and publics on their own terms; and finally, *commitment*, or the extent to which an organization gives itself over to the public (Kent & Taylor).

In terms of building interpersonal relationships, Kent and Taylor (2002), explain that all organizational members who communicate with publics must be comfortable engaging in dialogue, and the necessary skills needed to achieve dialogic communication include: listening, empathy, being able to contextualize issues within local, national and international frameworks, being able to identify common ground between parties, thinking about long-term rather than short-term objectives, seeking outgroups or individuals with opposing viewpoints, and soliciting a variety of internal and external opinions on policy issues. They also state that while dialogue "cannot guarantee ethical public relations outcomes, a dialogic communication orientation does increase the likelihood that publics and organizations will better understand each other and have ground rules for communication" (Kent & Taylor, 2002, p. 33).

For mediated dialogic relationships, Kent and Taylor (2002) suggest practical steps that organizations can take to reinforce their commitment to dialogue. Examples include placing e-mail, Web addresses, 800 telephone numbers, and organizational addresses prominently in advertisements, on organizational literature and on all correspondence that appears in public forums which then encourages members of publics to engage others in discussions about organizational issues. The authors assert that the Web can be used to communicate directly with publics (Kent & Taylor, 2002).

To serve as guidelines for the successful integration of dialogic communication in public relations practice, Kent and Taylor (1998, 2002) offer the five principles to facilitate dialogic relationships with publics through the Internet (see Table 1).

Table 1
Five principles of dialogic communication applied to websites

Principles	Description
One: The Dialogic Loop	Organizations should create websites that allow the public to ask questions of organizations and for organizations to respond.
Two: The Usefulness of Information	Organizations should provide content that is useful for the user—not just the organization needs.
Three: The Generation of Return Visits	Organizations create websites that inspire users to make repeat visits
Four: The Intuitiveness/Ease of Interface	Organizations should create websites that are easy to navigate and understand.
Five: The Rule of Conservation of Visitors	Organizations should create websites that keep visitors interested and surfing the site without going somewhere else. This principle has evolved into a measure of how timely the information is on a website (Kent & Taylor, 2004)

Table created from (Kent & Taylor, 1998, p. 326-330).

Kent and Taylor's dialogic theory and framework for measuring dialogic communication tools in websites has been applied to a variety of organizations. For example, Taylor et al. (2001) studied how activist organizations use the Internet to build relationships, and they found that while most activist organizations met the technical and design aspects required for dialogic relationship building on the Web, they were not yet fully engaging their publics in two-way communication. Additionally, they found that activist organizations were better prepared to address the needs of member publics rather than media needs. These findings imply that public relations practitioners already have the tools needed for dialogic communication at the websites but for some reason do not fully utilize them.

More recently, Seltzer and Mitrook (2007) studied the dialogic potential of weblogs (i.e., blogs) in relationship building and found that blogs incorporated dialogic communication principles to a greater degree than traditional websites, potentially making them better suited for online relationship building. Seltzer and Mitrook (2007) asserted that blogs can be effective at establishing and maintaining organization public relationships especially for public relations practitioners who are versed in two-way symmetrical communication skills and who are

knowledgeable of the organization and its publics. They state that these practitioners should be capable of practicing the type of public relations that effective blogging demands, therefore allowing the blog to reach its full dialogic potential in online relationship building.

Finally, in a ten-year review of dialogic Internet principles, McAllister-Spooner (2009) found that in spite of recommendations of scholars to incorporate two-way dialogic channels, websites are very poorly used dialogic tools, and that most organizational websites are effectively utilized only for introductory level of relationship-building functions. Additional findings suggest that while the websites are easy to use and offer useful information, they do not do the dialogic functions very well. McAllister-Spooner (2009) concludes that regardless of type, organizations do not seem to be fully utilizing the interactive potential of the Internet to build and maintain organization–public relationships.

Social Media and Dialogic Communication

Even though it is unclear what its full effect may be in the long-term, the use of social media has increased exponentially over the last several years and become recognized as an essential tool by public relations practitioners (Taylor & Kent, 2010). As an example, the authors note that the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) hosted eight Webinars in February and March 2009 that addressed social media and that the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) offers podcasts and lessons on how to integrate social media technology into the communications practice.

Blogs are generally also included in the social media spectrum, and the use of blogs in public relations serves two main functions (Hallett, 2005). First, it allows the practitioners to "analyze the market and ascertain the opinions of their audiences—to gauge public opinion on a business, product or brand" (Hallett, p. 269). Second, blogs allow consumers to participate in the communication loop by "giving opinions both personal and organizational, be it by posting comments on other blogs or creating one's own" (Hallett, p. 269). This implies that blogs are a natural fit within the dialogic communication framework.

As social media continues to emerge as an area of research (Trammell, 2006; Sweetser & Metzgar, 2007; Stewart, 2008; Wright & Hinson, 2008; Diga & Kelleher, 2009; Taylor & Kent, 2010), it should be an important consideration when it comes to the dialogic loop as it may help build relationships and possibly "facilitate more balanced organization-public relationships" (Kent et al., 2003).

Public Relations Practitioners and Dialogic Communication

One final element to consider is how important PR practitioners view Web-based tools. There is a significant amount of research indicating that they recognize their importance. For example, in a recent study Porter, Sweetser and Chung (2009) found that PR practitioners were using blogs as much as the general population. As Sallot, Porter and Acosta-Alzuru (2004) note, "Practitioners see the web as essential to compete in today's dynamic business environment, since clients and management expect practitioners to handle any web-related issues" (p. 272). In addition to having a company blog, 70% of the 216 practitioners surveyed by Porter et al. (2009) also maintained a personal blog. Another survey of 283 practitioners showed that 24% of them used social networking, about 40% had blogs and 19% used photo-sharing platforms such as Flickr (Eyrich, Padman, Sweetser, 2008).

Sallot et al. (2004) also interviewed PR practitioners about their Web use and their perceptions about the role Web-based tools should be used in the field. Some of the results

indicate that PR practitioners use the Web "as a way to 'laser-target' publics…and improve relationships with management and clients" (Sallot et al., 2004, p.276). Additionally, practitioners viewed the Web as a way of not only enhancing their image, but also as another channel to distribute information (Hill & White, 2000). Although the practitioners acknowledged that the Web was "a way to strengthen relationships that already existed" (Hill & White, p. 42) they did not see the Web as being capable of ever replacing the value of face-to-face communication.

It is clear that PR practitioners recognize the Web as a tool to rely information to and from the public. It is also clear that public relations researchers have advocated using the Web in general and Websites in particular as a tool to facilitate dialogic communication. What is less clear is whether the PR practitioners put those recommendations into practice in their own organizational Websites.

Research questions

We pursued three research questions in our analysis. The first question was guided by the dialogic communication website framework (Kent & Taylor, 1998; 2002). We also were interested in the degree to which public relations agencies featured social media tools, and so coding for social media tools was added to our analysis. Finally, we explored whether there were differences between the websites of the larger agencies and the other agencies.

RQ1: Do public relations agency Websites demonstrate principles of dialogic communication?

RQ2: Do public relations agencies use social media to create dialogue with their clients and potential clients?

RQ3: Are there systematic differences between large and smaller public relations agencies?

Method

This study reports the results of a content analysis of 102 websites of U.S.-based public relations agencies. The analysis was conducted over a one-week period in March 2011.

Sampling plan

O'Dwyer's Public Relations News is a company that reports news about the public relations field, and the company has published a widely used agency directory since 1970. We used O'Dwyer's list of the top-grossing public relations agencies with major U.S. operations as the basis for identifying the websites used in the study ("Public relations firm rankings," March 2011).

Two sets of agencies were selected based on their rank on that list—the top 50 (i.e., agencies ranked 1-50; $n = 50$) and the bottom third (i.e., agencies ranked 100-151; $n = 52$). When a link was provided to the main agency website on the O'Dwyer's list, we used that link to access the agency. If no link was provided, the agency website was identified using an Internet search with the Google search engine. Each of the agencies on the list had a website, so this resulted in 102 websites that were coded.

Coding Procedures

Two graduate students were trained in how to perform content analysis on websites. A codebook was developed using three previous website and dialogic communication studies (Kent

et al., 2003; Taylor & White, 2004; [AUTHORS]). The coders analyzed a sample of 4 websites, the results were discussed, and the coding list was finalized.

The main coding categories were usefulness of information, ease of interface, conservation of visitors, generation of return visits, and dialogic loop (see Appendix for coding sheet). For conservation of visitors, important information was operationalized as information about the organization, such as an event hosted by the agency. Quick links was operationalized as an alphabetized list of the most frequently requested pages that was placed on the front page.

For social media, we focused on popular social media tools and whether or not they were referenced on the front page. For example, Facebook page was operationalized as a direct reference to an agency's fan page on Facebook or a link that took a visitor to the agency's Facebook page. We also coded for the presence of a blog (or blogs), as well as who authored the blog (e.g., none, executive, employee). Finally, we included whether the blogs allowed for comments in the social media, because allowing for comments could be considered part of the dialogic loop.

Inter-Coder Reliability

Inter-coder reliability was established using cross-tabulation to derive a *Kappa* value. Percent agreement was also calculated. Websites were coded independently, with 10% of the websites being coded by both coders to establish reliability. Each coder then coded the remaining 45% of the sites the other did not code. The resulting *Kappa* value was a substantial $\kappa = .63$ (Landis & Koch, 1977) and a percent agreement of 81%. Riffe, Lacy and Fico (2005) noted that a minimum level of 80% agreement is required.

Results

Ease of Interface

Ease of interface concerns website features that facilitate site navigation. Almost all of the websites had major links to the rest of the site (98%), and almost all of the sites displayed the agency logo on the front page (92%). Conversely, only 14.7% included a site map and only 19.6% had a search engine. The latter two items are common features of websites.

Usefulness to Clients and Potential Clients

Usefulness of information relates to whether or not a website has features that meet the needs of its visitors. For clients and potential clients, we would expect the agency websites to have items such as contact information, agency specialties, and how to request information.

This was probably the area that was strongest and most consistent across the websites. For example, 99% of the agency websites contained contact information, 80.4% contained a list of agency leaders (e.g., president, vice presidents, etc.), 93.1% had a list of expertise, and 85.3% provided a client list. Interestingly, only 11.8% of the websites had a specific mechanism for requesting information and only 27.5% had client testimonials. Finally, only 6.9% of the websites had a special password-protected area for clients.

Conservation of Visitors and Generation of Return Visits

For conservation of visitors, we coded whether important information was on the home page and whether information about recent updates was available. Important information included items such as upcoming events, and 70.6% of the websites included important

information on the front page. For quick links, 61.8% of the sites had a bar for quick links off the front page. However, only 2.9% of the websites listed the time and date of last update.

For generation of return visits, we coded features of websites that would give visitors a reason to return to the website. Again, somewhat surprisingly agency websites did not include features that are commonly associated with generation of return visits. For example, none of the websites (0%) had a FAQs or Q&A page and only one website (1%) had an explicit invitation to return, although 5.9% did include a "Bookmark Now" feature. About 21% of the sites had some type of downloadable information, such as case studies or white papers.

Dialogic Loop

The dialogic loop consists of providing the opportunity for publics to engage organizations by expressing their opinions but also organizations can "close the dialogic loop" by responding to the publics. The dialogic loop is often operationalized as instances where website visitors can leave comments and where the organization can also respond.

Here, 34.3% of the websites provided opportunity for some type of user response. Not surprisingly, only one website provided the opportunity for visitors to vote on an issue and only two websites had public surveys that visitors could vote on. While generally not included in the dialogic loop, we did note that 32.4% of the websites included the option of signing up for some type of email news or e-newsletter.

Social Media

Because Kent and Taylor's (1998, 2002) dialogic theory and dialogic communication framework were developed prior to the development and popularization of many social network sites, we included those as a separate category. We coded for the presence of blogs, as well as common social networking tools such as Facebook and Twitter. We also coded for whether blogs allowed for comments.

About two-thirds of the websites (63.7%) had a blog. The two most common types of blogs were generic (e.g., no author or rotating author) with 35.3% and employee with 40% of the blogs in those categories, respectively. The other popular category was blogs by executives (18.4%). Almost all of the blogs allowed comments (89.2%).

There were similar percentages for other popular social networking tools: 61.8% had a Facebook page, 66.7% had an agency Twitter handle, and 55.9% had references to some type of other social media tool, such as LinkedIn, Youtube, Digg, and Reddit.

Comparing Top-50 Agencies to Lower-Ranked Agencies

We used Chi-square to compare the set of 50 top-billing public relations agencies to the 52 other agencies. In general, most of the comparisons showed that differences between the larger and smaller agencies were not significant. The areas where the differences were significant likely reflected access to greater staff resources than strategic decisions by the larger agencies.

For example, the top-billing agencies were more likely to provide a site map, $c^2 (1, N = 102) = 6.75$, $p = .009$, and more likely to provide a search engine, $c^2 (1, N = 102) = 16.72$, $p = .0001$. Similarly, the larger agencies were also more likely to provide case studies, $c^2 (1, N = 102) = 4.15$, $p = .04$ and to provide a "Bookmark Now" statement, $c^2 (1, N = 102) = 3.00$, $p = .08$, although both of the latter two differences should be interpreted cautiously given the relatively low counts for both size of agency. The larger agencies were also more likely to

provide opportunities for user response, c^2 (1, N = 102) = 10.71, p = .001. Finally, the Websites for the top 50 agencies were more likely to have some sort of blog, c^2 (1, N = 102) = 4.48, p = .03.

Discussion

The goal of the current study was to apply the five principles of Kent and Taylor's (1998, 2002) dialogic theory to a content analysis of two groups of public relations agency Websites. The first group was the top 50 PR agencies in terms of fees for 2010, according to O'Dwyer's Public Relations News. The second group comprised the bottom third of the top billing agencies (i.e., 100-151). In addition to the five principles of dialogic communication, we coded for the presence of blogs and other social media tools, such as Facebook and Twitter. Finally, we conducted an exploratory analysis to determine whether there were systematic differences between the top 50 agencies and the other agencies in terms of what was included in the Websites.

RQ 1: Evidence of dialogic communication

The first research question asked whether we would find examples of dialogic communication in public relations agency websites. In some ways the results of our analysis were striking, although perhaps not altogether surprising given what other studies have found (e.g., McAllister-Spooner, 2009). As a group, the PR agency websites demonstrated some evidence of dialogic principles, although there was considerable variance both within and between the five principles.

For example, while most of the websites included major links to the rest of the website and a clearly identifiable logo (associated with ease of interface), few provided a site map and relatively few provided a search engine box. Similarly, the agency websites were very consistent in providing certain types of useful information to what are certainly two of their most important publics—current and potential clients. Items like agency contact information, lists of agency leaders, and areas of agency expertise were readily available, as were examples of publicity about clients or projects. The latter example is to be expected. However, it was surprising how few websites included opportunities to request information or special password-protected areas for clients. While providing a special area for clients may represent a significant investment in an agency's website, providing opportunities to request information seem like a very simple change to make.

The same trend continued with both the conservation of visitors and return visit encouragement principles. For conservation of visitors, important information on the front page and quick links were available on many of the sites, but very few posted the last time and date of update—a common way to indicate that a site is active. There were also very few examples of the common items associated with encouraging return visits. For example, only two sites explicitly invited users to return. Not one website included FAQs, and only seven sites total requested visitors to bookmark the site. Again, these suggest simple changes that agencies could make to increase the dialogic capacity of their websites.

Closing the dialogic loop—providing visitors an opportunity to ask questions or give opinions and the organization responding—was strangely absent in the majority of the websites. Again, common ways of measuring the dialogic loop, such as an opportunity to vote on issues or to use a survey to voice an opinion were only found on three websites. There were more opportunities for user response, but that was still only evident in about a third of the websites.

So, the question becomes why weren't there more examples of dialogic communication on the agency websites? One possibility is that PR practitioners are unaware of Kent and Taylor's dialogic theory and their suggestions for website features that encourage dialogue. This is possible given the often wide chasm between researchers and practitioners. Another possibility is one that we point to in the title of the paper—perhaps the websites reflect a "do as we say, not as we do" mentality. Certainly, it is plausible that agencies are more interested in using websites to push out information than engaging their clients in dialogue. And this is a common finding among websites (e.g., Kent et al., 2003).

But we offer a third possibility—perhaps practitioners feel as if their websites are not the proper venue for dialogue. Perhaps there is something unique about the agency-client relationship such that agencies use their websites as a virtual "front door" where potential customers can come and browse without being bothered. If this were the case, then we would expect to see the principles of dialogic communication in evidence in other types of communication but not the websites. Because agencies exist to sell their services, it may also be that the agencies are reticent to provide too much information that could be used by competitors. Even so, there are a number of minor changes that agencies could make that would increase the dialogic communication of their websites.

RQ2: Agency use of social media

The second research question asked whether we would find examples of social media on the public relations websites. Again, given the recent explosion of social media, the results of this analysis were somewhat surprising. Only about two-thirds of the websites used featured blogs, Facebook pages, Twitter feeds, and others social media tools such as LinkedIn, Youtube or Reddit.

Many of the agencies that did use them, though, took advantage of the natural dialogic characteristics of social media. For example, many of the blogs posts featured responses from commenters who claimed to be current or former clients. Similarly, the Facebook pages often included comments from visitors and fans, as well as responses from someone at the agency.

We believe that social media offers a great opportunity for agencies to engage in dialogue with clients and potential clients. We also assert that increasingly this is what clients and potential clients expect. For example, Twitter could be used by agencies not only to talk about what services they offer, but also to engage in online discussions about topics of interest to the clients.

RQ3: Comparison of top billing agencies

The final research question was whether there would be significant differences between the larger and smaller agencies. While we did not offer this as a hypothesis, we expected that if differences emerged, they would be likely to emerge in the more technical elements of the websites. And we found this to be the case. For example, the larger agencies were more likely to provide features such as site maps and search engines. They were also more likely to provide case studies and to host a blog. All of these findings are likely to reflect that agencies have more staff available to write case studies.

It is worth noting that given the relative lack of differences across so many coded variables that there does seem to be an agreement across larger and smaller agencies about what is important to include. Ironically, many of those items could be interpreted as one-way

communication. For example, clients lists, agency expertise, and publicity about past successes provide information about the agency that is useful, but not really dialogic in nature.

Implications for theory

In the ten-year review of Internet dialogic principles, McAllister-Spooner (2009) suggested future research refines the dialogic principles. Additionally, McAllister noted how websites were not reaching their full dialogic potential because they are being underutilized. This study further refines these principles by coding for social media, client log-in and a list of leadership/management.

If the dialogic loop concerns itself with giving users an opportunity for feedback, a platform to vote on issues and voice opinions, and offering regular information (Kent et al., 2003), then the dialogic loop should be updated to include social media. Outlets such as blogs, Facebook and Twitter allow companies to provide regular information to users directly instead of relying on traditional media (Wright & Hinson, 2008). Social media also allow users to comment and participate in surveys and polls, as Stewart (2008) advised, "If your PR client sells a product or service, tell them to give his or her customers the option of following them on Twitter. This is a wonderful way to keep in touch with customers and get their instant feedback" (p. 17).

Kent and Taylor (2002) noted that, "dialogic participants must be accessible" (p. 26), "participants in dialogue should be viewed as persons and not as objects" (p. 25), and "dialogue is honest and forthright. It involves revealing one's position" (p.29). By coding to see whether the leadership identified itself on the websites, we can see whether practitioners are incorporating elements of dialogic features. Giving clients an opportunity to access the non-public side of the company may increase that accessibility. By observing these occurrences researchers can accurately judge the theory's assumptions.

McAllister-Spooner (2009) also suggested that dialogic theory should be advanced by analyzing Web users input and feedback. This study offers evidence that larger agencies are more likely to provide opportunities for user response, both on the website and blogs. Now that we know that these platforms exist and are being utilized, the next step should be to analyze the nature of messages to and from the public. This can further strengthen the assumptions of dialogic theory by illuminating the themes in the messages on blogs, Facebook pages and tweets.

Implications for practitioners

Kent et al.'s (2003) study suggested that "if organizations want to use their websites to build relations with publics, certain design features are necessary" (p.75). As useful as the dialogic features can be, practitioners need to make sure that they are using the right mix of features to achieve their goals. For organizations that depend on the public to achieve their mission, employing dialogic features in the Website design is important (Kent et al.).

McAllister (2009) noted that in order for practitioners to fulfill the "dialogic promise" (p. 321), they must concentrate on the website as one of the building blocks for relationship building. This study provides a guideline based on the dialogic features put forth by Kent and Taylor. As a major conduit for communication, websites are poised to facilitate relationship building through dialogue because the Internet is the next best thing to the interpersonal ideal (Kent & Taylor, 2002),

> The Web can be used to communicate directly with publics by offering real time discussions, feedback loops, places to post-comments, sources for organizational information, and postings of organizational member biographies and contact information. Through the commitment of organizational resources and training, the Web can function dialogically rather than monologically (p.31).

This data suggests that the top billing websites have the capacity to complete the dialogic loop, however a guideline that includes features more specific to their goal and capabilities is needed.

Limitations and Areas of Future Study

There are several limitations that should be noted in the current study. First, because we used total billing as the main criteria for inclusion in the study, we must be cautious about drawing inferences. While total revenue may represent one type of size, it is possible that other important segments of public relations agencies were omitted from the study. Second, we adapted the coding for "usefulness for client and potential client" from past studies. It may have been better to think conceptually about what a client or potential client may find useful, although certainly items such as agency expertise and agency leadership should be useful to both groups. Finally, we only looked at official agency Facebook pages and Twitter pages. It is likely that many people working at agencies have a social media presence that cannot be separated from their role in the agency. Thus, it is possible that we underestimate how much dialogue is actually occurring.

While the results of the study were interesting, there are also several areas of future research suggested by the study. The first, of course, is our suggestion of a rethinking of the dialogic communication framework. At the very least, we suggest that it be updated to include social media, but it is possible that we should rethink the framework itself in light of the different types of uses for websites. We assert that this is a topic for research, though, rather than simply offering a new framework. Second, we suggest further analyses with a more representative sample of agencies. As well, we suggest looking at different types of agency specialization. Finally, it would be interesting to study whether other agencies from other strategic communication fields (e.g., advertising, marketing) demonstrate dialogic communication with their websites.

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Appendix

Ease of interface
   1) Site map (y/n)
   2) Major links to rest of site (y/n)
   3) Search engine box (y/n)
   4) Logo of organization on front page (y/n)

Usefulness to clients and potential clients
   1) Agency contact information (y/n)
   2) Special area for clients (password-protected) (y/n)
   3) List of employees (y/n)
   4) Client list (y/n)
   5) Areas of expertise listed (y/n)
   6) Client testimonials (y/n)
   7) Case studies (y/n)
   8) Publicity about current clients/projects (e.g., recent newspaper or broadcast media coverage) (y/n)
   9) Ability to request information (y/n)

Conservation of visitors
   1) Important information on first page (y/n)
   2) Posting of last updated time and date (y/n)
   3) Quick links to other parts of Website for popular information (y/n)

Return visit encouragement
   1) Explicit invitation to return (y/n)
   2) FAQ's or Q&A's (y/n)
   3) Bookmark now (y/n)
   4) Downloadable information (PDF files, etc.) (y/n)

Dialogic loop
   1) Opportunity for user-response (y/n)
   2) Opportunity to vote on issues (y/n)
   3) Survey to voice opinion on issues (y/n)
   4) Offers regular information (e.g., e-mail, e-newsletter) (y/n)

Social media
   1) Blog (y/n)
   2) Type of blog: company (no author) = 1, executive (specified) = 2, employee = 3
   3) Blog allows comments (y/n)
   4) Reference to Facebook page (y/n)
   5) Reference to Twitter handle (y/n)
   6) Other references (e.g, Linkedin, MySpace, etc) (y/n)

Table 2
Occurrence of dialogic features in public relations agency Websites

Category	Total	Top 50	Bottom 50
Ease of interface			
Site map	14.7	24.0	5.8
Major links to rest of site	98.0	98.0	98.1
Search engine box	19.6	36.0	3.8
Logo of organization on front page	92.2	88.0	96.2
Usefulness to clients and potential clients			
Agency contact information	99.0	100.0	98.1
Password-protected area for clients	6.9	10.0	3.8
List of agency leadership	80.4	74.0	86.5
Client list	85.3	82.0	88.5
Area of agency expertise	93.1	96.0	90.4
Client testimonials	27.5	28.0	26.9
Case studies	57.8	68.0	48.1
Publicity about clients/projects	89.2	88.0	90.4
Opportunity to request information	11.8	16.0	7.7
Conservation of visitors			
Important information on first page	70.6	64.0	76.9
Post time and date of last update	2.9	0.0	5.8
Quick links to rest of site	61.8	70.0	53.8
Return visit encouragement			
Explicitly invites user to return	1.0	2.0	0.0
FAQ/Q&As	0.0	0.0	0.0
Request to "Bookmark now"	5.9	10.0	1.9
Downloadable information	21.6	22.0	21.2
Dialogic loop			
Opportunity for user response	34.3	50.0	19.2
Opportunity to vote on issues	1.0	2.0	0.0
Survey to voice opinion	2.0	4.0	0.0
Email newsletter/e-newsletter	32.4	34.0	30.8
Social media			
Website hosts blog	63.7	74.0	53.8
Facebook page	61.8	66.0	57.7
Twitter handle	66.7	72.0	61.5
Other social media tool/s	55.9	64.0	48.1

Note. Table includes percent for each category. Top 50 = top 50 public relations agencies by total billing in 2010; Bottom 50 = agencies ranked 100-151 by total billing in 2010..

Networked Publics and Crises: The Occupy Wall Street Movement, and a Changing Crisis Landscape

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Abstract

Through the analysis of the print version of the NYT and Twitter posts about the Occupy Wall Street movement during its formation and initial growth, this study identifies the word choices and frames employed most frequently at both media platforms. In addition, this research reveals the influence of Twitter frames on the ones adopting by the NYT, corroborating with previous scholarship on the changing process of news-making, aggregation, and distribution. Attention is also called to the role of consumer-generated content in the formation of critical events and its consequences to crisis communication practices.

Twitter was created in August 2006 and is a free social networking service that allows for instant online dissemination of short messages – 140 characters maximum. Photos, videos, links to online resources, and text can be shared. The messages–tweets—can be sent and received from any kind of device – desktop, laptop, cell phone—and the mobile aspect of the service to a great extent makes for Twitter rapid expansion (Farhi, 2009; Hermida, 2010). In fact, as Sunstein (2006) postulated, as a new media technology Twitter allows citizens to "obtain immediate access to information held by all or at least most, and in which each person can instantly add to that knowledge (p. 219)."

Studies have shown that only about 5% of Twitter content is devoted to news; nonetheless, mainstream news networks frequently poll the "twitterverse" for public opinion. Independent bloggers use it also to promote other angles of stories, providing alternative views on news facts (Ryan, 2009). In a recent study conducted by Pew Internet and American Life Project, it was found that nearly half of all Americans (47%) now get some form of local news on a mobile device. Such result points out to the ubiquitous influence of online channels in the processes of making and accessing the news (State of the Media Report, 2011).

Blogs and microblogs have risen to prominence as news disseminators (Papacharissi, 2010), providing a continuous stream of events in real time, especially during crises. Trending topics on these environments generate headlines in a myriad of realms – including traditional media – transforming news-making into a collective procedure (Hermida, 2010; Kwak, Lee, Park, & Moon, 2010). Several examples show the Twitter platform as an important channel to disseminate information during major events, such as 2008 California wildfires, the Mumbai attacks (Lenhard & Fox, 2009), and 2009 Iranian elections (Shiels, 2009).

As sources for news generation (Waters, Tindall, & Mortaon, 2010), social media and consequently Twitter may have a direct and indirect effect on crisis situations. Publics can virtually access information about crisis events in real time, sharing information and demanding resolution (Liu, Austin, & Jin, 2011). More than a decade ago, Martinelli and Briggs (1998) affirmed that new technologies have the potential to make any local event an international crisis in minutes. Social media platforms such as Twitter have demonstrated the capacity to deliver this finding in an extreme way – particularly as the lines between microblogging and news creation have blurred.

This study aims to explore the role of and interaction between Twitter and traditional media outlets in disseminating information during a situation that has the potential to become a crisis. Using "Occupy Wall Street" (OWS) as a case study, this project will investigate the progression of the relationship between Twitter's and The New York Times' coverage during the initial formation and growth of this major social movement, and, ultimately, how a better understanding of this interaction can be applied to crisis management and response.

According to the Occupy Wall Street movement's website (www.occupywallst.org), OWS is a people-powered series of demonstrations against economic inequality and corruption. Inspired by the uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia, the movement was organized nearly entirely online, speaking to the power of a highly interconnected society. This new media landscape has the capacity to influence the context around an issue like OWS. This changing media environment could have powerful consequences for crisis communication scholarship and practices. In emphasizing certain aspects of an event while downplaying others, the processes of news creation and sharing determine if and how news accounts transform reality (Entman, 1993) – and consequently, if these news accounts create a crisis situation. This study attempts to

uncover whether citizen-generated content influences frames adopted by traditional media to describe events related to the Occupy Wall Street movement.

News-Making in a Networked Society

Growing research has investigated the ways in which Twitter is employed as a news reporting platform. As Ingram (2008) stated, micro-blogging is a form of citizen journalism, where individuals can function as journalists, providing the first accounts and/or images of a news event. In fact, journalists, news organizations, and individual users blend information sharing and conversational uses in a complex system that enables millions of people to communicate instantly and co-create accounts of facts and news (Chadwick, 2011; Hermida, 2010).

The mobile and instantaneity aspect of the Twitter platform makes it particularly well-suited for quickly changing stories. Examples of these situations include disasters, riots, and political events (Farhi, 2009). Many news organizations like CNN and MSNBC have used Twitter to post breaking news (Palser, 2009) and some have argued that it is "the newest tool in a journalist's arsenal for getting information out quickly" (Armstrong & Gao, 2010, p. 219). Scholars also claimed that news organizations have increasingly adopted Twitter to survey audiences and indentify hot topics (Lariscy, Avery, Sweetser, & Howes, 2009).

In the last State of the Media Report (2011) produced by Pew's Project for Excellence in Journalism, 41% of Americans mentioned that they got most of their news regarding national and international issues from the internet, an increase of 17% from the previous year. When broadening the question to any kind of news, 46% of people surveyed reported getting news online at least three times a week, surpassing newspapers (40%) for the first time. In addition, according to Farhi (2009), Twitter users are two to three times more likely to visit a leading news website than the average American. These results highlight the relevance of online platforms in news creation, aggregation, and distribution.

In effect, sharing links and news accounts on Twitter allows users to create their customized newspapers, compiled from the information shared by one's personal social network (Johnson, 2009). In this fashion, citizens and journalists collectively create accounts of events and news (Hermida, 2010), emphasizing some aspects of the situations over others and redefining journalism in a networked society.

Framing the News in a Networked Society

The changing landscape in the process of news creation raises old questions on how news influences the public. Much work has been conducted in the fields of agenda-setting (McCombs &Shaw, 1972) and framing (Entman, 1993), which uncover how news organizations' values influence the content appearing in the media. In turn, media content plays a role on public's perception of events.

Media framing draws on "the presence or absence of certain keywords, stock phrases, stereotyped images, sources of information, and sentences that provide thematically reinforcing clusters in terms of facts or judgments" (Entman, 1993, p. 52). Specific frames are used by organizations to influence their publics' understanding of facts, advancing one interpretation while cloaking a less favored one.

First, frames often create consistent patterns that lend advantage—credibility, political power, moral authority—to one side over another in matters of public interest (Fairhurst & Sarr, 1996; Gitlin, 1980; McCombs & Ghanem, 2001). Strategic frames applied by any type of entity

– individuals, news organizations, corporations—to describe certain situations increase the salience of these situations and issues in the public opinion (Kiousis, Popescu, & Mitrook, 2007). Second, framing is associated with priming, the subtle introduction of ideas activating "schemas that encourage the target audience to think, feel, and decide in a particular way" (Entman, 2007, p. 164). As Kinder (2007) put it, "frames are like recipes, advice from experts on how citizens should cook up their opinions" (p. 156).

Traditionally, communication professionals – journalists and public relations practitioners –performed a gatekeeping function, selecting which aspects of an event were newsworthy and which ones would represent the "official" story told by an organization (Gans, 2004). However, in our current media landscape gatekeeping powers are diffused. Social media platforms enable every person to tells one account of an event and share it with the world. Not neglecting the still powerful influence of traditional news organizations and corporations in general, the current media landscape facilitates a shift in power, where the control of the information flow is distributed among a myriad of actors involved in a event (Papachrissi & Oliveira, in-press; Wigley & Fontenot, 2011).

Crises in a Networked Society

As Coombs (2012) puts crises are perceptions "of an unpredictable event that threatens important expectancies of stakeholders and can seriously impact an organization's performance and generate negative outcomes" (pp. 2-3). Crises represent serious threats to the most fundamental goals of an organization and its stakeholders. No matter what the size of an organization, a crisis interrupts normal business and damages corporate reputation; it can imperil future growth, profitability, and even the company's survival (Seeger, Sellnow, & Ulmer, 2003). Crises jeopardize the interests of employees, managers, suppliers, stockholders, victims, and community members. Sometimes lives are at stake. As a result, crisis episodes affect individuals' sense of reality, security, and normality. Problems happen at companies every day, but one single crisis may be enough to significantly damage or even destroy an organization (Fearn-Banks, 2002; Hearit & Courtright, 2004; Heath & Millar, 2004; Lerbinger, 1997).

Despite the occurrence of a concrete event, crises are highly influenced by the communicative actions taken to define, describe, and solve them (Hearit & Courtright, 2004). Ni (2009) claimed that perceptions of events can be equally, if not more, important than the actual event. In effect, from a social constructionist approach, it is possible to argue that actual events are a questionable concept. Events take different forms in the minds of each and every actor involved (Eisenberg & Riley, 2000; Wakefield, 2001).Therefore, it is crucial to acknowledge that crisis episodes are subject to different interpretations that sometimes illustrate competing points of view (Heath & Millar, 2004).

Given the instantaneity of current media platforms, citizen-generated accounts may exert the same role in defining a crisis event as "official" accounts of the situation provided by corporations and traditional news outlets. This exploratory study aims to uncover some aspects of the intertwined relationship among consumer-generated accounts of events, traditional media news-making processes, and crisis management practices. It focuses particularly in the frames adopted by the New York Times and by Twitter coverage of the formation and initial growing of the Occupy Wall Street movement, with the goal of answering the following question:

RQ: Whether and to what extent, are the frames adopted by Twitter users to describe the OWS movement also employed by the New York Times coverage?

Methodology

The Occupy Wall Street movement was selected as the crisis for study because of two main reasons. First, protests and political events are characterized for constant news updates; hence, being well-suited for the mobile and instantaneity features of the Twitter platform (Farhi, 2009). On the other hand, such type of events represents challenges to traditional media outlets, such as the print edition of the *New York Times*. Second, according to the OWS movement own website, the protests were organized nearly entirely online (www.occupywallst.org), speaking to the power of a highly interconnected society and a new media landscape where citizen-generated content has the potential for defining what is newsworthy.

In order to identify the frames adopted by each media platform, tweets and news articles were studied via computer-mediated and traditional textual analysis. The first OWS public protest took place in September 17th of 2011. Using LexisNexis, 257 news articles from the *New York Times* print version during the period of September 17th to October 17th, 2011 were retrieved and analyzed. This date range was chosen with the purpose of investigating the formation and initial growth of this social movement. The *New York Times* was chosen because it is the national paper of record. Furthermore, the local nuances of the OWS protests were also contemplated in the NYT coverage of the events, given the location of the protests and the newspaper. During the period under study a bit over 120 thousands tweets were posted. The top 1200 most influential ones were retrieved via Topsy.com, representing about 1% of the entire population. In both searchers, the key word "Occupy Wall Street" yielded the most complete set of news articles and posts[1]. Therefore, it was the search term adopted in this study. Tweets posted by the official NYT Twitter account - @nytimes- were manually excluded from the poll of posts analyzed.

After retrieved, posts and news articles were converted into .txt files. Dates, writers' information, and section where published were deleted. The following symbols were also manually deleted to facilitate software manipulation: @, #, $, %, *, (,), ", ", {, }, [,], |, \, /, <, >. The set of articles and posts composed two text corpus analyzed using R, an open-source statistical package (R Development Core Team, 2011)[2].

The quantitative approach adopted in this analysis—computer-mediated text analysis—is designed to back out patterns of meanings found on mathematical rules, avoiding in this way coder bias and sometimes manifesting unexpected findings. In this approach, the content of large amounts of text is represented by identifying the most frequent words (Oliveira & Murphy, 2009). Yet, qualitative textual analysis techniques (Fairclough 1995, 2000; van Dijk 1997) were also applied to pursue a deep explanation of meaning by contextualizing the word choices and frames in the mediated texts. The qualitative analysis sought to verify and expand the quantitative findings, understanding the systematic links between word choices and the frames emphasized.

Using Wordcloulds (Fellows, 2012) and Tm (Feinerer, 2012) packages for R[3], communality and comparison word clouds were created based on a term matrix, where rows represent words and whose columns represent documents. A function taking a vector of frequencies for a single term and returning a common frequency is the metric behind the communality cloud. In turn, a function comparing the frequencies of words across documents is the metric from which the comparison cloud is generated. The size of each word is mapped to its

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[1] The complete set of articles and posts are available from the author.
[2] R is available at www.r-project.org.
[3] Packages available at http://cran.cnr.Berkeley.edu

maximum deviation, determined by the document where that maximum occurs. Both clouds represent the top 150 most influential words in the texts under investigation. Communality and comparison clouds were created using an R script developed and shared by Leek (2011).

In addition to the exclusions mentioned early, before running the analysis and following Feinerer, Hornik, and Meyer's (2008) guidelines, the SMART exclusion list was applied to remove words such as: *the*, *a*, *an* , *and*, *about*, *between*, *be*, *before*, *can*, *could*, *of*, *out*, and many others[4]. Given the scope of the analysis, the words *occupy*, *wall*, *street*, *occupywallstreet*, and *occupy wall street* were also removed. Such words, while among the most frequent, would not provide insights on word choices and frames adopted by Twitter users and the NYT journalists.

To undertake the qualitative analysis, the selected number of tweets and news articles were read and analyzed. Notes were taken regarding language use, tone, focus, and differences and similarities in how information was distributed over each platform.

Findings

Figure 1

Comparison Cloud   Commonality Cloud

The communality cloud shows that both platforms – Twitter and print version of the NYT- focused mainly on facts about the events. *Protesters*, *protests*, *protest*, *park*, *police*, *people*, *Zuccotti* and *movement* are the words chosen more frequently to let the public know what was happened, where, and who was involved in these events. These word choices responded to a certain extent to the basic five Ws questions: what, where, who, when and why. Tweets such: "Protesters prepare to "Occupy" Wall Street (09/17)", "Thousands continue to occupy Wall Street as main stream media continues their blackout (09/17)" and "Occupy Wall Street

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[4] Complete list of words available from the authors and also available at
http://jmlr.csail.mit.edu/papers/volume5/lewis04a/a11-smart-stop-list/english.stop

protesters to continue demonstration as market opens (09/18)" represented this frame. Similarly, the following NYT headlines emphasized the same approach: "Wall Street protests continue, with at least 6 arrested (09/19)" and "Financial District protests continue as 7 more are arrested (09/20)". Whereas the frames are similar, the NYT initial coverage on the OWS movement spotlighted law enforcement reactions to the protesters.

Less frequent than the words previous mentioned, yet still among the most influential words in both channels, there are words representing major events during the protests like the demonstration on the Brooklyn Bridge, when nearly 700 people were arrested. Examples of these words are: *Brooklyn*, *bridge*, *march*, *pepper*, and *spray*. Tweets about the event described OWS movement online efforts to organize a response to what has happened. The following post illustrates such frame: "Occupy Wall Street – were you arrested on Brooklyn Bridge (10/03)". On the other hand, the NYT coverage of the incident highlighted the increasing concern of corporations over the movement. In the article "On Wall Street, a protest matures (10/03)", the journalist described bankers' distress about their personal safety as well as a nationally widespread call for accountability.

Whereas the commonality cloud draws attention to the most common frames adopted in the initial coverage of the Occupy Wall Street movement, these findings are not surprising. In contrast, the comparison word cloud reveals an interesting pattern. This cloud shows words that have different frequencies in the NYT print coverage and the Twitter posts on the initial stage of the OWS movement. Among the top 150 most influential words across texts, several present different frequencies in both platforms. In the Twitter posts, however, many more words appeared more frequently, indicating a vast range of word choices and frames adopted by Twitter users. Conversely, the NYT print coverage of the events displayed a smaller number of words having frequency differences. Such pattern indicates that the NYT articles shared a greater fraction of words with Twitter than Twitter shared with NYT. Responding to the exploratory RQ proposed in this study, word choices and frames adopted in the Twitter sphere seem to have an influence on the frames adopted by the NYT print coverage of the Occupy Wall Street movement.

The frames adopted more frequently by Twitter users only emphasized the instantaneity of the platform, zeroing in attention on organizing demonstrations, announcing locations of protests, law enforcement actions, and the movement expansion. Words such *protests*, *protesters*, *NYPD*, *NYC*, *Times Square*, *arrested*, *global*, and *news* are some examples. The following posts contextualize these word choices: "Occupy Wall Street' protest group seeks permit for thousands to rally today in New York City (10/05)", "Police say about 28 arrested during "Occupy Wall Street' march; Some protesters say they were beaten (10/05)", "Excellent and about time: 'Occupy Wall Street' protests poised to grow rapidly with union support (09/29)", and "Occupy Wall Street" protests growing despite lack of media coverage (09/30)".

The frames represented by words with different frequencies on the NYT print coverage concentrated on broader discussions of the protesters' claims – or lack of claims—as well as on social and economic causes of the OWS movement. Words among the top influential exemplifying these frames are: *financial*, *economic*, *economy*, *policy*, and *president*. These frames are more frequently present on latter coverage of the protests, where questions about the feasibility and functionality of movement are asked. For example, in the article "Protesters debate what demands, if any, to make", the newspaper discusses OWS lack of systematic demands:

In a quiet corner across the street from Zuccotti Park, a cluster of 25 solemn-faced protesters struggled one night to give Occupy Wall Street what critics have found to be most lacking. "We absolutely need demands," said Shawn Redden, 35, an earnest history teacher in the group. "Like Frederick Douglass said, 'Power concedes nothing without a demand.' " (10/17)

Exploring the widespread online dialogue on inequalities provoked by the OWS protests, the NYT focuses its coverage on describing the movement pervasive presence in social media platforms. An excerpt of article "Wall Street protest spurs online dialogue on inequity" illustrates this approach:

What began as a small group of protesters expressing their grievances about economic inequities last month from a park in New York City has evolved into an online conversation that is spreading across the country on social media platforms. Inspired by the populist message of the group known as Occupy Wall Street, more than 200 Facebook pages and Twitter accounts have sprung up in dozens of cities during the past week, seeking volunteers for local protests and fostering discussion about the group's concerns. (10/09)

Focusing on public policies and changes on local government' attitudes toward to the OWS protests are also frequently presented on the NYT coverage. Reporting on Mayor Bloomberg's initial hints on a potential eviction of protesters, the newspaper emphasized issues of public safety and sanitation. Such frame is demonstrated in the article "Bloomberg hints that Wall St. protesters could overstay welcome", describing the Mayor weekly appearance in a radio show:

The Occupy Wall Street protesters may not be able to camp out in a downtown park indefinitely, Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg warned on Friday morning.

"People have a right to protest but we also have to make sure that people who don't want to protest can go down the streets unmolested," the mayor. "We have to make sure that while you have a right to say what you want to say, people who want to say something very different have a right to say that, as well. That's what's great about this country." (09/30)

In summary, this exploratory study reveals that Twitter posts and the NYT coverage on the initial stages of the Occupy Wall Street movement have many similarities. In both platforms, most influential words indicated emphasis on factual information, responding the five Ws of traditional media coverage. The posts and news articles analyzed aimed at describing what was happening, where, when, and who was involved. Later coverage of the movement addressed the reasons behind the protests and the ways in which the protesters' agenda could move forward. Such frame was mainly employed by the NYT, exploring the traditional media values of this platform. Twitter users emphasized the instantaneity of the channel, concentrating on episodic frames and efforts to organize demonstrations, denounce law enforcement actions, and promote the movement expansion. Interestingly, results showed that the NYT applied a larger number of words with same frequency that Twitter users did. On the contrary, Twitter word choices were more unique.

Discussion

Several scholars have claimed that social media and specifically the Twitter platform is changing news-making and distribution processes (e.g. Farhi, 2009; Hermida, 2010, Johnson, 2009; Kwak et. al., 2010; Papacharissi & Oliveira, in-press; Sunstein, 2006). Research has also

shown that frames employed to describe an event function as influential scripts providing a path to be followed by public opinion (Kinder, 2007). Building on this scholarship, this study shows that word choices and frames adopted in the "twitterverse" have an influence on the ones employed by traditional media, in this case the print version of the New York Times.

Whereas most of the frames adopted in the coverage studied are similar, Twitter allows the emergence of alternative points of view, lending power to these angles and fostering them into the public sphere. As social movement with potential for making the current reputational crisis experienced by the financial industry worse, the frames employed to describe the OWS create reality and news. As Ni (2009) pointed out, perceptions of events can be equally, if not more, important than the actual event. Crisis scholars and practitioners have taken the first steps in acknowledging the role played by citizen-generated content in crisis formation and response (Liu et.al., 2011; Wigley & Fontenot, 2011). However, many questions remained to be answered. This study aimed to investigate one aspect of the complex relationship among new-making process and crisis definition in changing media landscape. Highlighting the influence of frames adopted by Twitter users on traditional media, this study corroborates with previous crisis scholarship, drawing attention to the important role played by consumer-generated content during critical situations.

It is necessary, however, to discuss a few caveats in this exploratory research. First, the coverage of a single social movement was studied. Different events may show a prevalence of traditional media frames. Also, only the print version of the NYT was compared to Twitter posts. Other newspapers and information published in other social media platforms may reveal different patterns as well. Thus, the generalization of these results is limited. They ought to be interpreted with caution. Finally, to achieve an in-depth understanding of the potential for consumer-generated content during crises, aspects going beyond media framing need to be studied.

Despite those limitations, this study's findings can—and should—be expanded in many ways. First, similarities and differences of the coverage of other crisis events should be investigated. Also, additional traditional and social media platforms need to be examined. Future research can also focus on corporations' specific responses to consumer-generated content during critical situations. Lastly, it is necessary to understand publics' attitude toward social media platforms during crises with the purpose to grasp the ways in which publics use the information shared in this type of platform.

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Expectation Management: Mission Impossible

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Abstract

Recent developments in new and social media have given more voice to both happy and unhappy stakeholders, but the causes behind stakeholder emotion have not received sufficient attention from public relations scholars. The expectations stakeholders have toward an organization play a great role in their feeling of satisfaction, as expectations guide publics' assessments and perceptions (Creyer & Ross, 1997; Ojasalo, 2001), leading eventually to behavioral responses (Boulding, Kalra & Zeithaml, 1993). When expectations are left unrealized they can lead to problems in organizational legitimacy, thus making them critical factors for organizational success (Reichart, 2003; Sethi, 1979). In previous literature expectations are often grouped together with other factors organizations should identify and monitor, such as attitudes, values and norms (Grunig et al., 1992; Ledingham, 2003). However, PR could benefit from a more thorough approach to expectations, especially since the need to be sensitive to expectations has been recently highlighted by PR professionals (Stockholm Accords, 2010).

If organizations should be aware of publics' expectations, a question arises: can expectations be managed? If different publics and subgroups can have different expectations, and expectations happen on different levels (e.g. predictive/normative/trusting/distrusting), is there anything organizations can do to match performance with expectations? This paper suggests that while expectation management is challenging, it should be made a priority for PR in the current working environment where fast responding is needed (Wright & Hinson, 2009), all issues are potentially viral (Coombs, 2002), and organizational control is diminishing (Luoma-aho & Vos, 2010). The paper presents a framework for expectations management in PR that recognizes the different expectations, and takes expectations as early signals for future behavior and satisfaction. The expectation management suggested does not mean that expectations should or even could be controlled, but rather that they can be consciously identified, monitored and responded to.

Expectation Management: Mission Impossible?

The importance of stakeholder expectations has lately been noted by PR professionals, as the recent Stockholm Accords (2010) of Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management note that public relations and communication professionals should "interpret societal expectations for sound economic, social and environmental commitments that yield a return to the organization and society" (Stockholm Accords, 2010, p. 4). According to the Stockholm Accords, organizations should be communicative and managed on "the principle that it is in the organization's interest to be sensitive to the wider expectations of society and to the legitimate claims of all its stakeholders" (Stockholm Accords, 2010, p. 5-6). Despite these recommendations, not enough attention has been given by public relations scholars to how and why expectations matter for PR.

Though recent studies have taken interest in how publics perceive organizations (see e.g. Coombs & Holladay, 2007; Kim, Park & Wertz, 2010; Pirson & Malhotra, 2011), expectations are still often only mentioned but not conceptualized in PR and communication studies, grouping them together with other factors that organizations should identify and monitor, such as attitudes, values and norms (Grunig et al., 1992; Ledingham, 2003). However, both theory and practice of PR could benefit from a more thorough approach to expectations, as they contribute to publics' assessments and perceptions (Creyer & Ross, 1997; Ojasalo, 2001), leading eventually to behavioral responses (Boulding, Kalra & Zeithaml, 1993). This is especially important due to recent developments in new and social media that have given more voice to both happy and unhappy publics, making the sources of their emotions an important area to cover.

What makes expectations important for organizational success and survival is that they serve as reference points against which performance is assessed (Creyer & Ross, 1997). When expectations are left unrealized they can lead to problems in organizational legitimacy, thus making them critical factors for organizational success (Reichart, 2003; Sethi, 1979). Expectations are said to derive from the mental models according to which people interpret the information they receive and experiences they confront (Reichart, 2003). As such, expectations act as frames against which assessments are made and own behavior is adapted (Burgoon, 1993). Expectations are highly subjective in nature, and can display both trust and distrust (Lewicki, McAllister & Bies, 1998), and as publics consist of individuals and subgroups, the expectations of groups that seem unanimous can vary (Klewes, 2009). What is more, publics' assessments based on expectations do not always happen consciously, as expectations are not always precise, but imprecise, fuzzy, implicit – or unrealistic (Ojasalo, 2001).

Though they are complex and not easy to make sense of, the importance of expectations lies in the way they affect relationships. Podnar and Golob (2007) note that organizations have an "expectational relationship" to their publics, where organizations need to meet or exceed expectations they face in order to keep the relationship running. As expectations can lead to a decision to end a relationship, for example, in terms of a customer leaving a company (Ojasalo, 2001), expectations guide publics' behavior by determining what receives support and what does not (Reichart, 2003). For these reasons expectations should also be recognized in PR as early signals for future behavior that need to be known and monitored as such.

If organizations should be aware of publics' expectations, a question arises: can expectations be managed? This paper suggests that while expectation management is challenging, it should be made a priority for PR in the current working environment where fast responding is needed (Wright & Hinson, 2009), all issues are potentially viral (Coombs, 2002), and organizational control is diminishing (Luoma-aho & Vos, 2010). The paper starts by

introducing why expectations are of relevance for relationships in general, and for PR in particular. After introducing the interlinks between the theoretical foundations of expectations and PR, the paper moves on to sketching a framework for expectations management in PR that recognizes the different expectations, and takes expectations as early signals for future behavior and satisfaction. The expectation management suggested in the paper does not mean that expectations should or even could be controlled, but rather that they can be consciously identified, monitored and responded to.

Expectations Role in (Public) Relations

In the current working environment organization-centric views have become outdated whereas network-based perceptions have gained ground, as they stress mutual interaction, relationships and engagement (Andriof & Waddock, 2002; Ledingham, 2008; Luoma-aho & Vos, 2010; Steurer, 2006). In this setting organizations and the groups surrounding them are seen as equal players on the organizational agenda where multiple interests need to be balanced (Luoma-aho & Vos, 2010; Steurer, 2006). As organizations are not always at the centre of the relational map, different actors can freely form relations to each other and combine powers (Rowley, 1997). This idea of reciprocal organization-public relations suggests that the network surrounding an organization constitute a delicate ecosystem where organizations need to find their fit and gain support for their operations. The challenge of this environment is that its dynamics can change whenever publics' attitudes, values and expectations change.

As part of their relationship with the organization, publics assess organizations on their past actions and current reputations, and these assessments guide how organizations are perceived and how they are expected to behave in the future (Luoma-aho, 2005; Sztompka, 1999). In other words, assessments are guided by expectations that are either confirmed or disconfirmed, affecting future assessments and future perceptions of reputation and performance. As such, expectations and their correctness counts, as theory has suggested that meeting expectations leads to publics' satisfaction that in turn rewards organizations with support and good reputations (Creyer & Ross, 1997; Fombrun & Shanley, 1990; Wan & Schell, 2007). Reputation can be defined as "behavior expected of you" (Burt, 2005, p. 100) and thus expectations guide how the operations and behavior of an organization are examined. If the expectations an organization faces are not based on realistic or truthful impressions, the future of the organization can be threatened (Aula & Mantere, 2008, p. 25).

In previous literature expectations have mainly been studied in the context of consumer satisfaction (Creyer & Ross, 1997; Walker & Baker, 2000), as well as interpersonal communication (Chung, 2009; Thomlison, 2000). According to them, expectations can be seen as contributors to behavioral responses, such as the willingness to give recommendations (Boulding et al., 1993), give support and collaborate (Reichart, 2003), or to stay in a relationship (Ojasalo, 2001; Thomlison, 2000). Expectations' link to behavior is mediated by an assessment made between expectation and perception to see whether the expectation was fulfilled or not (Ojasalo, 2001; Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1985), which in turn affects behavior (Reichart, 2003). Thus, when expectations change, also assessments and eventually behavior change, leading to newly formed perceptions about the current situation, such as the state of a relationship (Reichart, 2003). In fact, according to Thomlison (2000) relationships *are* sets of expectations, where their fulfillment is assessed continuously. Furthermore, expectations affect important factors in forming and maintaining relationships, such as trust. In fact, trust is often defined as confidence in the form of positive expectations despite a possible risk (Lewicki,

McAllister & Bies, 1998). In a virtuous circle, if an organization is trusted, publics assume that the organization will also fulfill their expectations (Eisenegger & Imhof, 2008).

Figure 1 below sets expectations in context together with concepts discussed above; mental models, assessments (comparison between expectation and perception), emotions (satisfaction/dissatisfaction), and behavior. The figure starts with mental models that affect expectations, which in turn form the base on which assessments are made, leading to emotional responses of feelings of satisfaction/dissatisfaction, which in turn result in behavioral responses, such as maintaining or ending a relationship.

Figure 1
Process from mental models to behavioral responses
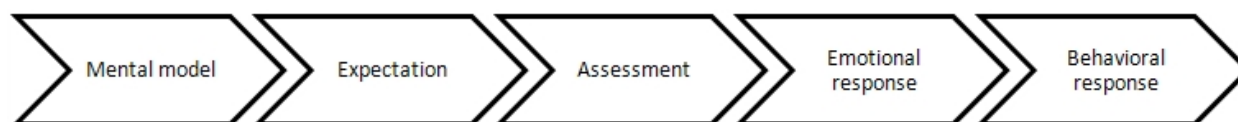
In the current communication environment, perhaps more than ever, a central task of public relations is to monitor the environment for emerging trends, issues or themes requiring organizational attention (Lauzen, 1995). According to Dozier (1986) the main aim of the scanning function is to find out not only about publics, but also about their reactions toward the organization and the opinions publics' have toward organizationally important issues. As expectations can be seen as early signals for both assessments, emotions and behavior (Reichart, 2003; Ojasalo, 2001; Thomlison, 2000; Weber & Mayer, 2011), they have the potential to gain momentum and turn into powerful demands (Luoma-aho, 2008). To be able to monitor expectations as weak signals, however, they first need to be understood. Understanding expectations also includes understanding expectation gaps that can further cause gaps in the relationships to which they are connected to. This is where attention is turned to next.

Expectations and Expectation Gaps

While theory on expectations is scarce in PR and communication studies, this section relies primarily on consumer satisfaction literature where perceived quality is believed to depend on the gap between expectations and performance (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1985). Though consumer satisfaction researchers stress the gaps created in service encounters, this paper applies the idea of expectation gaps to relationships as both deal with satisfaction and dissatisfaction. In order to tap into expectation gaps both in service satisfaction as well as satisfaction in a relationship, the different types of expectations need to be recognized. Distinguishing between different expectations becomes important, as expectations are a varying field with many different expectation types that relate to different areas on the performance scale.

An early division of expectations from consumer satisfaction studies is that of Summers & Granbois (1977), who distinct between *predictive (will)* and *normative (should)* expectations. The difference between the two is that predictive expectations describe what is considered likely (a prediction of what will happen) whereas normative expectations represent what should or ought to occur (a hope of what one should be able to expect). In sum, whereas predictive expectations are used for anticipating occurrence, normative expectations relate to the level of values and norms, thus making the two very different from another. Swan & Tarwik (1980)

make their distinction between *predictive* and *desired* expectations, where predictive is explained similar to the definition above, and desired is described as the level that is considered necessary in order to reach full satisfaction, a level that is believed to be both possible and deserved. Whereas a predictive expectation can be pessimistic (anticipation of poor performance), desired expectation relates to personal preferences that when fulfilled leads to positive outcomes (anticipation of satisfaction).

In 1977, Miller proposed a total of four types of expectations: *ideal*, *expected*, *deserved*, and *minimum tolerable* (Miller, 1977). Of these four, ideal represents the highest possible level, whereas expected is close to the predictive level presented above, based on probability. The deserved level represents an expectation based on the effort and resources invested (recognizing that also the one that holds expectations has influence on the outcome). A minimum tolerable level marks expectations on the bottom level that still remain acceptable enough. Thus, the minimum tolerable level is of special importance, as going below the minimum tolerable expectation means that dissatisfaction is unavoidable and satisfaction is out of reach.

Ojasalo (2001), in turn, works with *implicit* and *explicit* expectations, and adds to the mix also *fuzzy, precise* and *unrealistic* expectations. An *explicit* expectation is a conscious assumption or wish, whereas an *implicit* expectation includes elements held so self-evident that they are not even consciously thought about until they are missing. A fuzzy expectation is vague; a feeling something should be different without a clear picture of what it is that should be changed, whereas as a precise expectation is a concrete notion of what needs to happen in order to reach satisfaction. An unrealistic expectation is a wish or anticipation that is either impossible or highly unlikely to be delivered under any circumstances. As such, an unrealistic expectation is especially prone to evoke conflict, as publics with unrealistic expectations can never be satisfied.

As the expectation types presented above demonstrate, expectations can stress very different aspects. As such, expectation management needs to start with identifying not only expectations but where they are connected to. Understanding expectations starts with understanding the grounds in which they are formed in the first place (Reichart, 2003). This is even more important in the event of expectation gaps that can pose a threat to the operations of an organization.

One way to approach expectation gaps is to look into expectancy violation theory (drawn from interpersonal communication) that recognizes that expectations can be either confirmed or violated – both in a positive and a negative sense. According to expectancy violation theory expectations are believed to have a guiding effect on predictions, as they function as agents explaining social interaction and emotional exchange (Burgoon, 1993). In terms of expectancy violation theory, a positive expectancy violation means that the enacted behavior is more positive than initially expected, whereas in the case of a negative expectancy violation the enacted behavior is more negative than initially expected (Burgoon, 1993). As not only the outcomes but also expectations can be positive/negative, there is a significant difference in whether a positive expectation is violated positively (leading to an even better outcome than anticipated) or negatively (turning positive anticipation into a negative outcome), or whether a negative expectation is violated negatively (leading to an even worse outcome than expected) or positively (turning negative anticipation into a positive outcome) (Weber & Mayer, 2011).

A violation of expectations has a tendency to distract attention from the original situation or issue, as it leads to emotional responses and a need to both make sense of the violation and evaluate its consequences (Burgoon, 1993). In organizational context this can mean that the original issue turns into something else, especially in the case of a negative violation of a

positive expectation. Furthermore, expectation gaps are of special importance for PR, as controversial issues may originate from such gaps (Reichart, 2003), which is why expectation gaps should be brought to organizational attention as early as possible.

Both positive and negative violations of publics' expectations can produce gaps that require attention and action from organizations. For example, a too good reputation compared to the actual performance can pose as big a risk as a negative reputation (Luoma-aho, 2007). Not knowing what is expected is one source of an expectation gap, but also offering a quality that does not meet expectations, not meeting expectations with performance, or promising something that cannot be delivered can trigger expectation gaps (Zeithaml, Parasuraman & Berry, 1990). These gaps can be of different size depending on the evaluator, and evaluators might assess the significance of a gap differently (Zeithaml, Berry & Parasuraman, 1993). When viewed from the perspective of public relations, publics can have expectations on different levels concerning organizational communication and their relationships towards an organization. Communication can also create expectations (Creyer & Ross, 1997; Ojasalo, 2001), and hence have an influence on how wide the gap comes to develop. What is more, a revealed expectation gap is a potential threat to an organization's reputation (Coombs, 2007), and failure to meet positive expectations can result in conflict situations between an organization and its publics (Kim, Park & Wertz, 2010). Unmet positive expectations can cause gaps not only in terms of reputation and performance, but also in terms of overall legitimacy, as legitimacy can be defined as organizational commitment to the norms and expectations of the society (Deephouse & Carter, 2005). Thus expectation gaps are connected with legitimacy gaps (Sethi, 1979), both of which require intense attention when faced by an organization.

But how can organizations start to manage expectations to avoid the development of gaps that can threaten them? Relying on theories presented above, the next section aims to go more deeply into the actual expectation management tasks suggested for PR.

Mission Possible: Management Through Relationships and Identification

When talking about expectation management, at its simplest it means that an organization ensures that publics have clear expectations about what the organization can actually deliver. Thus, "*managing expectations does not mean trying to create an artificial reality, but rather calls for a conscious effort to monitor, identify, understand, and react to expectations*" (Miller, 2000, p. 95). In terms of communication it is important not to promise more or less than can be delivered in reality, as too high or low expectations leave room for dissatisfaction (Coye, 2004; Parasuraman et al., 1985). Consumer satisfaction research has suggested that systematic management of expectations increases the likelihood of achieving long-lasting satisfaction (Ojasalo, 2001), which is a relevant goal for all organizational relations in general.

Overall, systematic management of expectations increases the likelihood that important expectations are met and the relationship between the parties will develop as desired (Weber & Mayer, 2011). Ojasalo (2001) suggests that mismatched expectations could be avoided with the help of well-managed relationships and communication. Other strategies for managing expectations range from denial of expectations, or minimal response to them, to proactive anticipation of expectations (Sethi, 1979). Creating low enough expectations is one strategy to manage expectations (by avoiding disappointment), although meeting low positive expectations does rarely result in fruitful relationships (Weber & Mayer, 2011). As expectations derive from different sources, such as past experience, familiarity, reputation and image, formal and informal recommendations, and personal needs (Robledo, 2001; Webb, 2000), organizations can only

influence them partially. As such, managing expectations does not equal to controlling them, but rather to being aware of them and knowing how to respond to them (Miller, 2000).

In order to manage expectations, different kinds of expectations must be identified. Ojasalo (2001) suggests different actions for each identified expectation; a fuzzy expectation can be managed by making it more precise (for example with the help of dialogue). When the expectation becomes clearer, publics are more convinced about the kind of change they are hoping for. If the fuzzy expectation is not identified and brought to attention, the likelihood that the experience will not match the fuzzy expectation grows. Thus, managing fuzzy expectations involves a process of defining unclear problems and needs. The more realistic expectations are, the higher the possibility that they will be met in reality. If the unrealistic expectations can be made realistic (again with, for example, dialogue), a satisfying interaction that meets expectations is more likely to be offered. (Ojasalo, 2001.)

Knowing one's publics and identifying their expectations are central as there is no universal model for expectations and their management. In fact, different publics stress different things in their expectations and prioritize them differently (Klewes, 2009; Pirson & Malhotra, 2011). There is discrepancy in what groups expect, for example, in terms of trust; groups that are close to organizations can stress benevolence, whereas groups with more distant relationships can expect primarily integrity (Pirson & Malhotra, 2011). Thus, the only way to fulfill critical expectations is to know publics well and establish well-functioning relationships to them. Knowing and identifying publics and their expectations also enables the targeting and alignment of communication along with the existing priorities and mental models.

Identifying expectations is the first step of expectation management. However, knowing how publics understand and interpret their position as contributors in relationships is another aspect to look into. Thus, also they way publics see their role in the interaction and whether they feel comfortable in that role become important (Webb, 2000).The notion that expectations can become self-fulfilling prophecies (Jones, 1986) comes to play here, as in a relationship the actions of all parties count for the outcome. Individuals, just as organizations, can for example intentionally lower their expectations to avoid disappointment (Van Dijk, Zeelenberg & Van der Pligt, 2003).

In sum, expectation management includes identifying publics' expectations, assessment and prioritization of the identified expectations, and responding to expectations and expectation gaps. In terms of PR, special attention should be given to well-functioning relationships that ease monitoring and matching communication with performance (avoiding underestimates and overselling). If organizations know their environment and publics well and constantly monitor as well as acknowledge changes in attitudes, values, norms and expectations, an emerging expectation gap (that could grow into a legitimacy gap) is less likely to occur. It could be suggested that the most crucial expectations for organization to recognize are the minimum tolerable expectations that mark the lowest level where satisfaction can be maintained. When the minimums have been identified and fulfilled, there is room to build competitive edge in meeting and exceeding positive expectations.

How to Become an Expectations Manager in Practice?

Expectations form on the basis of personal values and preference, influenced by information available, previous experience and future predictions. When expectations and performance do not meet, previous research suggests that an expectation gap emerges, leading possibly to more threatening issue gaps (Reichart, 2003) or legitimacy gaps (Sethi, 1979). PR has

a role in the process where expectations are formed, as part of the process is the information given by the organization or of the organization. That is why both the messages coming from the organization itself as well as the opinions stated by others count. As communication can partly set expectations, it can also be argued that relationships are essentially about being able to continuously fulfill (positive) expectations – expectations that need to be constantly evaluated and reassessed as values, norms and levels of satisfaction evolves. The process where expectations are formed was presented previously in Figure 1. Figure 2 below continues with the same process, but adds PR to the equation by highlighting some of the most important factors for PR to follow throughout the process.

Figure 2
Role of PR before and after expectation formation
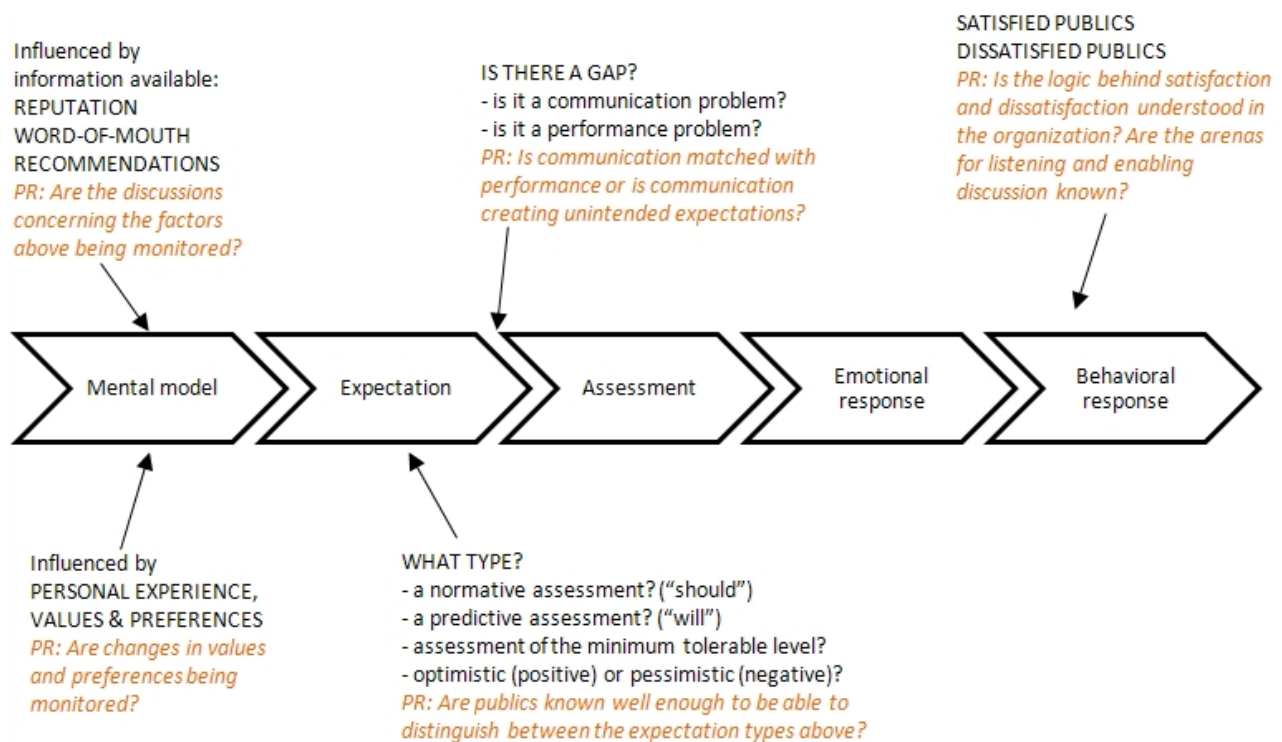
PR comes to play already in the first stage of the process presented in Figure 2, as mental models are on the one hand based on the information available, and on the other hand the way the information is perceived and interpreted (based on personal values and preferences, for example) (Reichart, 2003). Organization's knowledge of publics' expectations can be enhanced by, for example, conducting panels, surveys, listening to customer complaints, or building more direct relationships to publics in general (Zeithaml, Parasuraman & Berry, 1990), to which PR can contribute to. PR should especially be aware that mental models affect expectations that take place on different levels, such as what is likely (predictive) and what should be (normative). As PR cannot control how organizational communication will be interpreted, it has a role especially in what information is available. Mental models act as frames against which information is processed, including information about an organization's reputation or the word-of-mouth it is invoking, for example. Here a crucial task for PR is to monitor the arenas where discussions

about the organization or issues concerning the organization are taking place. These arenas for discussion can exist in both online and offline environments (Luoma-aho & Vos, 2010). In addition to monitoring arenas, monitoring is needed to detect crucial value changes that can alter the mental models or even reset them.

When the actual expectation is formed, the level to which the expectation is fulfilled/violated is assessed. The assessment can conclude that a positive expectation was fulfilled, confirming the expectation and leading to a feeling of satisfaction, or that a positive expectation was violated, leading to an unanticipated feeling of dissatisfaction (Weber & Mayer, 2011). Furthermore, a negative expectation might be assessed as confirmed, confirming the pessimistic expectation and leading to anticipated feeling of dissatisfaction, or the negative expectation might get violated positively, leading to unanticipated satisfaction (Weber & Mayer, 2011). In other words, assessments arouse emotions of satisfaction or dissatisfaction that might generate other feelings, such as feelings of trust or suspicion. The emotions produced based on whether the expectation is fulfilled or not can lead to behavioral responses, such as turning away from the relationship that is considered unfulfilling (Ojasalo, 2001; Thomlison, 2000), or staying cautious on whether to trust or support the other party in the future (Reichart, 2003: Weber & Mayer, 2011). Thus, it could be suggested that there is little to do for PR once the expectation has been formed. It is important, however, to constantly monitor whether gaps between expectations and performance are detected, because gaps affect how assessments form. Especially important is to match what is done with what is communicated and make sure that communication is not creating any unintended or misleading expectations. A reputation can be liability both if it is too weak or too strong, as a too good reputation compared to the actual performance can pose as big a risk as a negative reputation (Luoma-aho, 2007).

Furthermore, PR should understand the different types of expectations, as a gap in minimum expectations poses an immediate legitimacy risk, whereas a gap in ideal expectations can mean that in order to keep the happy publics happy a little upgrading is needed. This is why PR should first of all know the publics well and identify their expectations as the first step of expectation management. Knowing them once is not enough, as expectations can change (Luoma-aho, 2008), which is why constant negotiation and monitoring is needed. Monitoring weak signals such as changes in values as early as possible is of crucial importance, as they actualize in expectations and lead eventually to behavioral responses. This goes without forgetting social media, as it could be one of the rare arenas where expectations can be monitored early, as it is an environment where opinions are visibly stated, recommendations are exchanged and discussions take place (Luoma-aho & Vos, 2010, Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Wright & Hinson, 2009).

Finally, though there might be little to do for PR when expectations have been formed, their fulfillment has been assessed, emotions aroused and behavioral responses triggered, PR should listen to unhappy stakeholders to be able to identify where minimum expectations are lacking (and to be able to perform better in the future), and listen to happy stakeholders to be able to keep up with the development of future desired expectations. PR can also take part in the discussion involving expectations, satisfaction and dissatisfaction, and even aid publics express their expectations (in online and offline arenas). Finally, as expectations can change, PR should challenge the assumptions that organizations have about what is expected from it.
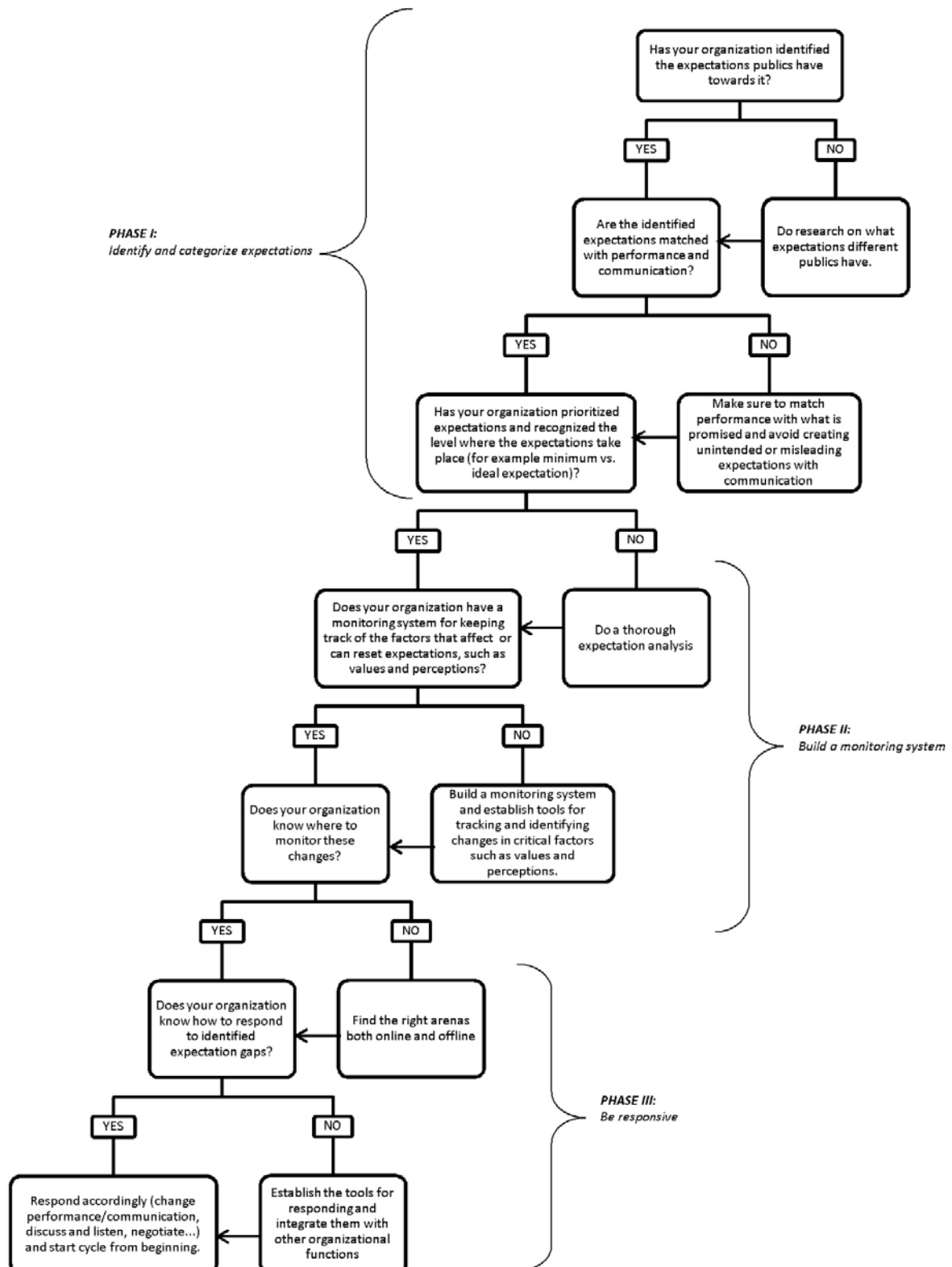
To sum up, the tasks for PR in expectation management are the following:

- identify and monitor publics' expectations

- identify and monitor expectation gaps
- match performance with communication
- understand expectations on different levels
- monitor relevant arenas for value changes, perceptions and discussions
- take part in expectation formation process; challenge your assumptions, negotiate, listen, respond

Figure 3 collects a checklist for expectation management based on the tasks presented above. Figure 3 divides expectation management into three phases: 1) identifying and categorizing expectations, 2) building a monitoring system for keeping track of expectations, and 3) responding to expectations and expectation gaps.

Figure 3
Checklist for expectation management

PHASE I:
Identify and categorize expectations

Has your organization identified the expectations publics have towards it?

YES — Are the identified expectations matched with performance and communication?

NO — Do research on what expectations different publics have.

YES — Has your organization prioritized expectations and recognized the level where the expectations take place (for example minimum vs. ideal expectation)?

NO — Make sure to match performance with what is promised and avoid creating unintended or misleading expectations with communication

YES — Does your organization have a monitoring system for keeping track of the factors that affect or can reset expectations, such as values and perceptions?

NO — Do a thorough expectation analysis

PHASE II:
Build a monitoring system

YES — Does your organization know where to monitor these changes?

NO — Build a monitoring system and establish tools for tracking and identifying changes in critical factors such as values and perceptions.

YES — Does your organization know how to respond to identified expectation gaps?

NO — Find the right arenas both online and offline

PHASE III:
Be responsive

YES — Respond accordingly (change performance/communication, discuss and listen, negotiate...) and start cycle from beginning.

NO — Establish the tools for responding and integrate them with other organizational functions

Conclusion

The Stockholm Accords (2010) have already noted the importance of expectations for the practice of PR, but academia has not yet addressed them to their full degree. Expectation management can prove to be helpful for organizations wanting to predict publics' behavior in the future, both existing and emerging. New and better means for early monitoring and predicting satisfaction are needed especially as publics find new means and power to express their opinions and combine powers quickly and broadly (Miel & Faris, 2008). To answer to this need, this paper introduced expectation management as an emerging new area for public relations' theory and practice. In the paper, the importance of expectations was seen in the way they affect relationships and satisfaction, and how they serve as reference points against which performance is assessed (Creyer & Ross, 1997; Thomlison, 2000).

It was suggested that as PR cannot control interpretations of organizational communication, it has a role especially in what information is made available, and in monitoring the arenas where discussions about the organization or issues concerning the organization are taking place. Once the expectation has been formed, there is little for PR to do. It is important, however, to constantly monitor whether gaps between expectations and performance are detected, and assess whether the gap is produced by promising too much or performing too poorly, for example. In essence, behavior should be matched with what is communicated and creating unintended or misleading expectations with communication should be avoided.

As the first step of expectation management PR should know the publics well and identify their expectations. Monitoring weak signals is important, as they actualize in expectations and lead eventually to behavioral responses. As expectations can change, however, mapping them once is not enough. PR should also understand the different types of expectations, as a gap in minimum expectations poses an immediate legitimacy risk, whereas a gap in ideal expectations can mean that in order to keep the happy publics happy, a little upgrading is needed. PR should also take part in the discussion involving expectations, satisfaction and dissatisfaction, and aid publics express their expectations, since a known expectation can be responded to. It is suggested that an organization wanting to do expectation management should be responsive to publics' expectations and involved in the process where expectations and their implications are negotiated together with the publics as part of the balancing act between organizational needs and publics' needs and in the process of finding mutual benefit.

It is important to note that expectation management does not equal to expectation manipulation, but rather that publics are known closely and comprehensively and that the organization takes part in the process where expectations are formed. Furthermore, expectation management is not a separate function, as it should be integrated into other organizational and PR functions, especially to those that aim to monitor and map the environment where organizations are operating. A central task for expectation management is to recognize crucial expectations and crucial changes in expectations, especially in the sense of early signals for future behavior. The very fact that expectations act as early signals (and not necessarily as loud manifests of attitudes that are much more easily recognized) makes them worth monitoring, as knowing them has strategic importance in the working environment where changes are a norm rather than a rarity. Thus, expectation management can prove to be fruitful for organizations wanting to succeed in the current communication environment.

The paper has several limitations, first of which is that the paper presents only a review and a framework with no concrete testing. Second, as expectation management was suggested as a new function for PR, its connections to other functions of PR should still be identified with

more detail. Though there is plenty of existing literature on expectations in consumer satisfaction research, so far these theories have not been connected properly with the theories of PR, despite their common interest in publics' satisfaction. While this paper serves as an introduction into this field, the full depth and potential of expectations in the theory and practice of PR needs more profound work. As such, the paper aims to inspire future research in shedding more light on expectations' role in satisfaction and dissatisfaction through the eyes of PR, and in finding the strategic importance of expectation for PR.

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An Examination of How Fortune 500 Companies and Philanthropy 200 Nonprofits Cultivate Relationships Using Facebook

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Abstract

Although public relations practitioners and researchers tout the potential of social media to build and maintain relationships between organizations and publics, little has been investigated empirically about the online relationship process. This study contributes to relationship theoretical developments through its explication of how Fortune 500 companies and nonprofit organizations from among Philanthropy 200 use Facebook to cultivate relationships. To better understand how organizations cultivate online relationships, a content analysis was conducted of a random sample of the Facebook pages and posts of Fortune 500 companies (n =75) and Philanthropy 200 nonprofits (n=75).

Introduction

Public relations practitioners are increasingly using Facebook to build community and engagement between their organizations and strategic publics (Bullas, 2012). Originating in 2004, Facebook now attracts more than 845 million users to its site at least once per month (Facebook, 2011). After Facebook began allowing organizations to create and manage their own pages in April 2006, more than 4,000 pages were created in the first two weeks (Waters, Burnett, Lamm, & Lucas, 2009). A survey of small business owners revealed that 69 percent use social media on behalf of their companies (Protalinski, 2011). However, although public relations practitioners and researchers anecdotally tout the ability of Facebook to build and maintain relationships between organizations and publics, scant research has empirically investigated the specifics of that relationship cultivation process.

Relationships, not persuasion or one-way influence, constitute the core of ethical, effective public relations practice. Relationship theory (Hon & J.E. Gruing, 1999) provides an explanatory framework for explaining the relationship process between organizations and key publics. Relationship theory posits a three-step process (Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 1997): (a) relationship antecedents, the reasoning or rationale for why a public enters into a relationship with the organization; (b) relationship cultivation strategies, the daily activities used by public relations practitioners to build and maintain relationships; and (c) relationship outcomes—trust, commitment, satisfaction, and control mutuality (Hon & J.E. Grunig, 1999)—that have been linked to greater organizational effectiveness (Hon, 1997).

A robust line of research has indicated the connection between relationship outcomes and indicators of effectiveness, such as changes in public attitudes and behaviors (Bruning, DeMiglio, & Embry, 2006; Ledingham, Bruning, & Wilson, 2000; O'Neil, 2007, Waters, 2008, 2009a, 2009b), but less attention has been given to the relationship cultivation strategies that engender the relationship outcomes. Research has examined relationship cultivation strategies in the context of websites (Bortree, 2007; Bortree & Seltzer, 2009; Ki & Hon, 2006; Williams & Brunner, 2010), blogs (Kelleher & Miller, 2006), and Twitter (Rybaldo & Seltzer, 2010), but not Facebook.

This study contributes to relationship theory through its explication of how Fortune 500 companies and nonprofit organizations from the Philanthropy 200 use Facebook to cultivate relationships. Results have professional and theoretical implications. From a professional perspective, results provide a snapshot of how large nonprofits and corporations are organizing their Facebook pages and engaging in dialogue with publics through their Facebook posts. From a theoretical perspective, results provide a better understanding of a key relationship theory component and process—relationship cultivation—in the context of online communication. To this author's knowledge, this study is among the first that develops a coding scheme to conceptualize and measure relationship cultivation strategies on Facebook.

Literature Review

Relationship theory, identified as the second most investigated theory in public relations scholarship (Sallot, Lyon, Acosta-Alzuru & Jones, 2003), elucidates how public relations initiatives build and maintain relationships with strategic publics (J. E. Grunig & Huang, 2000; Hon & J.E. Grunig, 1999). Ferguson (1984) first advocated that relationships be the primary focus of public relations scholarship. Since her landmark paper, public relationship researchers have sought to identify and measure relationship antecedents, relationship maintenance

strategies, relationship outcomes, and the effect of relationship outcomes on producing changes in the behaviors and attitudes of publics.

Relationship antecedents represent the reasons that publics develop relationships with organizations (Broom et al., 1997). Relationship cultivation strategies, originally referred to as maintenance strategies (Broom et al., 1997; Ki & Hon, 2009), are those daily tactics used by public relations practitioners to produce relationship outcomes (J. E. Grunig & Huang, 2000; Hon & J. E. Grunig, 1999). Relationship cultivation strategies consist of access, positivity, openness and disclosure, sharing of tasks, and networking (Hon & J.E. Grunig, 1999). Relationship outcomes, those consequences that result from relationship cultivation strategies, include trust, commitment, satisfaction, and control mutuality (Hon & J.E. Gruing, 1999).

Dialogic Strategies

Scholars have examined relationship cultivation strategies from two theoretical perspectives: dialogic theory and relationship theory. Kent and Taylor's dialogic theory (1998, 2002) positions dialogue as central to ethical and honest public relations practice. The theory is rooted in philosophy and relational communication theory. According to Kent and Taylor (1998, 2002), the World Wide Web is an ideal space for public relations practitioners to facilitate dialogue, which they define as "any negotiated exchange of ideas and opinions" (1998, p. 325). The dialogic process between organizations and publics can be enhanced on the Web through five dialogic strategies: providing useful information to a variety of publics, generating return visitors, providing ease of interface, conserving visitors by encouraging them to stay on websites, and facilitating a dialogic loop (Kent & Taylor, 1998, 2002).

Public relations scholars have examined online communication through the lens of dialogic theory. In their examination of websites of activist organizations, Taylor, Kent, and White (2001) found that although the websites were easy to use and contained useful information, they did not encourage generation of return visits or exhibit ease of interface. In a follow-up study, Kent, Taylor and White (2003) found that activist organizations utilizing greater number of dialogic strategies in their website features were more likely to respond to stakeholders. Park and Weber (2008) examined the websites of Fortune 500 companies and found that corporations were not fully using the dialogic principle of generating return visitors and conserving visitors. Scholars later examined Kent and Taylor's dialogic principles in the contexts of weblogs (Seltzer & Mitrook, 2007; Sweetser & Lariscy, 2008), Facebook (Bortree & Seltzer, 2009), and Twitter (Rybalko & Seltzer, 2010). The two studies on Facebook (Bortree & Seltzer) and Twitter (Rybalko & Seltzer) indicated a linkage between dialogic strategies and dialogic outcomes, including organizational responsiveness to posts and tweets.

Relationship Cultivation Strategies

Public relations scholars have also examined relationship cultivation strategies from the perspective of relationship theory. Hon and J.E. Gruing (1999) borrowed from interpersonal communication concepts conceptualized by Stafford and Canary (1991) to develop the relationship public relations cultivation strategies. The six strategies originally conceptualized by Hon and J.E. Gruing include access, assurances, openness/disclosure, positivity, networking, and sharing of tasks. Research suggests that these relationship maintenance strategies are important, because they help organizations create the relationship outcomes of control mutuality, satisfaction, trust, and commitment (J.E. Grunig & Huang, 2000; Hon & J.E. Grunig, 1999).

As implied by its name, access refers to the organization making itself accessible to publics. Hon and J.E. Grunig (1999) explain that access includes providing communication channels so that publics can reach the organization. For example, the organization "will answer phone calls or read letters or e-mail messages from the other. Either party is willing to go to the other when they have complaints or queries, rather than taking negative reactions to third parties" (Hon & J.E. Grunig, p. 14). In the context of websites, Ki and Hon (2006) defined access as the organization providing telephone numbers, company addresses, and email contacts. The relationship cultivation strategy of assurances is manifested when the organization assures their publics that their concerns are important (Hon & J.E. Grunig, 1999). Listening can facilitate assurances. If an organization responds to the requests or concerns of a public, then it has used the strategy of assurances.

Openness and disclosure relate to the "organization's efforts to provide information about the nature of the organization and what it is doing" (Ki & Hon, 2009). Honesty and transparency are the hallmarks of openness and disclosure. Organizations practice openness and disclosure when they provide company overviews and information.

Positivity refers to an organization's efforts to make the relationship enjoyable or pleasant for key publics (Hon & J.E. Grunig, 1999). In their examination of company websites, Ki and Hon (2006) defined positivity as attempts to facilitate ease of use on a website, such as through "clear labeling and operational links" (p. 32). An easy-to-use website has the potential to enhance a public relationship. Bortree (2007) says that games and multimedia content in online forums also constitute positivity.

Networking relates to the degree of "an organization's efforts to build networks or coalitions with the same groups that their publics do" (Ki & Hon, 2009, p. 9). Organizations may build networks with groups such as environmentalists, unions, and community groups (Hon & J.E. Grunig, 1999).

Sharing of tasks has to do with the organization's efforts to collaborate with publics to solve problems of mutual interest (Hon & J.E. Grunig, 1999). These tasks may include environment, community, and education initiatives in which the organization is working with key publics to better society.

A few studies have examined how relationship cultivation strategies are used through websites. In their examination of 286 Fortune 500 websites, Ki and Hon (2006) found that openness was the most frequently used cultivation strategy and networking was the least used cultivation strategy. Ki and Hon also found differences in the usage of positivity, openness, and access based upon industry type. Bortree (2007) coded the websites of 41 nonprofit for the presence of relationship cultivation strategies. She found that larger nonprofit organizations were more likely to use openness and sharing of tasks than smaller organizations. Williams and Brunner (2010) later examined 129 non-profit organization websites to better understand how they cultivate relationships. Williams and Brunner's research contradicted the work of Ki and Hon. Williams and Brunner found that nonprofits used positivity most frequently and assurances the least frequently.

In summary, scant research has examined the relationship cultivation process in online communication. The handful of studies have examined cultivation strategies present in websites only, not Facebook, which currently boasts more than 845 millions users. Current research has produced contradictory results regarding which strategies are used most often. This study seeks to contribute to these gaps by examining cultivation strategies of both Fortune 500 companies and Philanthropy 200 nonprofit organizations. This study examined the following two questions:

RQ1: Do Fortune 500 companies and Philanthropy 200 nonprofits differ in their usage of the relationship strategies of access, assurances, networking, openness and disclosure, positivity, and sharing of tasks through their Facebook pages and posts?

RQ2: Which relationship cultivation strategy—access, networking, openness and disclosure, positivity, and sharing of tasks—do organizations enact most frequently through Facebook?

Methodology

A content analysis of Facebook pages and the ten most recent posts of Fortune 500 companies (n =100) Philanthropy 200 nonprofits (n=100) was conducted from February 13 through March 2, 2012, by two independent trained coders. Content analysis is a method "of studying and analyzing communication in a systematic, objective, and quantitative manner" (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011, p. 156).

One hundred companies were randomly selected from the 2011 Fortune 500 listing and 100 nonprofits were randomly selected from the 2011 Philanthropy 200 listing. Randomly selected organizations that lacked a Facebook page (corporations = 49; nonprofits= 5) were excluded from the sample. When this occurred, replacement organizations were randomly selected to bring the total sample to 200.

Organizational Facebook pages and their ten most recent posts were designated as the units of analysis for this project. A comprehensive coding sheet derived from relationship theory was developed and reviewed by five public relations professionals. Below is a description of how the variables were operationalized.

Operationalization of Terms

Access was operationalized as the organization's providing on its Facebook page its phone number, address, website link, email contact, and whether the organization enabled outsiders to make original posts to its wall. A composite measure ranging from 0 to 5 was created based upon these five indicators.

Assurances was operationalized as the organizational response rate to questions posted on their Facebook wall by publics. This response rate was constructed by dividing the number of questions posed by publics in their five most recent posts by the number of times the organization responded.

Networking was operationalized by the number of likes of a group or public that was not self- serving (ranging from 0; 1-2 groups = 1; and 3 or more=2) and whether one of the organization's ten posts tagged another non self-serving organization (ranging from 0-10). The organization's likes and tags of self-serving organizations were excluded because they do not illustrate the spirit of networking: the organization's collaboration with groups that also interact with their publics, "such as environmentalists, unions, or community groups" (Ki & Hon, 2006, p. 32). The following example illustrates a self-serving group. Pier 1 Imports, a furniture and home décor store, likes groups such as HGTV, which promotes many of its products. A composite measure ranging from 0 to 12 was created based upon the indicators of networking. Openness/disclosure was operationalized by whether the organization provided an "About section," "Founded" information, and a "Mission statement" in the Information section of its Facebook page. These three measures are common options available to Facebook page administrators. A composite measure ranging from 0 to 3 was created.

Positivity was operationalized by the total number of uploaded photos, videos, or polls/quizzes in the ten most recent posts of the organization. These features make the Facebook experience more enjoyable, or positive, for users. An organization can upload only one of the three—photo, video, or poll—in one post, so a composite measure ranging from 0 to 10 was created based upon whether the organization posted one of the three in each of its ten posts.

Sharing of Tasks was operationalized by whether one of the organization's ten posts was about a program or event involving external publics to solve a problem of mutual interest. An example of a post that would illustrate sharing of tasks includes "Donate today to support our Green Initiative to reduce carbon emissions by 20% in the next three months." Because the organization's ten most recent posts were analyzed, the composite measure for sharing of tasks could range from 0-10.

A pretest was conducted with the Facebook pages and 10 most recent posts of 10 corporations and 10 nonprofits by two trained coders. Intercoder reliability was calculated via Holsti's (1969) formula for the relationship cultivation measures and found to be acceptable (93%).

Results

Research Question 1

Research one sought to investigate whether Fortune 500 companies and Philanthropy 200 nonprofits differ in their usage of access, assurances, networking, openness and disclosure, positivity, and sharing of tasks through their Facebook pages and posts. Individual indicators of the relationship cultivation strategies were first analyzed, as indicated by Table 1.

Chi-Square tests illustrate that nonprofit organization use more indicators of access than corporations. Nonprofit organizations more frequently share their phone number ($x2$ (2, N= 200) – 8.86, p = .01), address ($x2$ (2, N = 200) = 14.22, p = .001), and email contact ($x2$ (2, N = 200) = 11.75, p = .00) than corporations. There is no significant difference, however, among nonprofit organizations and corporations in terms of providing a website linkage ($x2$ (2, N = 200) = 2.02, p = .364) or if they enable outsiders to post to their walls ($x2$ (2, N = 200) = 5.31, p = .070). Corporations use the assurances relationship strategy more frequently than nonprofits. As indicated by Table 2, corporations responded to user questions 75% of the time. In contrast, nonprofits responded to user questions only 45% of the time.

Nonprofit organizations display greater usage of the networking strategy. Nonprofit organizations like more non self-serving organizations (($x2$ (4, N = 200) = 46.83, p = .00) and more frequently tag non self-serving organizations ((t (198) = 6.64, p = .00) than corporations. Nonprofit organizations use more tactics associated with the openness and disclosure strategy than corporations. As indicated by Table 1, nonprofits more frequently provide an "About" section ($x2$ (2, N = 200) = 12.40, p = .002), "Founded" section ($x2$ (2, N = 200) = 15.79, p = .00), and a "Mission" statement ($x2$ (2, N = 200) = 22.39, p = .00).

Nonprofit organizations and corporations do not differ in their usage of positivity tactics. As indicted by Table 1, nonprofits do not differ in their usage of photos (t (198) = .27, p = .79), videos (t (198) = -.5, p = .62), or embedded polls/quizzes (t (198) = -.7, p = .49). Table 2 illustrates the series of independent t-tests performed to analyze for differences among nonprofits and corporations in their usage of the composite relationship cultivation strategies. Nonprofit organizations use access (t (198)=4.86, p = .000), openness/disclosure (t (198) = 6.1, p = .000), sharing of tasks (t (198) = 3.64, p = .000), and networking (t (198) = 6.63, p = .000)

strategies more frequently than corporations through Facebook. Nonprofits and corporations do not differ in their usage of positivity (t (198) = -.099, p > .05) on Facebook.

Table 1
Nonprofits' and Corporations' Usage of Cultivation Tactics on Facebook

Cultivation Tactics	Nonprofits N=100	Corporations N=100
Access	Percentage	Percentage
Phone number present	41%	24%*
Address present	60%	34%*
Website link present	100%	98%
Email contact present	34%	16%*
Enable outsiders to post to wall	86%	73%
Openness/Disclosure	Percentage	Percentage
"About" section present	95%	78%*
"Founded" section present	85%	60%*
"Mission statement" present	84%	53%*
Assurances	N/Percentage	N/Percentage
Number of questions posed by publics	40	107
Number of times org responded to questions	18	80
Response rate of assurances	45%	75%
Networking		
Number of non self-serving groups liked by org.	Percentage	Percentage
None	13%	59%
1-2 groups	12%	8%
3 or more groups	75%	33%
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
Number of non-serving groups tagged in posts	2.54 (1.78)	1.02 (1.42)
Positivity	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
Number of photos in 10 posts	1.85 (2.13)	1.77(2.03)
Number of videos in 10 posts	.83 (1.2)	.91 (1.12)
Number of embedded polls/quizzes in 10 posts	.06 (.28)	.09 (.32)
Sharing of Tasks	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
Number of posts out of ten that involve working with a public to solve a community problem	1.92 (1.84)	1.03 (1.64)

* Statistically significant differences; p< .05

Table 2
Nonprofits' and Corporations' Usage of Cultivation Strategies on Facebook

Strategies	Nonprofits' M (SD) and Index		Corporations' M (SD) and Index	
Access (Range 0-5)	3.21 (1.2)	64	2.45 (.1)*	49
Openness/Disclosure (Range 0-3)	2.63 (.73)	88	1.91 (.93)*	64
Positivity (Range 0-10)	2.73 (2.4)	27	2.78 (2.3)	28
Networking (Range 0-12)	2.54 (1.78)	21	1.02 (1.42)*	8
Sharing of Tasks (Range 0-10)	1.92 (1.84)	19	1.03 (1.64)*	10

Indexes were calculated by the following: Mean score of composite strategy/range of composite score x 100
* t-tests indicate statistically significant difference in mean scores

Research Question 2

Research question two sought to determine which relationship cultivation strategy is used most often by corporations and nonprofit organizations. As indicated by Table 2, both nonprofits and corporations most frequently use the strategies of openness and disclosure, followed by access, followed by positivity. The strategy used least frequently by nonprofits is sharing of tasks. Corporations use the networking strategy the least often.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to analyze how Fortune 500 corporations and Philanthropy 200 nonprofit organizations use Facebook to cultivate relationships with key publics. Relationship cultivation strategies represent the daily tactics used by public relations practitioners to build relationships with publics. Because public relations practitioners spend a good deal of their time executing daily tactics such as these, it is important to understand how and whether those tactics cultivate relationships.

The first purpose of this study was to determine if nonprofits and corporations differ in their usage of the relationship cultivation strategies. Results of this study indicate that nonprofit organizations enact greater usage of access, openness and disclosure, networking, and sharing of tasks compared to corporations. Although it was beyond of the scope of this study to empirically determine why these discrepancies exist, there are a few plausible explanations. First, there is no fee to develop Facebook page. The expense incurred relates to the person hours needed to post information and to listen and respond to publics. Compared to other marketing tools such as advertising, promotion, and special events, Facebook represents a relatively low expense. Thus, nonprofits may be devoting greater resources to this low-cost medium in comparison to corporations. Second, nonprofits and corporations prioritize different publics. Both nonprofits and corporations typically work with members, donors, volunteers, and other community partners, such as other corporations and government agencies. Corporations, on the other hand,

seek to reach and interact with consumers and prospective consumers, as well as employees and investors. Perhaps Facebook represents an ideal place to cultivate relationships with donors and volunteers. This latter idea would reinforce the research of Briones, Kuch, Liu, and Jin (2011), whose in-depth interviews with employees of American Red Cross revealed that American Red Cross uses Facebook to create dialogue with community members. On the other hand, corporations may utilize Facebook in order to promote or sell products or services in the short term, not to build relationships in the long-term.

Corporations, on the other hand, do a much better job than nonprofits in their usage of the assurance strategy. Corporations responded to users' questions 75% of the time, on average, whereas nonprofits responded 45% of the time. Why this is so is puzzling. Nonprofits need to be more diligent in responding to user questions posted to their Facebook walls.

The second purpose of this study was to determine which relationship strategy was used most frequently through Facebook. This study indicates that nonprofit organizations and corporations use the openness and disclosure strategy most often through Facebook. This finding reinforces the research of Ki and Hon (2006), who also found that Fortune 500 corporations most frequently used the openness and disclosure strategy in their websites. In this study, openness and disclosure was operationalized as the dissemination of information in the "About," "Founded," and "Mission" portion of Facebook. This type of information represents one-way communication and requires little upkeep from the organization once the information is written and posted. Therefore, the fact that both nonprofits and corporations use this strategy quite frequently is not surprising. Corporations and nonprofit organizations should be commended for taking the time to share basic information about their history, organization, and mission with publics.

This study also showed that access was the second most frequently used relationship strategy among both nonprofits and corporations, again reinforcing the findings of Ki and Hon (2006). In this study, 100% of nonprofits and 98% of corporations provided a link to their websites. A significantly much smaller percentage of organizations provided their phone number (nonprofits=41% and corporations=24%) and email contact information (nonprofits=34% and corporations=16%). Williams and Brunner (2010) also found that most nonprofit organizations did not display their telephone and email on their websites. Perhaps most organizations provide a link to their websites on Facebook, because it is relatively easy to do and because the website contains more information about the organization. On the other hand, providing a phone number and email contact information requires that the organization have the resources to respond to requests and questions from interested publics. Because so many people now use Facebook to learn about organizations, nonprofits and corporations should provide basic email and phone numbers in order to increase their accessibility, a key component of relationships.

Positivity was the third most frequently used strategy among nonprofits and corporations. On average, both types of organizations share close to two photos and one video per ten posts. Polls and quizzes were not used as frequently. Organizations likely use videos, photos, and polls/quizzes to engage and entertain with their publics. It is encouraging that organizations are making attempts to make the user experience positive for publics.

Sharing of tasks and networking were the two least used strategies. In particular, corporations used the networking strategy the least often, reinforcing the findings of Ki and Hon (2006) who analyzed corporate websites. In this study, corporations tagged on average only one other non-serving group in ten posts. Fifty-nine percent of Fortune 500 companies analyzed did not "like" any other non self-serving organizations. These findings suggest that corporations can

do a better job of displaying their connections to environmental groups, unions, and community groups. The study's findings do not indicate whether the Fortune 500 companies are not networking with other community groups or whether they're failing to communicate those connections.

Nonprofits used the sharing of tasks strategy the least frequently in their Facebook communication, reinforcing the findings of Williams and Brunner (2010) who found that nonprofits did not share much community activity information on their websites. Sharing of tasks is defined as the organization's effort to collaborate with publics to solve problems of mutual interest (Hon and J.E. Grunig, 1999). As an example, the nonprofit Organization Compassion wrote in one of its ten posts: "Organization Compassion sends more than six million seed packets to Africa and Central America this week to provide food and income to needy families living in rural poverty. More than 600,000 people helped." Because nonprofits exist to fulfill a mission that is dependent upon their linkages with members, donors, and volunteers, the fact that they used the sharing of task strategy the least often is surprising. On average, nonprofits talked about collaborations with other groups in only two out of their ten posts. Nonprofits need to talk about their collaborative efforts, because research suggests that communication that clearly demonstrates the nonprofit's mission and work is positively related to donations (O'Neil, 2008). Corporations shared even less information about their collaborations than nonprofits. On average, corporations posted a sharing of task related message in only one of ten posts examined. Whether corporations are not collaborating to solve problem or failing to communicate about their collaborations remains unknown.

Future research could include interviews with the social media managers of nonprofits and corporations to better understand the rationale and why behind the relationship cultivation strategies used through Facebook. Future research could also analyze the linkage between the relationship cultivation strategies used on Facebook and the relationship outcomes or organizational objectives. This latter type of research could indicate whether and how the daily posts and interactions with Facebook engender greater trust, commitment, satisfaction, and control mutuality, as proposed by relationship theory.

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Employee Reactions to Crisis Events: Effect of Attributions of Responsibility and Severity on Employee Strain Responses

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Abstract

The study of crisis in public relations has focused on understanding the effects of crisis events and crisis communication on the perceptions of external stakeholders. However, very little is known of how employees react to crisis events. Based on the job demands control model and situational crisis communication theory, this manuscript presents a framework to understand how crisis situations act as acute stressors and affect the way employees respond to a crisis event. We argue that employees have a need to make sense of crisis situations. Specifically, employees evaluate how responsible the organization is for the crisis and the severity of the crisis. These evaluations will result in an affective response such as anger or organizational commitment. Subsequently, affective responses will impact the types of behaviors, either counterproductive work behaviors or organizational citizenship behaviors, in which employees engage. Finally, employee behavioral reactions ultimately influence organizational and individual performance. Implications for research and practice of public relations are discussed.

Every day the news media is inundated with stories of organizations facing a crisis. These situations can range from minor incidents that are easily addressed, to tragic situations which can have lasting physical and mental health outcomes for those affected. As such, there has been growing interest in understanding what actions organizations can take and what messages organizations can use to address the crisis situation and protect stakeholders and the organization from harm (Coombs, 2007a). Research in crisis communication has suggested that stakeholders, both internal and external, are important to consider during crisis situations (Coombs, 2007b). However, much of the crisis communication research has focused on understanding the impact of crises on the perceptions and actions of external publics. Thus, there is a limited understanding of how crises are perceived and responded to from an employee point of view (Rosen, Chang, Djurdjevic & Eatough, 2010). Today employees represent an important source for intellectual and human capital that can impact organizational success (Cascio, 2009). Therefore, understanding how employees make sense of, interpret, and respond to crisis situations is important to help organizations plan for and manage during these difficult times.

Research has acknowledged the importance of employee well-being (both physical and mental) and its impact on the success of the organization. Employees who feel good and experience limited stress at work are more likely to feel satisfied with their work (Wright & Corpanzano, 2000), are more likely to be committed to the organization (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990), and are more likely to engage in supportive behaviors toward the organization (Rosen et al., 2010). All of these behaviors, in turn, have been linked to organizational success (Birdi et al., 2008) . Stressful events, however, can have a significant impact on the well being of employees, as well as overarching effects on the organization. In particular, employees who experience acute stressors, or intense events that occur in a short time frame, are likely to exhibit negative affective outcomes such as anxiety, depression, anger, and physical symptoms such as cardiovascular disease (Ganster, Fusilier, & Mayes, 1986; Landsbergis et al., 2011). In turn, exposure to acute stressors has been negatively related to organizational level outcomes such as job satisfaction, motivation, organizational commitment and employee performance (Crawford, LePine, & Rich, 2010; De Jonge, van Breukelen, Landeweerd, & Nihuis, 1999).

Crisis events are one type of acute stressor that can impact employees. Following a crisis, employees are likely to experience affective and behavioral reactions. These affective and behavioral responses to a stressor are known as strain responses. Understanding employee strain responses that follow a crisis is essential to further comprehend the effects that crises can have on the organization and what organizations can do to manage and communicate after a crisis event. This manuscript develops a framework to explain how employees make sense of and respond to crisis events. We integrate principles from the job demands control (JDC) model and situational crisis communication theory (SCCT) to propose how employees might react after a crisis event and how these reactions can affect both employee and organizational productivity. We focus on four common strain responses: anger towards the organization, organizational commitment, counterproductive work behaviors (CWB), and organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB).

Reactions to Crisis Events

Crises are inherently uncertain and unpredictable events that occur in a quick time frame (Coombs, 2007a). Following a crisis event, stakeholders can experience a variety of cognitive, affective and behavioral reactions, including a need to make sense of the crisis event (Coombs, 2007a), feelings of uncertainty and anxiety (Heath, Shashari, & Lee, 1998), feelings of anger

towards the organization and the situation (Coombs & Holladay, 2008b; Pace, Fediuk & Botero, 2010), and a decreased desire to be associated with the organization (Coombs, 1999, Lyon & Cameron, 2004). However, our understanding of how individuals respond to crisis events is largely based on the reactions of external stakeholders (e.g., Coombs & Holladay, 1996; 2001; 2008; Pace et al., 2010).

To date, there is limited understanding of how internal stakeholders react to crisis events. When employees experience an organizational crisis they do it as both an individual and as someone who has a strong tie and responsibility to the organization. Therefore, the reactions of employees during and following crisis events can have a significant impact on the ability of the organization to navigate and recover from the crisis. The literature on employee reactions to acute stressors in the workplace can provide insight into how employees may respond to crisis events. In this next section we review this literature and explain how it can be used in the context of crisis.

Employees Reactions to Stressful Events

Work stressors are environmental factors that elicit aversive and potential harmful reactions from an employee (Beehr, 1995). Acute stressors, one common type of stressor, last for a short period of time, can vary in intensity and are typically associated with extreme events (e.g., workplace violence, accidents, quick changes in job requirements). Exposure to stressors typically results in a reaction known as a strain response. Employee exposure to acute stressors has resulted in employee strain responses such as anxiety, depression, anger, and physical symptoms, as well as organizational level outcomes such as organizational commitment, job satisfaction, work tension, and performance (Beehr et al., 2000; Klebler & van der Velden, 2003). We believe that crisis events are a type of acute stressor that can impact employee feelings and behaviors.

One of the most influential models used to explore the relationship between work stressors and strain responses is the jobs demands and control (JDC) model. JDC suggests that job demands (i.e., amount of workload) and job control (i.e., autonomy and authority in decision-making are two dimensions of work environments that can influence the strain reactions experienced by employees (Van der Doef & Maes, 1999). JDC model posits that the interaction between job demands and level of control will result in varying intensities of the strain response. High levels of job demands and a low level of control will result in a high strain response. Alternatively, when job demands are low and control is high, employees will experience low levels of strain. For employees, crises represent stressors that can influence both the demands that a job can have on an employee and the level of control the employee has over the work environment (Chisholm, Kasl, & Eskenazi, 1983; Klebler & van der Velden, 2003). Following a crisis employees are likely to have more demands in their job, and less control. Following this rationale, we argue that organizational crises are stressful events for employees and likely to result in employee strain responses (Pauchant, Mitroff, & Lagadec, 1991).

There are a variety of strain responses that employees can experience following exposure to a stressor (e.g., a crisis event). These strain responses include actions that are physical, affective, and/or behavioral (Fox, Spector, & Miles, 2001). This manuscript focuses on two affective responses, anger towards the organization and organizational commitment, and two behavior responses, counterproductive work behaviors (CWB) and organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB), commonly associated with acute events. Anger is composed of intense negative feelings toward the perceived cause of the situation (Gibson & Callister, 2010). In this

project we focus on anger that is directed toward the organization. Organizational commitment refers to the level of identification and attachment an individual has with the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991). CWB are intentional employee behaviors that focus on harming the organization and typically include abuse against others, production deviance and sabotage, theft, and withdrawal (Spector et al., 2006). Finally, OCB are discretionary, "extra-role" behaviors that contribute to the overall effectiveness of the organization and often take the form of helping behavior such as staying late or helping coworkers with their responsibilities (Organ, 1997).

Typically, strain responses are examined independently of one another. It is generally thought that individuals can experience multiple strain responses at the same time; however, little is known about how strain responses may affect one another and organizational outcomes (Chang, Johnson, & Yang, 2007). We believe that when crises act as stressor events for employees, they are likely to first result in employee affective strain responses, and these affective reactions, in turn, affect the behavioral strain responses that employees will have. This idea is similar to Fediuk and colleagues (2010) who argue that after a crisis event stakeholders first try to make sense of what occurred and why it occurred; then they develop affective responses to their assessment of the situation and behave based on the way they feel. Similarly, we were interested in building a model to describe the cognitive process that employees go through after a crisis event, how these cognitions influence employee responses, and how employee responses can influence organizational and employee outcomes. In the next section we present our model to understand employee reactions to crisis events.
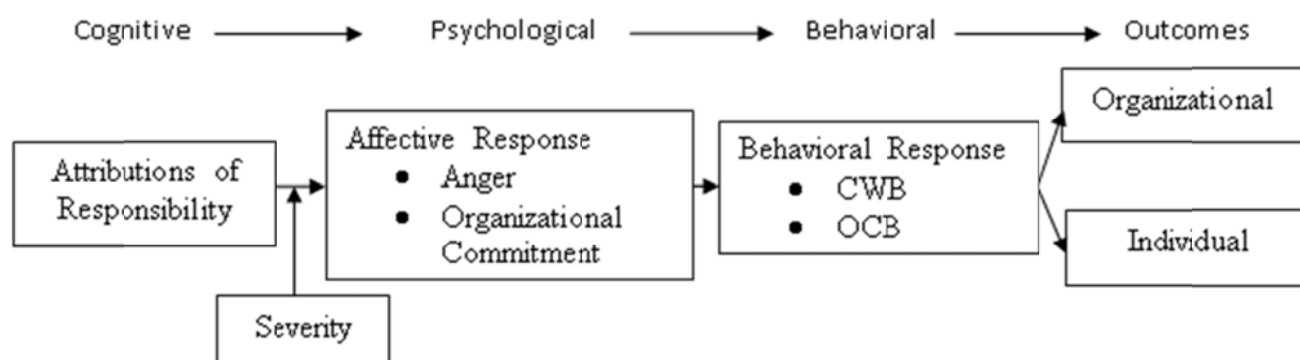
Employees and Crisis Events

Although crisis events are likely to result in strain responses, not all crises are likely to elicit the same type of response. Situational crisis communication theory (SCCT) is a theoretical framework used to understand how organizations should respond to a crisis event in order to avoid damaging the organization's reputation (Coombs, 1995;1998). Principles from this theory can also be applied in internal contexts to understand how employees may responds differently to crisis situations. SCCT posits that organizations should match their post-crisis communication with a crisis event based on the level of responsibility (i.e., evaluation of amount of fault) attributed to the organization for the occurrence of the crisis. The level of responsibility attributed to the organization is important because it affects how external stakeholders will respond to the crisis event (Coombs & Holladay, 1996). We believe that employee responses following a crisis event are also affected by the assessment of organizational responsibility (Perrewe & Zellars, 1999).

Crisis severity can also play a role when determining employee responses to a crisis situation. Crisis severity represents the amount of damage or harm caused by the crisis event (Coombs, 2004). This damage can include the number of people injured or killed by the crisis, the amount of property damage, the impact on the environment and the community, as well as financial losses (Coombs, 1998). Although crisis severity is often explored as directly influencing responses toward the organization we believe that, for employees, crisis severity serves as a moderator of the affective response. Employees evaluate both attributions of responsibility and crisis severity to make sense of the crisis event. The way employees make sense of the event will determine the affective response they will have toward the organization.

Building on previous research that has found that affect is related to individual behavior (Dillard, 1998), we suggest that affective responses will influence the employee's behavioral response. Behavioral responses will, in turn, be related to positive and negative organizational

and individual outcomes. Following the rationale presented above we developed a model to better understand how employee make sense of the crisis, respond to crisis events and the consequences of these responses for organizations and individuals. Our model is presented in Figure 1. In the sections below we explain each of the links in our model.

Figure 1
Visual Model of Employee Reactions to Crisis and its Consequences

Attributions of Responsibility and Employee Affective Responses to Crisis Events

Past research indicates that attributions of responsibility may impact the outcomes of the crisis. Specifically, findings indicate that transgression-based crises which result in high levels of responsibility being attributed to the organization (e.g., organizational misdeeds) are the most likely to result in negative outcomes such as reputation damage or feelings of anger toward the organization by stakeholders, (Coombs, 2007a; Pace, et al., 2010). Conversely, victim (e.g., natural disasters) and accidental (e.g., technical errors or technical breakdowns) crises which result in minimal to moderate amount of responsibility being attributed to the organization typically result in fewer negative impacts for the organization. In particular, research has found that organizations involved in a victim or accidental crisis are typically able to retain their reputation, and are able to recover from the situation (Coombs, 2007a). Building on these previous results, we suggest that employees use information about attribution of responsibility to make sense of a crisis and to determine their affective reaction to the event. We are interested in two affective responses: anger towards the organization and organizational commitment.

Gibson and Callister (2010) propose that anger is an emotion that occurs when an individual attributes the responsibility of wrong doing to a particular target. Research has found that stakeholders react negatively when an organization has acted in an unacceptable manner (Hearit, 2006). In particular, individuals who attribute higher levels of responsibility to an organization are more likely to be angry towards the organization after an event (Barclay, Skarlicki, & Pugh, 2005; Weiner, 2004). Thus, we believe that when employees perceive that the organization has intentionally engaged in some sort of wrong-doing (i.e., higher levels of attributed responsibility), individuals will be likely to experience anger toward the organization.

One of the reasons employees may react with anger after a crisis is because they perceive that an injustice has occurred. Justice refers to fairness in the workplace, and injustices occur when employees perceive that resources, decisions, or people have not been treated fairly as a result of an organizational action (Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter, & Ng, 2001). Increases in

attributions of responsibility for a crisis can lead an employee to perceive that an injustice has occurred. Similarly, employees often develop certain expectations for how the organization should behave by creating a psychological contract with the organization (Rousseau, 1995). Crises likely violate the expectations that stakeholders have of the organization and cause a breach in the psychological contract between the stakeholder and the organization (Fediuk et al., 2010). When the cause of the contract breach is due to the intentional actions of the organization (i.e., high level of attributed responsibility to the organization) employees are more likely to respond with anger (Barclay et al., 2005); however, when the breach of contract is caused by factors outside of the organization's control (i.e., low level of responsibility attributed to the organization) employee's may be more forgiving of the situation. Following this line of thought, we suggest that after a crisis event employees use their judgment regarding attributions of responsibility to determine the level of anger they will feel towards the organization. The higher the attribution of responsibility, the more angry they will be towards the organization. Thus:

> **P1a**: Higher attributions of responsibility after a crisis event will result in higher levels of employee anger towards the organization.

Attributions of responsibility also impact the level of organizational commitment employees experience following a crisis. Past research has found negative relationships between the violation of the employee-organization psychological contract and perceptions of injustice with organizational commitment (Colquitt, et al., 2001; Zhao, Wayne, Glibowski, & Bravo, 2007). When applying this to employee reactions to crisis we argue that increases in attributions of responsibility are likely to be perceived as resulting in both violation of psychological contract and a sense of injustice. This in turn, will result in lower organizational commitment on the part of the employee. On the other hand, when there is lower attribution of responsibility employees may come together and develop a sense of unity (Heeren, 1999). Past research has found that after crisis events where low levels of responsibility are attributed to the organization (e.g., accidental fire) individuals are more likely to develop social cohesion (Fischer, 1998; Tierney, 2003). We believe that this sense of unity may translate into higher organizational commitment (Andrews, Kacmar, Blakely, & Bucklew, 2008). Overall, the more the employee perceives the organization to be at fault, the lower their level of commitment towards the organization. On the other hand, when employees perceive that the organization is not at fault, they will be more likely to strengthen their positive feelings toward the organization and increase their level of commitment towards the organization. Thus:

> **P1b**: Higher attributions of responsibility towards an organization after a crisis event will result in lower levels of employee commitment towards the organization.

Moderating Effects of Crisis Severity

Attributions of responsibility appear to be a driving factor in how employees respond to acute stressors such as crisis events. However, crisis severity can also play a role in the reactions employees have. Previous research in both crisis (Coombs, 2006) and strain responses (Kleber & van der Velden, 2003) suggest that levels of severity can impact individual responses after an event. SCCT argues that crisis severity in combination with the attribution of responsibility results in more negative outcomes for the organization (Coombs, 1998; 2004; 2006; Coombs & Holladay, 2002). Although most of the research explores the direct effects that crisis severity can

have on stakeholder responses to a crisis, in the context of employee reactions we believe that the severity of the crisis is likely to act as a moderator to enhance or lessen the intensity of the strain response depending on the level of responsibility attributed to the organization. When attributions of responsibility are high and the crisis is severe it is likely perceptions of a breach in the psychological contract and organizational injustice will be greater (Fediuk et al., 2010), which will lead to affective reactions that will be will be more negative. However, less severe crises may not pose any substantial violation to the employees and will likely not result in such a strong negative response. As illustrated in Figure 2a, we believe that crisis severity will moderate the relationship between attribution of responsibility and anger such that anger will be stronger as severity increases. Thus:

> **P2a**: Crisis severity will moderate the relationship between attributions of responsibility and anger such that increases in levels of severity will result in higher anger towards the organization.

We also expect that crisis severity will moderate the relationship between attributions of responsibility and organizational commitment. As shown in Figure 2b, it is suggested that organizational commitment will be highest when the organization is attributed lower levels of responsibility for the crisis and the crisis is seen as severe. Under these conditions, employees will feel that they need to support and help the organization. As previous research has found, severe crisis events can result in unity and altruistic behaviors from stakeholders (Tierney, 2003). Therefore, employees will be committed to the organization and help the organizations after the crisis. On the other hand, commitment will be lowest when the attribution of responsibility for the crisis is high and severity is high. In these situations employees can feel a sense of betrayal from the organization, and will be less likely to support it in any way. Thus:

> **P2b**: Crisis severity will moderate the relationship between attributions of responsibility and organizational commitment such that increases in levels of severity will result in higher organizational commitment only when attribution is low.

Employee Affective and Behavioral Responses to Crisis Events
Previous research points at the importance of affective states for behavioral actions. In particular, researchers suggest that affective states are important because they predict behavior (Dillard, 1998) and help individuals make decisions of how to act in the environment (Scudder, 1999). Building on past work that supports the role affective states play in influencing behavior, we argue that employee behavioral responses to crisis will be influenced by their level of anger towards the organization and the level of organizational commitment they feel. We focus on two employee behaviors: CWB and OCB.

CWB are employee behaviors that are intentional and have detrimental effects on the organization (Fox et al., 2001). Previous research has found that affective states such as anger and organizational commitment play an important role when understanding the causes of CWB (Fox et al., 2001; Spector & Fox, 2002). Principles from equity theory have been used to explain why these affective states can affect individual behaviors. Equity theory (Adams, 1965) suggests that when employees perceive they are being treated fairly, they will be motivated to maintain positive relationships with the organization. On the other hand, when employees perceive unfair treatment they will engage in behaviors that will help the restore their sense of equity. Thus,

employees who are angry towards the organization because they perceive unfairness has occurred will be more likely to try to restore their sense of equity by engaging in retaliatory behaviors against the organization (Barclay et al., 2005; Bies & Tripp, 1996). In a similar way, employees who perceive the organization is treating them fairly and are committed towards the organization will not be motivated to engage in retaliatory behaviors such as CWB.

We believe that after a crisis, employees go through a similar process when determining how to behave towards the organization. As such, the levels of anger and commitment that employees feel toward the organization following a crisis will affect the likelihood that employees will engage in CWB. In particular, the higher the levels of employee anger towards the organization, the more likely employees will be to engage in CWB. These actions will be motivated by employee to restore a balance in the relationship with the organization. On the other hand, the higher the levels of commitment towards the organization, the lower the likelihood employees will engage in CWB. In these cases, employees might view organizational commitment as an expression of how good they feel about the organization and will not engage in behaviors that can hurt the organization. Thus:

> **P3a**: Higher levels of anger towards an organization after a crisis event will increase the likelihood that employees will engage in CWB.

> **P3b**: Higher levels of organizational commitment after a crisis event will decrease the likelihood that employees will engage in CWB.

OCB represent a second type behavioral strain response that employees may engage in after a crisis event. OCB is a term used to describe employee behaviors that are discretionary, are often not recognized by reward systems from the organization, and, in aggregate, promote effective functioning of the organization (Organ, 1997). Past research has found that perceptions of fairness, satisfaction with the job, leadership support, and conscientiousness are strong predictors of employee OCB (Hoffman, Blair, Meriac, & Woehr, 2007). Additionally, previous research exploring affect as a predictor of OCB has also found that positive emotions likely result in OCB (Spector & Fox, 2002). Although employee likelihood to engage in OCB has not been explored following a crisis, we suggest that after a crisis affective states will impact the likelihood that employees will engage in OCB. In particular, it is expected that the higher the levels of anger towards the organizations the lower the possibilities that an employee will engage in OCB. In this case, angry employees will not feel the need to "help the organization" by engaging in behaviors that will not be recognized as part of their performance. On the other hand, employees who feel high levels of commitment toward the organization will be more likely to engage in OCB. In this case, employees who have a positive feeling towards the organization are likely to feel a need to "help the organization" to get over the crisis and by engaging in OCB they will feel that they are helping the organization. Thus:

> **P4a**: Higher levels of employee anger towards the organization will decrease the likelihood that employees will engage in OCB.

> **P4b**: Higher levels of employee commitment towards the organization will increase the likelihood that employees will engage in OCB.

Consequences of Employee Responses to Crisis

In the final link of our model we elaborate on the organizational and personal consequences that employee responses to a crisis can have. We are particularly interested in the costs and the benefits that employee responses to a crisis can bring both the organization and the individual. We believe that employee behavior has important implications for the performance of others and their organization (Detert, Trevino, Burris, & Andiappan, 2007; Dunlop & Lee, 2004). This is particularly true after a crisis. Research exploring external stakeholder's reactions to crisis has found that crisis events can affect organizational reputation (Coombs, 1995, 1998), purchase intentions (Lyon & Cameron, 2004), supportive behaviors (Coombs & Holladay, 2001), and word of mouth (Coombs & Holladay, 2008a). We believe that employee behaviors following a crisis can also affect the outcomes of the organization and the individual.

Previous research in organizational behavior suggests that CWB represents significant costs for organizations (Vardi & Weitz, 2004), and has found that CWB increases the expenses organizations incur due to accidents, health care, and lost work time (Harris, 2004). Additionally, organizations that report a higher percentage of CWB by employees also report higher damage to organizational property due to sabotage (Ambrose, Seabright, & Schminke, 2002), higher costs of workers' compensation and replacement workers due to violence (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2005), diminished financial performance due to theft (Detert et al., 2007), and productivity loss (Dunlop & Lee, 2004). There is an agreement among scholars that employee CWB often result in negative outcomes for the individual and the organization (e.g., lower performance, increase costs, and lower effort from employees).

Building on previous research, we suggest that when employees respond to a crisis event by engaging in CWB, this will result in negative outcomes for the organization. In particular, CWB after a crisis is likely to increase the costs for organizations beyond the costs caused by the crisis itself. Employees who engage in CWB view their actions as a form of retaliation towards the organization and may be less likely to invest less effort into their work. This decrease in performance increases the costs for the organization because it requires more hours to do the same job. Furthermore, the organization would need to pay for any sort of physical damage caused to the organization as a result of CWB. At the same time, CWB can also manifest in negative actions towards other stakeholders such as customers or coworkers. This can also be detrimental to the organization because it can negatively influence the evaluations that other stakeholders make about the organization. At the individual level, CWB can also bring negative consequences for employees. Employees who engage in CWB after a crisis are likely to be dismissed or punished by the organization, are likely to be evaluated lower by their supervisors, and can suffer from a poor personal reputation. Thus:

> **P5a**: After a crisis event employee CWB will result in negative outcomes for the organization.

> **P5b**: After a crisis event employee CWB will result in negative outcomes for the individual.

Much of the interest in OCB research is the assumption that these behaviors are likely to enhance organizational performance (Organ, Podsakoff, & Mackenzie, 2006). Previous work on this area has found that OCB have important implications for organizational and personal outcomes. For example, helping behaviors (i.e., a form of OCB) have been positively related to

evaluations of performance, quantity and quality of production, sales, operating efficiency, customer satisfaction, and quality of performance (Organ et al., 2006). Additionally, OCB has been positively related to individual performance. In particular, employees who engage in helping behaviors are more likely to receive positive evaluations from their supervisors, be recommended for promotion, and receive positive rewards from other employees (Organ, et al., 2006). In general, OCB often result in positive outcomes for the organization and the employee. Building on these findings we suggest that when employees engage in OCB after a crisis event, these behaviors are likely to bring positive outcomes for the organization and the employee. For the organization, having employees who are willing to engage in additional work outside of their responsibility can result in lower expenses after a crisis, availability of more resources to deal with consequences from the crisis, and better service for customers. At the individual level, employee OCB can result in positive perceptions about the employee, positive feelings towards the employee, and increase in their personal reputation in the eyes of supervisors and other organizational supporters. Building on this rationale we advance the following propositions:

P6a: After a crisis event employee OCB will result in positive outcomes for the organization.

P6b: After a crisis event employee OCB will result in positive outcomes for the individual.

Discussion

Crisis communication and crisis management has been an important topic of research in the last three decades. Scholars and practitioners in public relations and corporate communication have been very interested in understanding what organizations can do after a crisis event to minimize the reputation damage to the organization, and how practitioners can manage and navigate after a crisis event (Coombs, 2007b). Although we now have a better understanding of crisis events and the way that external publics react and process information after a crisis, we have very limited understanding of how employees process and react to crisis events. Employees are one of the most important assets of an organization and can play an important role after a crisis occurs. In particular, the reactions of employees following a crisis can have a significant impact on the way the organization is able to recover from the crisis. Because of this, we believe that understanding employee reactions is essential to knowing how organizations can best manage and communicate during and after a crisis situation.

In an attempt to continue advancing our understanding of crisis events this manuscript presents a model to understand how attributions of responsibility and crisis severity influence the way employee make sense of a crisis and deicide to respond to such events. Additionally, we link employee responses to both organizational and individual outcomes. Building on ideas from the JDC model and SCCT, we propose that all types of crisis are likely to cause employee strain reactions. However, the types and intensities of these responses vary based on the amount of responsibility attributed to the organization and the severity of the crisis. We also suggest that these employee responses are likely to impact organizational and individual outcomes after a crisis event.

Similar to Fediuk and colleagues (2010), we believe that to understand employee responses to crises we need to acknowledge that employees go through several stages before they decide to act. First, they engage in a cognitive processing stage. During this time employees will

try to make sense of the crisis and understand why it occurred and who is to blame. After the cognitive processing, they will first react based on emotions, and these emotions will influence the behaviors they choose to follow. Finally, employee behavioral reactions can result in either positive or negative outcomes for the organization and the individual.

There are at least three important boundary conditions that we need to highlight about this model. First, employees have a prior history with the organization. This history includes experiences with and previous knowledge about the organization. We acknowledge this history can intensify how employees will evaluate what to do after a crisis has occurred. Second, we assume that employees have a high personal involvement when a crisis affects the organization that they work for. Given this high level of involvement, employees are an active audience who are likely to process more information – because of the relevance to them- and analyze information more carefully after a crisis occurs. Thus, we should note that the factors presented in this model are not exhaustive and represent a portion of the information that employees are likely to evaluate and types of strain responses employees could experience. Finally, we also assume that the crisis event is the only "trigger event" for employees to evaluate when assessing what actions in which to engage.

Implications for Theory and Research

The framework presented in this manuscript identifies multiple factors that impact the types of responses employees may have to varying types of crisis situations. The literature acknowledges that acute stressors, such as a crisis event, will result in a strain response, but does not clearly differentiate how or why employees respond differently to varying types of stressors. This manuscript seeks to fill this gap by examining the impact that attributions of responsibility and severity may have on strain responses following acute stressors. Such a distinction provides insight into the underlying mechanism for why certain strain responses occur. In the context of crisis communication, this allows for an understanding as to why employees respond differently during different types of crises. Further investigation into other factors that may impact employee cognitive processing and reactions to crisis events is needed in order to more fully understand and predict how employees will respond to crises.

Furthermore, strain responses are often viewed as unique states that do not impact other strain responses. In many cases strain responses have been linked to performance indicators (Chang et al., 2007), but little is known about how affective and behavioral strain responses may interact with one another. It is necessary to understand how strain responses interact with one another because varying combinations of emotional and behavioral states can have a significant impact on the well-being of the individual as well as the performance of the organization.

In the study of public relations and communication, our model is presented as an initial consideration of how employees make sense and react to crisis events. This is important for both theory and research because it highlights the effects of employee actions after crisis events, and it helps provide a baseline to consider when exploring communication towards employees after a crisis event.

Implications for Practice

This framework also provides insight into how crisis managers, as well as upper management in the organization, may best be able to address employee and organizational needs following a crisis. This framework allows organizations to infer how employees will respond to

the crisis and allows for the organization to make informed decisions about how to appropriately address and plan for employee needs following a crisis.

For example, when attributions of responsibility are high, it may be beneficial for organizations to provide suitable forums in order for employees to express their anger in a more appropriate manner or use communication strategies that apologize and accept responsibility in order to alter the employee's perceptions of the crisis to reduce feelings of anger. When attributions of responsibility are low, it may be important for organizations to embrace the supportive behaviors provided by employees and use messages to further decrease attributions of responsibility in an attempt to increase organizational commitment and OCB.

Finally, prior literature in crisis communication has a limited understanding of how external and internal stakeholders may differ in their responses to a crisis. Employees have a power to intimately and directly impact the organization following the crisis and they may engage in different responses than external stakeholders due to their involvement in the organization. As such, crisis communication and management strategies may need to differ depending on which stakeholder group is being addressed. Message strategies that have been identified as effective with external stakeholder groups may need to be re-evaluated to address the specific and likely intense response from employees during a crisis.

Conclusion

This framework integrates the literature from public relations, crisis communication, organizational behavior, and workplace health to better understand how employees respond to crisis situations. When organizations are involved in a crisis, employees are intimately affected and their responses can have a significant impact on organizational performance. Understanding this process is necessary in order to inform what crisis communication and management strategies can best address the needs of employees and the organizations affected by the crisis.

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Figure 2a
Anger - Moderating Effect of Severity
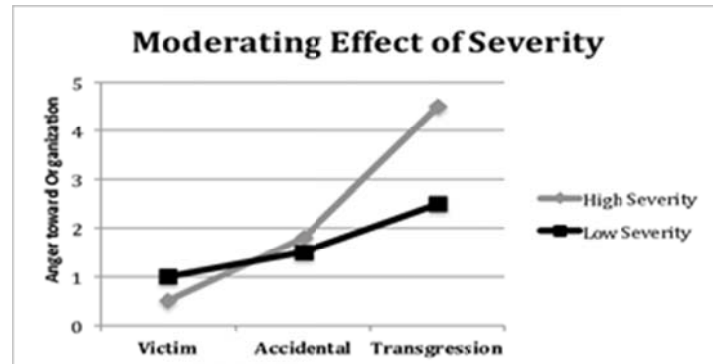
Note. Graph is an estimate of the moderating effects of severity

Figure 2b
Organizational Commitment – Moderating Effect of Severity
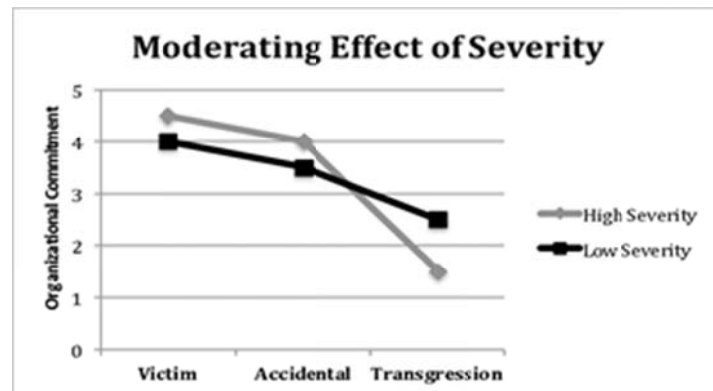
Note. Graph is an estimate of the moderating effects of severity

Dueling Definitions of Uncertain Risk: Modeling Strategic "Risk Communication" by Clashing Advocacy Coalitions as Messages Mix and Mash via Traditional/New/Social Media Venues

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Abstract

The "Dueling Definitions of Uncertain Risk Model" is designed to help students in public relations, environmental communication, journalism and related disciplines better understand the political nature of the processes of risk assessment, risk characterization, and risk management requiring "risk communication." The Dueling Definitions of Uncertain Risk Model draws on the evolution of risk communication through the Red Book and to newer approaches recognizing that how we conceptualize, communicate about, and attempt to manage or mitigate "risk" is essentially political action within a larger social and cultural context. The Model also builds on research over the last 25 years testing the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) in the field of policy analysis (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993). The most fundamental concept in Advocacy Coalition theory is that a set of "deep core" values and accompanying "policy core" beliefs—essentially "worldview"—drives political action as we join with others who share our core beliefs and work to see policy outcomes that reflect those values. While the Model adapts the original Advocacy Coalition "flow diagram" specifically for a risk controversy, it makes one significant tweak—the addition of the "Media-enhanced (traditional/new/social) Public Arena." The paper uses the current example of the public policy battles over a relatively new drilling technology for extracting natural gas and oil from shale deposits the industry calls "horizontal hydraulic fracturing," but grassroots groups protesting against it call "fracking." Fearing irreversible contamination to watersheds and increasing levels of air pollution—since the oil and gas industry have used political influence to exempt this technology from the federal Safe Drinking Water Act and the Clean Air Act—these "fractivists" challenge the gas and oil industry's claims that the technology is safe as they push for local laws to ban fracking in their communities and for stricter federal and state regulations for the industry.

Introduction

In a TV spot set in an empty lecture hall, two enthusiastic college students engage a skeptical classmate in a discussion about the new technology that will meet America's energy needs and create new jobs. This ConcoPhilips "There's Power in Cooperation" advocacy spot jostles against the catchy tune of the animated YouTube viral-hit "My Water's on Fire Tonight (The Fracking Song)" and YouTube videos of folks literally lighting their tap water on fire in the hyper-mediated battle of conflicting "risk" messages about "horizontal hydraulic fracturing"—the petroleum industry's "revolutionary" technology for tapping vast shale deposits to produce oil and natural gas. The "Dueling Definitions of Uncertain Risk Model" conceptualizes the forces at play in the very political public processes of assessing, characterizing—and then communicating about and advocating for—the public policies that will regulate proposed new "risky" technologies.

Time magazine's end-of-year review called "fracking" the environmental issue of 2011 and named two Cornell professors and actor-turned-activist Mark Ruffalo as three major figures in the movement protesting the practice (Walsh, 2012). ProPublica, the internet-based investigative journalism enterprise that has been following the issue, declared 2011 as the year that "fracking" broke into the public consciousness (Lustgarten, 2011). Even gas industry executives conceded they were losing the "messaging battle" in the court of public opinion: "The public is skeptical of anything we say. The favorable perception of the oil and gas industry polls at seven percent—that's lower than Congress," the President and CEO of the Colorado Oil & Gas Association told insiders at a September 2011 conference. Further relaying polling results showing how much industry opposition has grown, she said: "These nuts make up about 90 percent of our population, so we can't really call them nuts anymore. They're the mainstream" (fjgallagher, 2011).

In an attempt to help students in communication disciplines like journalism, public relations, and environmental communication—and folks like the President and CEO of the Colorado Oil and Gas Association—gain a better understanding of the types of dynamics that come into play in a risk controversy, the "Dueling Definitions of Uncertain Risk Model" is a multi-disciplinary synthesis of theory and research that draws on the evolution of "risk communication" through the publication of the so-called "Red Book" (National Research Council, 1989) advocating the democratic or participatory model and to newer approaches that recognize that how we conceptualize, communicate about, and attempt to manage or mitigate "risk" is essentially political action within a larger social and cultural context.

The Model also builds on research over the last 25 years testing the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) in the field of policy analysis (Sabatier, 1988; Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993). The most fundamental concept in Advocacy Coalition theory is that a set of "deep core" values and accompanying "policy core" beliefs—essentially "worldview"—drives political action as we join with others who share our core values and accompanying policy beliefs and work to see public policy outcomes that reflect those values. ACF research also focuses on how technical and scientific information is used in specific policy areas—key to deciding issues involving "risk."

The primary purpose of this paper is to present an explanation of the elements in the Dueling Definition of Uncertain Risk Model and apply a discussion of the model to the current controversies surrounding the growing use of the new technology the oil and gas industry call "horizontal hydraulic fracturing" but protesting activists call "fracking" The paper will, first, explain the model and the theories underlying the concepts it illustrates; second, discuss the

current battles over "fracking" by examining how the Core Values and the accompanying Policy Beliefs of the Advocacy Coalitions then further shape the use of the available Resources, and Strategies employed in the battle to influence the public policies at question; third, discuss the significance of adding a "Media-Enhanced Public Arena" in the middle space shared with the "Government Policy Makers"; and fourth, conclude with observations about why a fuller understanding—and a way to model—the dynamics involved when groups clash over assessing and managing risky technologies can spur addition research and insights into the public policy-making process and the new challenges of expanding venues for risk communication strategies and techniques.

The Components of the Model

Figure 1
Dueling Definitions of Uncertain Risk Model
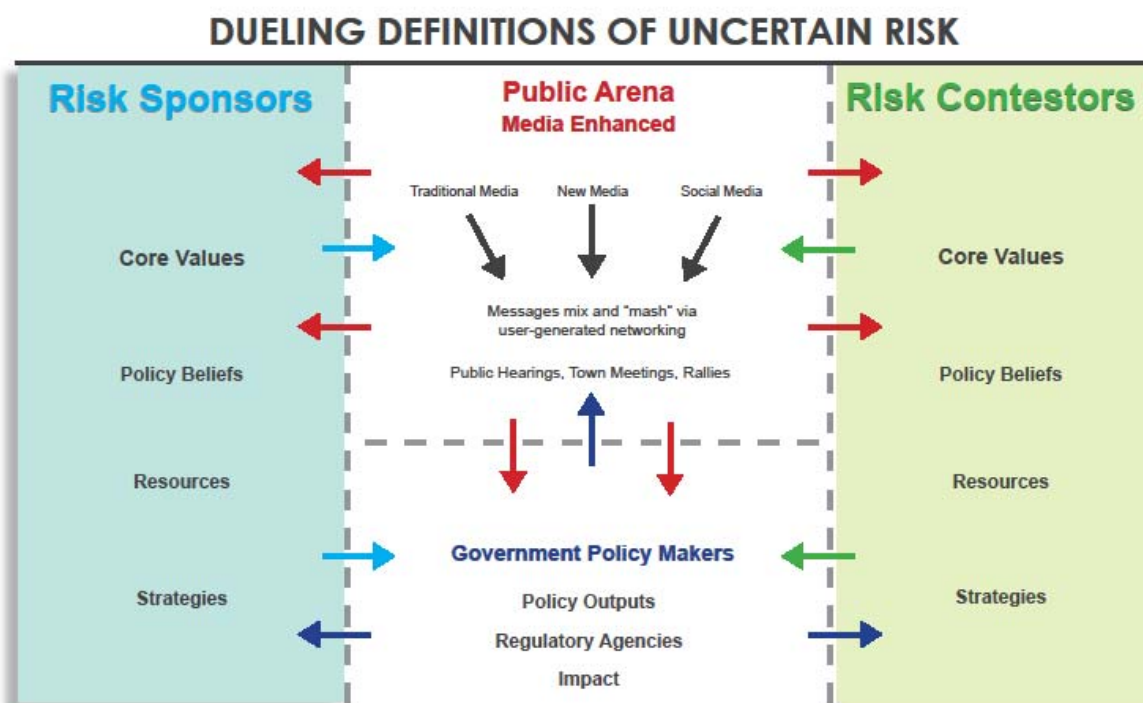
The Dueling Definitions of Uncertain Risk Model takes the basic "Policy Subsystem" section of the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) "flow diagram" and tweaks it with risk controversy-specific labels and creates a new space designated for the "Public Arena." The larger model of the policy process envisioned in Sabatier's original theory focuses on the "Policy

Subsystem"—consisting of two "Advocacy Coalitions"—labeled "A" and "B"—and the governmental "Policy Brokers" sandwiched between the two coalitions. The original model also includes a section for "External Conditions"—like socioeconomic conditions, scientific information, public opinion, and view of the role of government—that influence the rule-making and decisions made in the Policy Subsystem.

In the Dueling Definitions of Uncertain Risk Model, the first components are the two battling coalitions placed at the opposite ends of the model: the "Risk Sponsors" advocating the technological innovation at one end and the "Risk Contesters" challenging the new technology on the opposite end. The model's next major component is a horizontally-divided central space between the two competing coalitions. Because the Dueling Definitions of Uncertain Risk Model focuses on the dynamics of how risk messages and the ensuing debates between the clashing advocacy coalitions and their risk-related arguments drive the debate and become embedded in everyday conversations, the top part of this central space is labeled "Public Arena" with the subtitle "Media-enhanced (traditional/new/social)." By noting the role of a public space for discussion that expands through media venues, the model focuses on the strategic uses of advocacy messages advancing the coalitions' interests. The lower part of the divided central space replaces the ACF "Policy Brokers" with "Government Policy Makers"—the governmental bodies and authorities charged with crafting and carrying out the public policy that will manage and regulate the "risky" technology. The lines separating the various model components are dotted, not solid, suggesting the chance for influence between both these "intermediary" actors and the members of the competing coalitions as they interact and participate in the public discussions and policy-making processes.

Recently, policy analysis researchers using the ACF initiated studies examining the influence of policy narratives on public opinion and policy outcomes, highlighting how the "policy environment" becomes "progressively more complex and cacophonous" with new media and social media (Shanahan, Jones & McBeth, 2011). The foundation of these newer ACF analyses looking at how the advocacy coalitions use policy narratives can be found in Stone's seminal work identifying the "political paradoxes" in public policy debates and identifying how language use and other rhetorical strategies shape the discourse leading to policy choices (1988).

By adding the "Media-enhanced (traditional/new/social) Public Arena," the Dueling Definitions Model creates a focal space to examine the risk-related policy narratives coming from the various coalition parties and policy actors—reflected in the traditional media and in the amplifying mixing and "mashing" of messages in new media and social media venues. Adding the "Public Arena" for public discussion and recognizing how the various media venues and practices like social networking now expand and amplify public discussion and participation in local issues by spreading user-generated media content, the Dueling Definitions Model—with apologies to Solis and Breakenridge—puts the publics back in public policy-making (2009).

Core Values—the Well-spring of Policy Advocacy

The Dueling Definitions of Uncertain Risk Model builds on the last 30 years of research to identify the essential ideology or "worldviews" and the core values traditionally associated with the two major competing factions or advocacy coalitions involved in risk controversies. The Dueling Definitions of Uncertain Risk Model inserts "Core Values" at the top of the list of elements that will shape the other key elements identified in the original ACF model—the accompanying "Policy Beliefs" that grow out of the Core Values and then the uses of "Resources" and "Strategies" in the continuing battle for the desired policy outcomes. Based on research in risk controversies in the last 30 years, the "Risk Sponsors" come from the perspective

of an "Industrial Society" with a "Risk Culture" and core values based in fundamental beliefs in natural resource development and economic development/growth and a certainty that technology/industry will solve problems—which then privileges scientific knowledge. "Risk Contestors," on the other hand, are based in a "Risk Society" with a "Precautionary Culture" and core values based on ecological tenets or goals which demand participatory governance and transparency while discounting distinctions between lay and expert assessments of risk (Hanekamp and Pieterman, 2009). Portney (1991) discovered even deeper well-springs of philosophical and ideological divides feeding risk controversies. These fundamental disagreements center on questions about humankind's relationship to the natural world, issues of distributive and social justice, debates about the relationships between government and those governed, and, ultimately, challenges to the often subjective nature of the authority of "science." These four essential values conflicts, Portney found, provide the "normative context" of risk decisions.

Building on that third plank of the values listed for the two essential worldviews—scientific expertise versus less emphasis on distinguishing between "expert" or "lay" assessments—is essential to understanding the evolution of research and thinking about risk controversies in the last 30 years. In traditional controversies, the Risk Sponsors and the Risk Contestors represent the differences the literature identified almost 30 years ago as decisional premises based on primarily a "Technical Rationality" or a "Cultural Rationality." Risk assessments using experiential or Cultural Rationality personalize the risk—asking what any level of "exposure" means to *my children/grandchildren* and *my pets/livestock*—while Technological Rationality abstracts "exposure" into incomprehensible parts-per-million and probabilities. Where "scientific" or Technical Rationality narrows the realm of relevant factors, Cultural Rationality branches out and brings many factors and dimensions to the risk assessment which is a social process inviting different voices and different perspectives. Cultural Rationality values anecdotal evidence and often draws on historical precedent and folk wisdom. Operating within the "cultural framework," risk messages become embedded in everyday communication and are part of a complex sociopolitical tapestry (Krimsky and Plough, 1988; Douglas and Wildasky 1982).

Trying to get a handle on how the two essential advocacy coalitions view scientific research and evidence in this particular controversy is difficult because the battle over environmental and health impact of fracking technologies and the development of both oil shale and tar sands, which the industry categorizes as "unconventional" fossil fuels, becomes just a small part of the much larger "scientific" debates about global climate change and greenhouse gases. These controversies also get bundled into the larger policy battles over establishing national and even international energy policy. Recently, a group of "alumni" of NASA—including former astronauts—asked the agency to stop making "unproven and unsubstantiated remarks" connecting global climate change and human activities. The group's intent was "to get NASA to back off from taking political positions on science" (Parry, 2012).

In this context, the battles over fracking are just a small—but very controversial—piece of the global puzzle as both Risk Sponsors and Risk Contestors deride and discredit any studies supporting the other side claims or contentions and ridicule or object to the composition of investigatory committees appointed by government agencies. These disputes over "science" become part of the strategic jockeying that goes into the advocacy efforts—and, as Portney (1991) and other researchers have shown—form the foundation of risk controversies.

Policy Beliefs—Advancing or Protecting the Core Values in the Political Fray

The contest over using the fracking technology to drill gas wells in the Marcellus Shale— the rich deposits beneath New York, Pennsylvania and eastern Ohio—has been especially fierce, fracturing communities and setting neighbor against neighbor in this section of "the old industrial America" where unemployment rates are high and the prospect of well-paying jobs and renewed local economies makes the deals offered by the Risk Sponsors hard to resist. As the risk controversy used to illustrate the elements of the Dueling Definitions of Uncertain Risk Model, the pitched battle over fracking pits long-time contenders in the larger battles over national energy policies and the legal wrangling over clean air and water policies against each other. But, more importantly also adds the elements of diverse coalitions of local activist groups as allies, creating new dynamic issue coalitions. While the major industrial associations for the oil and gas industry and their allied local groups like the Marcellus Shale Coalition are accustomed to facing off against the policy agendas of large national environmental groups like the Sierra Club and the Natural Resources Defense Council, the real driving forces in the anti-fracking movement are the particularized local groups like Don't Frack New York or Stop Fracking Ohio—not the national organizations.

Horizontal hydraulic fracturing—the technological innovation in oil and gas drilling being challenged—has only been widely used in about the last six years. While Halliburton developed the vertical hydraulic fracturing technique some 60 years ago, horizontal drilling puts a new twist on the practice. After the vertical shaft reaches the desired depth into the layer of shale that will be fractured to release the oil and gas reserves, the drill bits turn and drilling begins horizontally throughout the bed of shale. The hydraulic fracturing process then involves setting off small explosives to rupture the horizontal well casing. Then the actual "hydraulic fracturing" begins by pumping tons of solutions of water, silica sand and any number of chemicals and other agents under high pressure—10,000 pounds per square inch—into the ground where these solutions break open the shale formations. The average gas well takes about eight million gallons of "frac fluid" to complete the process. The frac fluid that returns from the well as waste—also carrying salts, heavy metals and naturally occurring radioactive material— increases the health and pollution hazards already present with the "trade secret" mix of frac fluid chemicals. The waste fluid is either pumped into deep injection wells or hauled off to wastewater treatment plants ("Unnatural Gas," 2010). Much of the controversy over the riskiness of the technology involves concerns over the types of chemicals being injected underground and the how the waste water is handled. Air pollution is also a major issue.

The fundamental public policy at stake in the protest against fracking revolves around the "Halliburton Loophole"—an exemption for the oil/gas industry inserted by then Vice President Dick Cheney into the 2005 Energy Policy Act. The Halliburton Loophole exempts the industry from adhering to the Safe Drinking Water Act so that the chemical mixtures injected into the ground are protected as "proprietary trade secrets." The industry argues that there is no need for federal regulation or mandated disclosure of their fracing-fluid "trade secrets" since drillers post OSHA-mandated lists of the chemicals being used at drilling sites, and, they argue, the new American Petroleum Institute web site—FracFocus—facilitates voluntary disclosure. States can better regulate industry practices since the geology of each area is different, the industry also argues. The industry has powerful supporters like Texas Governor Rick Perry,who claims that requiring disclosure would be tantamount to outlawing fracking since disclosing the contents of the fracturing fluids would, in Perry's words, "shut down the oil and gas industry" (Kirkland,

2010).   When Interior Secretary Ken Salazar raised the issue of drafting regulations for hydro-fracking on federal lands in February 2012, the industry swiftly reacted with official letters protesting any federal regulation of any sector of the industry ("Producers oppose federal frac standard idea, groups say," 2012).

Risk Contestors pose one essential question to the industry: If hydro-fracturing is as safe as you claim, why fight disclosure and adherence to the Safe Drinking Water Act? Currently pending in Congress, The FRAC Act was drafted to close the Halliburton Loophole and the BREATHE Act addresses the additional concerns for air pollution—especially methane gas—associated with the boom in fracking and rules that also exempt the operations from adhering to provisions of the Clean Air Act. Often calling themselves "fracktivists," members of the Risk Constestor advocacy coalition ask questions about water and air quality and human health and safety in marches, town meetings, and public hearings with placards reading "No Fracking Way" and rousing group renditions of an Ohio protester's rallying song "You Can't Drink Money."

An important development in the evolution of risk communication and the development of the democratic or participatory model was the body of research on how "outrage factors" catalyze risk protest when communities believe "outsiders" are imposing a dangerous or burdensome "unacceptable risk" which the community has no ability to control or mitigate (Sandman, l986). Outrage finds voice today in the testimony at town meetings and public hearings as members of the Risk Contestors coalition tell stories about their contaminated well-water and dead livestock while citing research challenging industry claims as they press their local and state governments to ban drilling until better studies answer questions about safety or risk.

Resources and Strategies—From "Preferred Positions" to "Homespun" Protests

As the advocacy coalitions jockey for power and influence in the policy-making process, more insights from the field of policy analysis inform the Dueling Definitions Model and add light to the battle over fracking and the Halliburton Loophole. The industry-based Risk Sponsors have one decided advantage—the "preferred position"—which means that government entities tend to support economic development first and foremost when formulating public policy. This "preferred position" is imbedded in our capitalistic DNA, Lindblom has argued in his work in policy analysis for the past 40 years (Lindblom & Woodhouse, 1993).

In assessing the Resources and Strategies the advocacy coalitions bring to the battles over formulating public policies that will either mitigate and regulate risk or allow industry to drill with minimal regulations, traditional efforts at direct lobbying favor industry. In this controversy, hydraulic fracturing of oil and gas shale reserves becomes part of the much larger lobbying efforts for a core set of energy development policies being advanced by the oil and gas industry's major trade associations—the American Petroleum Institute (API) and the Independent Petroleum Producers Association (IPPA).   The public watchdog group Common Cause issued their study, "Deep Drilling, Deep Pockets in Congress," which found that the natural gas industry spent $750 million to lobby Congress on the issue of fracking between 2001-2011. The study also found that the industry continues to reward those who supported the 2005 Energy Act, with its Halliburton Loophole, with generous campaign contributions. The press release accompanying the study's release ends quoting Common Cause President Bob Eager: "Thanks to the Supreme Court and its Citizens United decision, the natural gas industry will be fee to spend whatever it likes next year to elect a Congress that will do its bidding. The

industry's political investments already have freed it from government oversight" (Common Cause, 2011).

Within API 's broad advocacy efforts are two web sites specific to horizontal hydraulic fracturing—Energy From Shale and Frac Focus—and the issue of hydro-fracking is featured in the central issue agenda promoted in the four other advocacy organizations API sponsors— Energy Tomorrow, Energy Nation, Energy Citizens, and the newly created Vote 4 Energy. The API advocacy sites also link to the IPPA-funded advocacy site Energy In Depth. While sourcewatch.org considers IPPA's Energy In Depth a "front group," each of the six web sites funded by API make the organization's advocacy connection to API clear.

Whether viewed as "advocacy" groups or "front" groups, the campaign material created and released by these major industry groups and by individual companies like ConocoPhillips and Exxon Mobil, who are also running their own advocacy campaigns, become a major stream in the Public Arena portion of the Dueling Definitions of Uncertain Risk Model. Not only are these organizations focused on traditional media relations-type public relations activities to get their issues discussed and covered in "mainstream" and new media coverage, they are also heavily involved in engaging their organizations members in social media platforms and facilitating political activity through new media and social media networking using their members as bloggers, tweeters, posters, etc. API calls Energy Citizens (membership open to all interested) and Energy Nation (employees of the oil and gas industry) "social action networks." These two groups are especially designed to get their memberships involved as bloggers with sections of the web sites giving ready-made issue briefs and social media widgets for their members to download and use in their social media postings.

The industry's advocacy efforts were critiqued February 2012 in a Special Issue on "Environmental Communications and Public Affairs" of the public relations trade magazine, *O'Dwyer's.* After addressing the "groundswell of opposition" over fracking, the article notes the industry is "sinking historic sums into PR, marketing, advertising and lobbying efforts to sway citizen opinion and influence legislation." The article points out some classic "astro-turfing": "Tactically, Energy Citizens has been wont to lend a 'grassroots' sensibility to the needs of the energy industry. One of its mobilizing M.O.s includes bussing in hundreds of energy employees to bogus 'rallies' created by the groups to oppose cap-and-trade legislation." Of this typical front group astro-turf move, the article notes: "By establishing a perceived public support for fracking, Energy Citizens is able to cast the illusion that its services are a response to interests voiced by the masses" (Gingerich, 2012).

While oil and gas industry organizations have very deep pockets to finance slick public relations campaigns and fund intensive lobbying efforts, the diverse Risk Contestors coalition— often described as "homespun" or "rag-tag"—may have less money but may possess another less tangible force that Stone's work in policy analysis identified as often more powerful—the ability to harness "the laws of passion." The first "law of passion" is the synergistic and holistic "the whole is greater than the sum of its parts." Recognizing that most actions change their meaning and impact when done in concert with other actions—the protest march means much more than itself—shows how "passion" enlarges and enhances a coalition's resources as actions assume symbolic meaning and activists form more connections to one another (1988).

Unlike the focused policy agenda advanced by the oil and gas industries, the loose coalition of groups fighting fracking— in the Marcellus region and in other parts of the United States—often come at the issue with different agendas and priorities. Individuals like 2012 Republican presidential hopeful former Senator Rick Santorum want to define those contesting

the safety of the technology and crying "No Fracking Way!" as saying "'Look what's going to happen. Ooh, all this bad stuff's going to happen, we don't know all these chemicals and all this stuff.' Let me tell you what's going to happen: Nothing's going to happen. . ." Santorum then claimed that those protesting fracking "will use this to raise money for the radical environmental groups so they can go out and continue to try to purvey their reign of environmental terror on the United States of America" (Dembicki, 2012). One "snapshot" of the larger Risk Contestor coalition—as reflected in the range of the 109 organizations signing a March 5, 2012 letter to President Obama expressing concern for his implied support of fracking in the 2012 State of the Union Address—shows a much different picture than Santorum's "radical environmental groups." Based in 16 states and claiming more than three million members and supporters, the groups signing the letter are a mix of religious, social justice, public health, consumer, citizen and multi-issues advocacy groups in addition to local "grassroots" environmental groups ("Obama's Support for Fracking Meets with Opposition," 2012).

For the most part, the mainstream national environmental groups like the Sierra Club, National Resource Defense Council, Environmental Defense Fund, and the Environmental Working Group are focused on fracking as part of their larger initiatives dealing with energy policies and climate change. While they are not necessarily leading the charge in rallies at the various state capitols, these groups do lend a permanent infrastructure of organizational web sites, publications, local chapters of seasoned activists, and expertise in the use of social networking and new media channels to send out "action alerts" aimed at lobbying Congress or the President on pending legislation like the FRAC Act or BREATHE Act—regulations at the federal level to address the industry's exemptions to the Clean Drinking Water Act, Clean Water Act, and Clean Air Act.

The coalitions of more local groups fighting fracking support policy solutions ranging from stiffer regulation to passing outright bans. The New York coalition has been described as a loose network of connected grassroots groups whose names stake a claim to their locale and their goals—Sustainable Otsego, Gas-Free Seneca, Committee to Preserve the Finger Lakes, Chanango Community Action for Renewable Energy. For the most part, the organizations started as informal neighborhood study groups or "listening groups" after former Governor Patterson issued a stay against fracking. One grassroots group, Middlefield Neighbors, spearheaded the anti-fracking coalition's move to use local zoning ordinances to ban fracking. As one of the group's co-founders recounts, "We're just regular people who got together and learned and reached in our pockets to go to work on this. It's inspiring, it's awesome, and it's America—its own little revolution." In the November 2011 local elections, the movement to ban fracking supported scores of candidates—most novices—ousting pro-gas incumbents for positions on town councils and county boards (Canatrow, 2012). With over 50 local communities passing fracking bans in upstate New York, the anti-fracking movement seemed to be growing without a countermovement on the other side (Applebome, 2011).

The diversity of the groups at the January 23, 2012 rally in at the State Capitol in Albany reflects the truly "grassroots" composition of most of the anti-fracking groups in New York State, which has been characterized as a "little revolution" since most anti-fracking activism responds to harms already done—as in Pennsylvania—"New York State's resistance has been waging a battle to keep harm at bay." One activist, biologist Sandra Steingraber of Ithaca College, calls the movement "the biggest since abolition and women's rights in New York." Steinbraber also frames the fight against fracking as "the civil rights issue of our day" citing clean water and clean air as "our human rights" (Canatrow, 2011).

As a loose coalition of diverse grassroots groups, it is not surprising that there is some friction over differences in policy ends. The differences were visible at the January 23, 2012 rally in Albany as some 600 citizens registered to lobby for various bills. State Senator Tony Avella, sponsoring a bill to ban fracking, told the crowd: "There is no possible regulation or series of regulations that can stop the one incident that pollutes our water supply for 1,000 years." A member of one of the coalition groups that had been working for stricter regulations rather than outright bans—Environmental Advocates—explained why the group took that stance: "if we had taken a hardline black-and-white stand, we wouldn't have been as effective." Another "fractivist" group from Otsego County was also pushing for a "home rule" bill to clarify a township's right to enact a ban on fracking and blocking industry-funded lawsuits against the municipal bans. The group Frack Action pushed to prohibit fracking and disposing of any fluid used in the fracking process in the state. As a member explained: "Frack Action's position is that there's no reason to even talk about a regulatory approach. It has been proven that it can't be done safely, even when regulated" ("Wall Street Journal: Environmental Groups Rally for NY Ban on Fracking," 2012).

Compared to the carefully planned and measured public relations "front-group" campaigns and the estimated millions of dollars the oil and gas industry spend to counter this new "revolution," grassroots coalitions and networks of opposing local groups conduct their lobbying efforts in a way that expresses more of what Stone called "passion." Some of the more creative tactics used by groups include Citizens Campaign for the Environment and the Environmental Advocates of New York teaming up to send Governor Cuomo 180 water-clocks to represent their request that he extend the period for public comments on the issue to 180 days (Kaplan, 2011). Local farmers and artisan bakers also delivered 100 loaves of bread to Cuomo's office to reinforce the importance of a safe environment for agriculture. Outraged by a series of Exxon Mobil television commercials, about 24 groups pooled their resources to run a series of radio ads to launch a campaign asking New York state residents to write "A Million Fracking Letters" to Governor Cuomo. "The gas industry is using the media to tell consumers that fracking is a piece of cake—finally, the answer to all our energy needs," one of the campaign organizer's stated. "People have a right to hear the other side of the story" ("NY Anti-drilling Groups Launch Campaign to Write 1M Letters," 2011).

Estimates of the amount of money being poured into persuading Governor Cuomo, according to a story in *The New York Times,* place anti-fracking coalition expenditures at about $800,000 and gas industry expenditures at four times that amount. Public records show the gas drilling companies spent more than $3.2 million in the last year. One drilling company, Chesapeake Energy, spent $1.6 million on lobbying in the last three years—in the three years before, Chesapeake barely spent $40,000 for lobbying (Kaplan, 2011).

Public Arena—Media-enhanced and Network Connected--Catalyzes Public Participation

All of the various advocacy messages from the competing coalitions are amplified, mixed and often "mashed" in the media-enhanced Public Arena. Whether it is the extensive investigative or depth reporting issues from the *New York Times,* National Public Radio, the internet-based Pro Publica, or the various cable news channels and ever multiplying social bookmarking and social networking applications and venues that accelerate the 24-hour news cycle, coverage of fracking in recent months has indeed "cracked public consciousness"—as indicated in several surveys conducted and released in March 2012. The Pew Research Center included questions specifically on fracking for the first time and found 26% responded that had

heard a lot about fracking and 37% saying they had heard a little—another 37% responded that they had heard nothing about fracking. Of those who heard about fracking, 52 % favor the technology, while 35% oppose. As with opinions on other energy issues, political affiliation provides a wide gap between Republicans who favor fracking at 73% while Democrats favor the technology at just 33% and 53% for independents. Men favor the new technology about two-to-one (61% to 29%) while women are evenly split (40% favor and 41% oppose). People living in the Northeast—the Marcellus shale "play"—are most likely to have heard a lot (36%) compared to the rest of the country (23%) (Pew, 2012).

  In addition to traditional media and new media journalistic outlets, Web 2.0—primarily the internet and the various user-generated content social media it makes possible—and what is now being called "Web 3.0"—mobile applications—creates almost limitless ways for information and opinion on issues to expand, "mash," and mutate. As Brian Solis and Deirdre Breakenridge frame it in the title of their groundbreaking 2009 analysis of how social media are changing public relations—as the new media and social media cause a communication paradigm shift that is now *Putting the Public Back in Public Relations.*

   With the internet and social media, it might be argued that for many of the types of informal "ad hoc" grsassroots groups that form around local issues like fracking, the organization's primary or definitive or formal presence is in cyberspace—in the web sites and Facebook pages and other social networking tools used to communicate and organize their collective efforts. While many group actions will occur in real time and real space—the rally on January 23, 2012 at the State Capitol in Albany, New York—other efforts will take place in cyberspace—blogging, tweeting, social bookmarking, posting to Facebook, signing on-line petitions, sending e-mails, adding pictures to Tumblr, uploading videos to YouTube, etc.

  Beyond the web sites, Facebook pages, and other social networking tools used by the loosely connected groups the primary advocacy coalitions battling over a risky technology, secondary advocacy groups also join into the fray. Often it will be these secondary groups that hasten the spread of conspiracy theories and rumors through their web sites, publications, and uses of social media. An example of this secondary advocacy comes from the the conservative think-tank American Enterprise Institute which features pieces on its web site by a writer further promoting what was originally the IPPA-funded Energy In Depth's crusade to unmask what the research group considers the media-academia-wealthy liberal philanthropist triangle it claims fuels the anti-drilling agenda in New York state (Entine, 2011). Similarly, in Pennsylvania, the web site of the Commonwealth Foundation boasts a lengthy policy brief—"The Great Frack Attack: The War on Natural Gas"—showing how the same type of conspiratorial triangle of media-academia-wealthy liberal philanthropist also fuels the dissent in that state (2011).

  The blogosphere and citizen journalists also add to the intrigue and rumors. As described in the *O'Dwyer's* piece, a citizen journalist attending the industry event "Media and Stakeholder Relations: Hydraulic Fracturing Initiative 2012" in Houston in November 2011 reported that the spokesman for Pennsylvania energy giant Range Resources claimed his company was employing former military counterinsurgency officers to combat grassroots opposition. "We have several former psyops folks that work for us at Range because they're very comfortable in dealing with localized issues and local governments." A representative from Anadarko Petroleum also warned industry attendees to "download the U.S. Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Manual, because we are dealing with an insurgency." When questioned about these remarks by *O'Dwyer's*, an Energy In Depth spokesman said the comments were "a joke" which was "abundantly obvious to everyone in the room…including the woman from the environmental

group who snuck in and taped it." The *O'Dwyer's* writer notes: "True or not, blogs and Internet discussion forums are now abuzz with the rumor that the U.S. energy industry is hiring psychological warfare experts to perform duties previously reserved for Madison Avenue boardrooms" (Gingerich, 2012).

Government Policy Makers—Ultimate Targets of this Fracas

Whether it is members of Congress, governors of states, members of state legislatures, representatives on regional watershed commissions, local city council members—or "bureaucrats" with the Environmental Protection Agency—the public policy questions about assessing and managing risk will be answered in some way by those elected or appointed to make and enforce the policies. All in all, not an easy task at any level—especially with a clear understanding that there will never be consensus on the "science" being used to justify the policies and that often politics trumps "science." On the national level, White House spokesman Carl Stevens claims President Obama is "evaluating the need for new safeguards for drilling," a spokesman for Public Citizen observes: "It's likely that the science is going to say we need to regulate fracking. But Obama's political team is going to say don't regulate, and I think the political team will win." With the prospect of all the jobs and potential economic development generated by fracking in the Marcellus shale, predicts one industry insider, it will be "politics first and regulation second" (Efstathou & Chipman, 2011).

Policy makers and regulators have to deal with political pressures in many ways. When the list of potential members of the scientific panel that will peer review the EPA's studies on fracking was released in September 2010, the Independent Petroleum Association of America (IPAA) immediately responded with a letter placing a "red flag" on two of the 82 potential panelists. IPAA President and CEO Barry Russell wrote: "Unfortunately, a number of nominees' past comments betray a strong and unambiguous antipathy toward shale development in general, and hydraulic fracturing in particular." The list also included a number of industry-friendly reviewers like officials from Halliburton, Shell Oil and Newfield Exploration (Soraghan, 2010).

Even when the agency has issued a study, political influence continues—as suggested by the EPA's announcement in March 2012 that the draft study released in December 2011, finding contamination in the water supply in Pavillion, Wyoming most likely came from fracking fluids, would require additional testing from the U.S. Geological Survey before it would be peer reviewed. "Today's announcement demonstrates the EPA's report was rushed without peer review, and the assertions aren't supported by the data," a spokesman for EnCana, the gas company that owns the Pavillion wells said ("EPA agrees to more testing before reviewing Wyo. water study," 2012).

Conclusions

While executives with the larger industry groups may have a different view of how to engage in battling the anti-fracking faction, the remarks made by Tisha Conoly-Schuller, the President and CEO of the Colorado Oil and Gas Association, are a telling example of the failure-to-understand the research in risk communication and the basic theories guiding public relations. After referring to the opposition as "nuts," and noting that historically "the industry has been dismissive of its critics," she told industry leaders that trying to connect with the protest faction means, "We're not on engineering and scientific turf anymore, we're on emotional turf, and we need to get our point across." To do this, she said, the industry needs to enlist other

messengers—preferably university professors—who "polled highest and are well-positioned in that regard"—to carry positive messages about oil and gas: "We need to talk about how energy is the building block of our economy" (fjgallagher, 2011).

One of the Cornell professors featured in *Time*—and derided by Energy In Depth as one of the academic "rock stars" created by the media-academia-wealthy liberal philanthropist foundation conspiracy fueling the anti-fracking movement—responded to Conoly-Schuller's remarks about how the industry might improve its image by resorting to the old expert-to-lay model of risk communication. Anthony Ingraffea, the Dwight C. Baum Professor of Engineering and Faculty Fellow at the David R. Atkinson Center for a Sustainable Future (ACSF) at Cornell said: "I am a university professor, but I'm certain Conoly-Schuller and her colleagues decidedly won't like my simple message for them: 'Tell the whole truth.' And I am only one of hundreds of critics delivering that message." Indirectly addressing Conoly-Schuller, Ingraffea continued, "The trouble with the industry's PR is that it is built on myths" ("Does the natural gas industry need a new messenger?" 2011).

While Conoly-Schuller's suggestion about recruiting university professors to shill for the industry might meet with resistance, she also told industry executives, "Our industry is going to have to become hipper. People that like *South Park* are our audience and we need to figure out how to talk to them." She urged the executives to get on Facebook and learn how to use social media: "That's your homework because that's where they are, the people who are talking about this, the people we need to reach" (fjgallagher, 2011).

Fans of *South Park*—even if they could be reached through Facebook campaigns—are not a likely army of passionate activists who will show up at public hearings, register to vote, or write to lawmakers on behalf of the oil and natural gas industries. The American Petroleum Institute has just launched a "Vote 4 Energy" advocacy campaign to enlist "energy voters" who understand that "America needs more energy from all sources to create jobs and get our economy moving" by creating "new opportunities, a new era of energy security and a brighter future for all" (Vote 4 Energy, 2012).

Also sharing a concern for the future, the passionate fracktivists—who join together to march and chant "No Fracking Way!" as they push Congress to close the Halliburton Loophole—protest as a way to question whether their children and grandchildren will have safe water to drink and clean air to breathe once the oil and gas industries drill wells and pump gallons and gallons of "trade secret" chemical combinations into the ground.

The Dueling Definitions of Uncertain Risk Model is offered as a theoretical tool to help students better understand the dynamics of these types of public policy controversies and as an aid to further research that might bridge the policy analysis sciences and various sub-disciplines in the field of communication and forge new understanding of how we collective assess and manage risks to human health and safety and the natural environment.

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Where Relationships Rule: An Investigation of Symmetrical Communication in Evangelical Churches

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Abstract

In order to understand how and why church leaders employ symmetrical and asymmetrical communication with internal publics primarily, as well as the outcomes of those choices, the researcher interviewed 25 pastors at eight large evangelical churches. Findings show that most pastors extol the characteristics of symmetrical communication as a preferred communication model but that most practice two-way asymmetrical communication as much or more than two-way symmetrical communication. Communication choices are guided by communication type, situational circumstances, personal beliefs about leadership, and/or doctrinal beliefs. In particular, pastors are unwilling to be influenced in the areas of biblical doctrine and church mission. Evidence from interviews suggests that symmetrical communication, trust, relationship quality, and satisfaction are interrelated. This paper also discusses the unique role of volunteers as essential member-publics and suggests that symmetry is imperative to volunteerism in the church. The perspectives of senior pastors are shown to strongly influence the communication environment of the church, whether authoritarian or collaborative (transformational). This paper recommends that the degree of symmetry used in communication with publics be guided by a public's organizational proximity to the communicator and by the degree of interdependence the organization (or leader) has with the public. The findings of this research may be beneficial for any organization that is member-centric, mission-focused, dependent on volunteers, and/or particularly concerned with internal PR.

Introduction[1]

It can be argued that the primary product offered by a local church as an organization to its constituents is relationship; churches instruct and encourage members and visitors in their relationships with God and people, and they provide a context for myriad relationships—intended for spiritual, social, educational, professional, and/or service-focused purposes—to form and grow. In their book on communication and conflict management in the church, Gangel and Canine (1992) identify this relational focus as a major point of distinction between churches and secular organizations: "In profit-making organizations, interpersonal relations serve as a tool or a means to accomplish the profit motive. In a Christian organization, it serves as the end as well as a means" (p. 95). Studies have indicated that the quality of relationships enjoyed by an organization are related to such factors as the quality of interaction between members and leaders (Mueller & Lee 2002), satisfaction with the amount and form of communication received (McCown, 2007; Taylor, 1997), and the openness of leaders to feedback (Garner & Wargo, 2009). The field of public relations has long promulgated the importance of organization–public relationships (OPR) as a factor contributing to the success or failure of organizations (e.g. Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2006). Public relations excellence theory, proposed in 1992, includes twelve characteristics that contribute significantly to success in building OPRs (Grunig, J.E. & Grunig, L.A., 1992). Among those characteristics, two-way symmetrical communication has become a hallmark of PR excellence and has been recommended (albeit not without controversy) as the most effective model for communicating with publics.

Although churches do not commonly employ public relations officers per se, church leaders routinely engage in PR activities—whether intentionally or unintentionally—as they strive to represent their organization, communicate with constituents, and build relationships with their internal and external publics. While most churches—like many other non-profit organizations—may not have the structure or resources to support a PR professional on staff, leaders would be served by understanding how their communication choices and behaviors act as PR functions in that they shape organization–public relationships for better or worse.

With its relational focus and doctrinal mandates to care for others, a church would appear to be an ideal organization to adopt symmetrical communication models as normative. Interviews with church leaders conducted by Phillips (2010) indicated that many of their beliefs and values are compatible with symmetrical communication principles. Church leaders also indicated that they are likely to embrace symmetrical communication tactics within the context of a good relationship with a high level of trust. However, some beliefs that church leaders hold pose potential obstacles to symmetry, as do some organizational structures (Phillips, 2010). The purpose of this research, therefore is to discover whether two-way symmetrical communication is indeed an advantageous stance for church leaders to adopt when communicating with their publics; to investigate the ways that church leaders practice symmetrical or asymmetrical communication; and to discover those factors that encourage or impede choices toward symmetry.

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[1] This research was conducted in the process of completing master's degree thesis requirements at Texas Christian University.

Review of Literature

Spicer (2007) describes the relationships that organizations and stakeholders have with each other, saying that where stakeholders have a high dependence on the organization and the organization has a high dependence on the stakeholder, the stakeholder and the organization are interdependent (p. 31). By recognizing that interdependence, organizational leaders—including church leaders—can begin to realize the importance of establishing and developing organization–public relationships that are healthy and rich. For, as Broom, Casey, and Ritchey (2000) explain, when parties perceive that they have a relationship with each other, they will behave in ways that both reflect the qualities of that relationship and construct the qualities of the relationship. Applying this principle to the context of a church, we can see that because a church is not merely leading its people but also has a interdependent relationship with them, the quality of relationship that staff, volunteers, and members believe they have with the church as an organization will determine how they behave, and their behavior will further strengthen or challenge that relationship. And that relationship matters because it either helps or hinders the organization's ability to succeed (Grunig& Huang, 2000).

Research has shown that strategic public relations and communication activities can effectively shape perceptions about organizational relationships, satisfaction, and behavior. For example, Taylor (1997) found that as church members expressed satisfaction with the communication they received from leaders, they also expressed satisfaction with church membership and were more likely to participate in church activities beyond mere attendance. Taylor suggested that "an environment of open, supportive, active, accurate, free-flowing communication in the church is the foundation for a satisfied membership" (p. 302). In another longitudinal study linking communication to relationship quality, Ledingham and Bruning (2000) used the dimensions of openness, trust, involvement, investment, and commitment to measure the quality of the organization–public relationships of a telephone service provider both before and after the organization implemented an intentional communication campaign. The results demonstrated that the organization gained customer fidelity and implied that the organization's strategic communication efforts had the impact of improving relationship quality and strengthening the organization's business position with its customers. Berger (1999) claims that public relations is the most effective organizational function for creating communication that represents the organization, and he points to symmetrical communication as one ideological communication approach that has shaped public relations.

The Ideological Roots of the Two-Way Symmetrical Communication Model

The two-way symmetrical model of communication is one of the most widely discussed models of PR communication, and it has been increasingly scrutinized since its introduction as a normative model in 1992. Although it was first promoted by name in 1984 by Grunig and Hunt, the roots of the symmetrical model go back to early discussions of dialogue as an interpersonal communication philosophy. Austrian Jewish philosopher Martin Buber is credited with developing the dialogue concept by identifying two distinct attitudes in human communication, which he termed I-Thou and I-It (Buber's italics) in his 1923 book titled I and Thou. Buber's concept of the I-It communication relationship is monologic in that the speaker relates to the hearer as an object to engaged for the purposes of accomplishing his or her own objectives. For Buber, the I-Thou relationship occurs when one chooses to recognize another as a unique human being, particularly as that person—Thou—is "a glimpse through to the eternal Thou" (Buber, 1958, p. 75). The person with whom one is communicating is a person who reflects God, and

who, therefore, is worthy of appreciation and respect in their own right. (The spiritual lens through which Buber views the value of individuals in communication is especially appropriate as we examine how church leaders communicate with those in their church.) With this perspective, the communication relationship that Buber endorsed is dialogic in that both parties are engaged in an exchange for mutual benefit and understanding. Buber recognized, however, that the I-Thou exchange is not entirely without self-interest. Buber's dialogue may best be understood, according to Johannesen (1971), as "more of a communication attitude, principle or orientation than a specific method, technique, or format" (p. 374). One comes to a conversation in a "spirit of dialogue" (Johanneson, 1971, p. 374), then employs certain dialogic tactics to build a mutually beneficial, enriching relationship with his/her co-communicator.

In 1968, Thayer described communication that was synchronistic and diachronistic in ways that paralleled Buber's I-It and I-Thou, respectively (J. E. Grunig & L. A. Grunig, 1992). J. E. Grunig called on Thayer's concepts in his study of the communication approaches of public relations professionals in 1976, and subsequently replaced the concepts of synchronism and diachronism with asymmetrical communication and symmetrical communication respectively (J. E. Grunig & L. A. Grunig, 1992). Grunig and Hunt(1984) then introduced two-way symmetrical communication as one of four communication models identified in public relations history and practice. Among the four models, two-way symmetry is distinguished by the intentional exchange of information between an organization and its publics that takes a dialogic form, with openness and reciprocity as its key characteristics. It was further promulgated as a normative model for PR communication with the introduction of PR excellence theory in 1992 (J. E. Grunig & L. A. Grunig, 1992). According to the symmetrical model, an organization is just as likely to be influenced by the public as the public is to be influenced by the organization (Dozier & Ehling, 1992). As J. E. Grunig and L. A. Grunig (1992) put it, "In the symmetrical model, understanding is the principle objective of public relations rather than persuasion" (p. 289).

In its best form, therefore, the symmetrical model for organizational communication parallels Buber's I-Thou relationship in interpersonal dialogue. And just as Buber accepted that the I-It relationship is sometimes necessary and appropriate (Buber, 1958), J. E. Grunig and L. A. Grunig (1992) concede that the two-way symmetrical model is not a perfectly accurate reflection of reality. They say, "We use the term model to describe a set of values and a pattern of behavior that characterize the approach taken by a public relations department or individual practitioner" (p. 286). As Johanneson (1971) suggests that dialogue is an attitude rather than an activity, so we see the Grunigs echo that true symmetry in communication is marked by a state of mind—"a set of values"—not just specific practices. Berger's (1999) suggestion that communication practices are rooted in ideology rather that a prescribed set of procedures further encourages us to see symmetrical communication as an approach rather than a formula for communication. Further, Kent and Taylor (2002) distinguished "dialogue" as the proper nomenclature for that state of mind—or "orientation"—unique from specific communication practices. Explaining that the terms dialogue and symmetrical communication are used in the PR field in such a way that makes it difficult to tell one from the other, they suggested that dialogue (between an organization and its publics) is the product to be pursued in the process of communication and that two-way symmetry may be the process that practitioners use to reach dialogue. Ultimately, Kent and Taylor say that "a dialogic communication orientation does increase the likelihood that publics and organizations will better understand each other and have ground rules for communication" (p. 33), a sentiment that proponents of two-way symmetrical communication echo.

Criticisms of Two-way Symmetrical Communication

The critics of two-way symmetrical unite around a rejection of two-way symmetry as the "single, dominant, legitimate" approach to PR (Brown, 2010, p. 282). Brown (2010) grouped symmetry's criticisms into five categories: rhetoric, critical thinking, postmodernism, qualitative methodology, and a mixture of globalism, internationalism, and multiculturalism. Stoker and Tusinski (2006) suggest that those seeking to practice two-way symmetry are required to give up their own goals and objectives, deny differences between co-communicators, ignore biases, and execute perfect equity among all publics without regard for their positions with the organization. Symmetry, in this light, simply requires an organization to adopt a stance of accommodation to a public's interests in such a way that it must abandon its own interests. Even if an organization sought to practice such accommodation, it would be virtually impossible for an organization to effectively accommodate to the differing (and sometimes antagonistic) needs and objectives of multiple publics (Berger, 1999; Leichty 1997). Many critics of symmetry decry the model as downplaying or ignoring the problem of power disparities between organizations and publics (e.g. Curtin & Gaither, 2005). Power inequities, they say, prevent the weaker group from having an adequate voice in the communication process, making the equilibrium of symmetry impossible, regardless of intentions. Critics, such as Pang, Jin, and Cameron (2010) describe strategic communication and communication management as being too complex to be reduced to a single normative model; requiring organizations to seek mechanical collaboration in line with symmetry rather than allowing them to employ more "intuitive, nuanced, and textured" practices, puts them in situations where they may be forced to act unethically, illegally, or inconsistently with their corporate mission. Still other critics say that PR, an increasingly global field, must consider the diversity of politics, economies, activism, and cultures found internationally— considerations that are beyond the monocultural scope of symmetry, which is an American/Western paradigm (Gower, 2006). Contingency theorists Cancel, Cameron, Sallot, and Mitrook (1997) criticized the symmetrical model, saying "It fails to capture the complexity and multiplicity of the public relations environment" (p. 33). Pang, Jin and Cameron (2010) summarized the value of contingency theory as an alternative to symmetrical communication, saying it promotes the adoption of stances on the symmetry-asymmetry continuum rather than the adoption of a prescribed practice (as they say symmetry does).

Answering Critics of Symmetry

Murphy (1991) recognized the challenges posed by the dichotomy of pure symmetry (or accommodation) and pure asymmetry (or advocacy) as communication models. Anticipating much of the criticism of symmetry that would follow, Murphy examined the definition of symmetry in light of game theory and proposed that "mixed-motive" is actually a better description for the most ideal, most effective practice of communication symmetry. "Mixed-motive games provide a broad third category," she said, "a sliding scale of cooperation and competition in which organizational needs must of necessity be balanced against constituents' needs, but never lose their primacy" (p. 127). Agreeing with Murphy, J. E. Grunig and L. A. Grunig (1992) describe a continuum between the two polar ideals of asymmetry and symmetry, stating that excellent public relations practice needn't be at the pole of symmetry, but can fall on the continuum: "In practice, professional public relations involves both asymmetrical (compliance-gaining) tactics and symmetrical (problem-solving) tactics. … The most effective public relations, excellent public relations, will fall more toward the symmetrical end of the

continuum than the asymmetrical end" (p. 312). Although contingency theorists suggest that contingency is a more effective approach in explaining that process of decision making that determines communication's place on that accommodation-advocacy continuum, contingency theory falls short in that it fails to provide a paradigm to challenge the worst natures of PR practice. That is, without the recommendation of an ideal (normative) stance such as symmetry, organizations that are guided primarily by their predisposing and situational variables to select a stance that seems best suited to the circumstance may be more likely to gravitate toward the stance that serves their best interests alone while disregarding the perspectives of their publics and perpetuating inordinate power structures. The theory thus fails to promulgate an ideal toward the improvement of moral, ethical, relational, or professional corporate standards. Symmetry, however, does present an approach to communication that, when pursued ideologically rather than rigidly, challenges organizations to consider, understand, and respect their publics—to the mutual benefit of organization and public—unlike other models.

Adopting this ideologic, mixed-motive framework for the practice of symmetry seems to address much of the criticism against symmetry on rhetorical grounds. For example, the charge that symmetry requires an organization to yield its own goals to those of a given public can be answered with the allowance that within the paradigm of symmetrical conversation with publics, the organization can continue to seek its own best interests so long as it does not ignore interests of other publics and remains open to hearing and responding to the public in the spirit of mutually beneficial dialogue. (Buber explained the same of interpersonal dialogue.) Such a perspective presents the practice of two-way symmetry not as an unrealistic caricature of its polar extreme (as some critics describe it), but as a more effective, public-focused alternative to models that are primarily one-way and asymmetrical. A view of symmetry that embraces the advocacy-to-accommodation continuum and highlights symmetry's dialogic underpinnings supports a response to critics who insist that symmetry cannot be effective when dealing with activist groups or multiple, varied publics. That continuum-based view does not require that organization and public objectives are both satisfied equally—a virtual impossibility—but rather that the communication process seeks a balance in the interaction of ideas and perspectives (with true potential for achieving mutual understanding and influence) so that the organization and the public (or publics) alike may be satisfied that the result is the best possible outcome given the circumstances and any limitations of the situation. By attempting to understand and value the varied perspectives of multiple publics, an organization may more effectively prioritize decisions, communicate those priorities, and find responses that satisfy more publics than are dissatisfied.

Support for the Efficacy of Symmetrical Communication

In real-world settings, two-way symmetrical communication principles have been shown to be effective in practical ways. In the MIT Dialogue Project in the early 1990s, for example, researchers led adversarial groups through dialogic tactics (which mirror principles of two-way symmetrical communication) over an extended period of time, and the groups were ultimately successful in breaking down barriers to their collaboration, overcoming long-standing conflicts, and forming commitments to new cooperative efforts. McCown (2007) suggested the positive impact of symmetrical communication by disproving supposed merits of asymmetrical communication in his study of employees who took on activist roles following a change in benefits at their college work place. Had the college initiated two-way symmetrical communication, McCown speculates from looking at the case, the college might have avoided

the entire ordeal. The study by Ledingham and Bruning (2000) mentioned above, also supports the idea that symmetrical communication has beneficial (and measurable) results; they conclude that "the organization must engage in behaviors that benefit its public as well as serving the interests of the organization" and that "organizations that practice relationship management within a model of two-way symmetry both generate and receive benefits" (p. 66).

Symmetrical Communication in the Church Environment

Dialogue and symmetrical communication tactics described in public relations texts are not misappropriated paradigms for the church. In discussing relational communication and competence in the church, for example, Ragsdale (1992) describes being competent as "both personal effectiveness and equal consideration for the other person's wishes and goals" (p. 147). He continues to say that the focus on the other person's rights, needs, and desires that are characteristic of competence (and, as noted above, are characteristic of a symmetrical approach) are also a focus of mainline Christian religious traditions. "Because of this similarity," he says, "one might logically expect a person who is committed to following Christian principles to exhibit more relational communication skill than one who is not" (p. 147). Writing to a Christian audience, Gangel and Canine (1992) recommend dialogic practices to church leaders, not only as an effective way to communicate, build morale, and address conflict, but also as a biblical mandate, saying, "God calls and gifts all of his servants….Spiritual gifts are given for the benefit of the community of faith without a hierarchy of importance (1 Cor. 12)" [italics in the original] (p. 119). They suggest that leaders should take time to listen to and include church members in discussions because members have valuable perspectives and ideas to contribute. They continue to describe two-way communication—describing symmetrical characteristics without calling them symmetrical—as a means for making adequate decisions and achieving goals. Similarly, Schultze (2000) explains that Christians have a responsibility to be stewards of their communication choices and opportunities and that Christian leaders have to humbly listen to others in society, particularly those without voice, in order to be true leaders. He even goes so far as to say that Christians should have "a deep regard for the rights of others by respecting even our biggest detractors, by patiently listening to opponents, and remaining humble in the heart of argument" (p. 159).

The perceptions and beliefs about the God-ordained roles for church leaders and members—including how they should relate to each other—are rooted in biblical texts. On the one hand, biblical beliefs such as those about the value that individuals bring to the larger body (1 Corinthians 12:14-18), about being quick to listen (James 1:19), and about looking out for the interests of others (Philippians 2:4) would encourage a church leader toward a symmetrical stance. On the other hand, biblical beliefs such as those about the dangers of catering to the desires of the crowd (2 Timothy 4:3), about the need for church members to submit to leaders' authority (Hebrews 13:7), and about gender roles that place men (and not women) in leadership of the church and the home (e.g., 1 Corinthians 14:34, 1 Timothy 2:11-12, Titus 1:6) can encourage church leaders toward an asymmetrical stance. The latter beliefs are frequently manifested in today's churches in such forms as hierarchical organizational structures, limitations on the service and leadership opportunities for women, hyper-authoritative pastors, and sometimes inordinate deference to leaders as those uniquely called by God to lead.

Writing about the development of organizational communication, Pearce and Cronan (1980) point out that the church has been historically authoritarian, saying "[The] content of the church-sanction dogma was to be affirmed, not debated or questioned: neither rhetoric nor

dialectic belonged in the sacred communication. Some of the popes were remarkably forthright in expressing their role as custodians of truth, which they would dispense to others who should receive it gladly, with no questions asked" (p. 52). In her analysis of the Catholic Church's response to priests' sex abuse scandals, Dixon (2004) explained that the power of pastors and teachers over church members is established organically as people come to the church as seekers looking for spiritual guidance from spiritual authorities. When discussions become too critical or members become so vocal that leadership authority is threatened, leaders will react in ways that limit dissent and maintain institutional authority, she said.

Hall (2007) conducted focus groups with volunteer leaders and volunteer workers in a church to understand how perceptions of followers impact leadership. In his analysis, Hall suggests that those leaders organizationally closer to the pastor and church officers view their roles as gatekeepers of information and issues, maintaining spiritual facades between the congregation (including the workers) and the pastor. Such organizational perspectives are likely to preclude the use of symmetrical communication, which would, if used sincerely, challenge leaders to be open about issues and abandon attempts to control or protect pristine perceptions of authority and church business (L. A. Grunig, 1993).

Leadership and the Communication Environment

The role of the highest organizational leader(s) in determining organizational culture and the communication climate (whether symmetrically or asymmetrically oriented) can hardly be overestimated. Fairhurst (2009) explained that leaders are key players in cocreating contexts for interpreting events through discourse, and she described the importance of leaders having conversations at all levels of the organization in dialogic fashion. In a study of leadership models among chief academic officers at private colleges, Forward, Czeck, and Allen (2007) distinguished three models of leadership employed by organizational leaders—the manipulative Machiavellian, the controlling bureaucratic, and the relational transformational models—and they found that transformational leadership (with symmetrical characteristics) was linked to effective communication that facilitates job satisfaction. Aldoory and Toth (2004), saying that understanding leadership styles and perceptions about leadership styles is the beginning of developing PR theory, similarly found a transformational style of leadership to be the most effective style of leadership, linking it to higher job performance and morale. Interested in understanding leadership paradigms of church leaders specifically, Forward (2001) interviewed pastors to discover how they would describe their leadership. He found that only 17% of pastors used "affiliative" leadership metaphors that draw on qualities of transformational leadership. The vast majority (83%) of pastors used hierarchical metaphors—such as CEO—that draw on authoritative characteristics and one-way communication.

As with the work of Hall (2007) and Dixon (2004), the work of Forward (2001) hints at potential challenges to church leaders implementing, let alone embracing, symmetrical communication models: pastors who have been encouraged to view themselves in a position of authority, where they are above the organization, may find it difficult to invite or even receive effectual feedback and participation from staff or members who could be perceived as challenging their authority. Indeed, Garner and Wargo (2009) studied perceptions about dissent in a church and found that pastors had a more negative view on messages of dissent than parishioners did. They also found that parishioners who were intimidated by the pastor's position or the closed communication environment were more likely to choose unhealthy forms of dissent while those who had a relationship with the pastor were more likely to dissent in

healthy ways. Comparing their findings with Hall's (2007), Garner and Wargo suggested that volunteer workers' perspectives that leadership is based on divine placement could dissuade them from giving upward feedback just as the same perspective held by volunteer leaders could persuade them to view any dissent as a threat. In both cases, symmetrical communication would be hindered.

Considering the pitfalls of poor communication practices in the church, Gangel and Canine (1992) warn that where a climate of two-way communication and relationship does not exist, where organizations allow goal achievement to trump "interpersonal communication and need-meeting" (p. 19), then "what was the communication process becomes information process. Now workers in the organization no longer doubt they exist to serve it, whether or not it serves them at all. Ultimately overinstitutionalization ensues, and death comes in one form or another" (p. 20). Such an admonition begs the question: What factors may help nurture the development of dialogue, relationships, and leadership that values symmetrical communication in the church?

Rationale

Given the nature of symmetrical communication as a relationship-focused stance and the nature of the church as a people-oriented, relationship-driven organization, one would expect that church leaders would accept, if not embrace, symmetrical communication as a model that could help them to better understand their publics, build better relationships, and ward off destructive conflicts that are all-too-common in churches. Not only does the symmetrical communication model seem to be effective in developing strong organization–public relationships, but it also seems to be highly compatible with Christian values. Still, symmetrical communication practices may challenge some evangelical perspectives. On one side of the church culture dichotomy there are paradigms for including every member in the life and work of the church, for holding individual gifts and perspectives in high regard, for desiring honesty and humility, for not regarding any person as better than another, and for bearing one another's burdens in unconditional love. These paradigms harmonize with symmetry. On the other side of that dichotomy, however, there are paradigms for respecting authority, for nobility in sacrifice and suffering without complaint, for appreciating distinct roles and hierarchy, for a culture that nurtures egos and judgment too easily, and for standing alone on right principles regardless of what the crowd says. These paradigms pose challenges or objections to symmetry. The question arises, then, are church leaders are more or less likely to communicate with their various publics in ways that are symmetrical? And when pastors do choose one communication model over another, what are the factors that influence their communication choices?

Method and Sample

The study analyzed here was patterned after a pilot study conducted in the Spring of 2010 by this same researcher. In the current study, interviews were conducted in the Spring of 2011. In both the pilot study and the current study, qualitative one-on-one interviews were conducted with pastors and leaders of large, nondenominational evangelical churches in the South. Each interview was conducted on location at the pastor's church and lasted between 45 and 90 minutes. Leaders in large nondenominational evangelical churches were chosen as the focus of this research because (1) they share a view of the Bible and key doctrines that fundamentally influence their beliefs and behaviors and that sets them apart from many other denominational and Protestant churches; and (2) they are independent and free from denominationally imposed structures, policies, and politics that might determine their behavior apart from individual

convictions. For the purpose of these studies, a large church was defined as having an average weekly attendance between 1000 and 4000. Churches were considered evangelical if the church's statement of faith and/or church leaders themselves agreed with essential evangelical beliefs as identified by three prominent evangelical organizations: National Association of Evangelicals (NAE); Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability (ECFA); and Evangelical Free Church of America (EFCA)[2]. A "General Evangelical Statement of Faith" was created by adapting the statements of faith from each of these organizations; the result is a statement that is fully compatible with all three statements and yet is unique from them. Each participant in the study was given the general statement in advance of the interview, and each affirmed that the statement aligned with their beliefs prior to the interview's start.

Churches included in these studies were identified through the researcher's previous awareness of them, their appearance on searchable online church lists, or referral by a member. Two to four leaders from each church were interviewed. Participants were selected from church staff rosters because they held executive staff positions, had supervisory roles, and had differing backgrounds. (i.e. The researcher tried to include participants from different seminaries and ministry backgrounds when possible.) Participants were contacted and invited through a personal email to participate. In the pilot study, 10 pastors[3] (nine men and one woman) from three churches participated. In the current study, 15 pastors (12 men and three women) from five churches participated. Altogether, 25 pastors from eight churches were interviewed in connection with this research. With 25 interviews, there appeared to be saturation of information (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Participants included five senior pastors, 17 executive-level pastors[4], and three director-level pastors. Ages of participants ranged from 30 to 61. Fourteen of the 25 participants had been employed full-time outside of ministry work during their careers, including positions in law, banking, accounting, healthcare, marketing, commercial design, and education. Each participant signed an informed consent acknowledgment at the time of the interview and was assured of confidentiality. Accordingly, the names of the participants have been replaced with arbitrarily selected pseudonyms in this paper, and church-specific titles and program names have also been generalized. Each interview was recorded to ensure accuracy of interview transcriptions.

Although information gleaned through the pilot study was foundational to the current study, the analysis that follows focuses specifically on the findings from the interviews with the 15 participants in the current study only. If information or quotes from the pilot study were needed to provide context or a better understanding of the current findings, that information was clearly identified in this paper as coming from the pilot study.

Data Analysis

Using open coding, axial coding, and selective coding techniques as described by Strauss (1987), the researcher reviewed each transcribed interview and categorized individual statements

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[2] The Evangelical Free Churches of America (EFCA) is considered a denomination, however it does not govern individual church operations, leadership, or its member churches directly. The EFCA statement was considered as one additional check to confirm the most culturally appropriate definition of "evangelical" for this study. None of the churches included in the study, however, is a member of the EFCA.

[3] Throughout this paper, the term "pastor" is used to designate the pastors and leaders of the church, particularly the ones involved in this study. Not all of their job titles included the word "pastor," but each participant was working in a pastoral role at the time of the interview.

[4] Executive-level pastors are part of a leadership cabinet, which includes the senior pastor and which has apparent responsibility for developing and directing the goals and major initiatives of the church.

about practice and perspectives by a general topic or theme (e.g. communication, relationships, trust, leadership, etc.) and then by a more specific sub-topic description of the statement's content as it related to that theme (e.g. trust…is lost by lack of transparency; communication…helps reduce or avoid conflict; two-way communication…nurtures ownership and buy-in). In reviewing the categorized data, the researcher identified 19 themes representing 287 sub-topic statements. Within themes, the sub-topics were examined and grouped according to similarities that represented facets of the theme. (e.g. Under the two-way communication theme, facets included the general statements about two-way communication, benefits of two-way communication, how two-way communication is implemented, hindrances to two-way communication, and negative effects of two-way communication.)   The researcher examined the statements as grouped on a data spreadsheet according to theme, facet, and sub-topic, making note of similarities and differences in statements as well as identifying links between various themes and facets.

Findings

The research questions posed in this study asked how church leaders use two-way symmetrical communication and what factors move them to or deter them from using symmetry. The findings of this study provided not only information to answer the research questions, but also insight into characteristics specific to churches as organizations, to their publics, and to relationships—both personal and professional—in churches. In reviewing the findings from the data, I will first examine the nature and goals of the church organization and its most strategic publics—members, volunteers, and staff—as they were identified by pastors. I will then examine the nature of communication activities and perspectives as reported by pastors. Finally, I will examine those factors that pastors reported as motivating or shaping their own communication choices and those of leaders around them.

The Nature and Goal of the Church: Connection

Participants in the study clearly believed that the church as an organization is unique from for-profit companies and even secular not-for-profit organizations. Several expressed that difference outright, saying that the church appears to produce nothing except for the impact that it has on people's lives and the community that is developed within its membership. Because members[5] don't obtain any commodity from the church, and because the majority of workers are volunteers, the church has to have a "much higher relational quotient," as one pastor put it, than other types of organizations. One pastor explained that without relational connections between the people in the body, the church experience can be nothing more than a show. Describing how some people can attend church as "consumers," several pastors dismissed that mindset as being antithetical to their church's goals. Some pastors used the word "community" to describe connections as a primary goal of the church or the positive outcome of church connections. "We want to be a community here that knows one another, that has what we call authentic community, meaning we're going below the surface," Karen said, describing the kind of connections the church desires to facilitate for its members.

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[5] Throughout this paper, the term "member" is used to designate not only those who have gone through a membership process to formally join the church, but also those who are regular attendees of church services and/or programs without having formally joined the church. As pastors talked about their congregations, they rarely distinguished members from attendees, and generally referred to those of both designations as one group.

Each pastor interviewed described the work they do and the mission of their church in terms related to serving, training, and connecting people to each other and to God. Often the church was described as meeting the essential needs of food, water, and shelter through its programs to the poor and underdeveloped communities. Pastors also described the church meeting people's needs for esteem and self-actualization by giving members and volunteers the opportunity to contribute their time and talents toward serving others. "We realize that when you first come in, [you might be a consumer]," Frank explained, "but we want to help transition you to be a contributor, to where you connect with your calling. … That's where people find the most fulfillment, where they're serving, they're using the gifts that God's given them." Church leaders also spoke about small groups and individual relationships within the church as having perhaps the most significant impact on people's lives, practically as well as spiritually.

Altogether, relationships, community, and connections were the primary words used to describe the goals of the church. And as leaders work to have a positive impact, they rely heavily on relationships formed within the organization and between the organization and its members to accomplish their church's mission.

The Internal-External Church Publics

Another point of distinction between churches and other organizations is the unique position that church members hold as both internal and external publics simultaneously. Those who attend regular services and programs can easily be considered the customers of the church: they choose the church they will attend, they are the recipients of most of church's "products," their funds constitute the revenue stream for the church, individuals can freely stay or leave the church as they wish with little to no consequence, and the church will thrive or die depending on the level of their participation and loyalty. At the same time, the relational nature of the church, its dependence upon an army of member-volunteers to sustain operations, a revenue structure based on member donations, and doctrines that emphasize the family-like culture of the organization as well as the distinct "otherness" of those who are not members of the church are factors that put members in a position of internal publics similar to employees or stock-holders. The church designs and changes its "products" to satisfy the needs of its member-customers, and at the same time, it relies on its member-workers to create and implement those products. Members may flip-flop between a customer role to a worker role depending on the setting and the message.

When we consider the work of volunteers in particular, their essential role in the workings of the organization, and their affinity for the organization, we can compare church volunteers to organizational employees. Yet, other volunteer characteristics, such as their periodic and often sporadic participation and the lack of authority a church has over them make volunteers unique from traditional employee publics. William explained that one challenge of working with volunteers is the fact that they are often not gifted with the talents needed to be very good at their volunteer work. Another pastor pointed out the unfortunate fact that, unlike businesses dealing with inadequate, unreliable, or disrespectful employees, for pragmatic and cultural reasons the church normally can't "fire" volunteers. Several pastors said they view working with challenging volunteers as part of their mission by helping those people "realize their potential" and become more mature, responsible members of the body.

One pastor explained the practical responsibility that the leaders of the church have for motivating volunteers in two ways: Leaders motivate volunteers to work by adding value to

their lives rather than offering a paycheck; and leaders motivate volunteers by effectively communicating the mission and vision of the church. He said:

> [T]he currency you have with [volunteers], the reason they show up an hour before everybody else, to come to service, to get everything set-up, the reason they do that is because you added value to their life. You've met with them. … In some cases you've helped them with their marriage. You've helped them with difficult situations with their teenagers. Whatever the case may be, you've added value. … [They] buy-in to the vision of the church and want the church to grow and succeed in its vision. In other words, they want to be with you. They're not showing up for a paycheck. They're working based on vision.

Staff members at a church fill the traditional role of an employee public: they are hired by the organization selectively, they are paid for the work they contribute, they are required to perform specific tasks with specific results, and they can be released if they fail to meet the expectations of the organization. Unlike many other corporate employees, however, the staff interviewed in both the pilot study and the current study almost unanimously described their jobs as a calling. They view their work as an act of service and obedience to God, as an expression of their personal values, and as an expression of love to those they lead and reach. On the one hand, because of the call that church staff feel to their jobs, they are generally not content to simply receive direction and execute orders. They have a deep need to contribute their talents and perspectives to the organization in order to be satisfied that they are making a difference. On the other hand, because of the call they feel to church work, staff members are often willing to tolerate dissatisfaction and frustration at a higher level than their secular counterparts might be. They elevate the Christian principles of obedience to God, submission to authority, and self-sacrifice above any natural proclivity to demand justice for themselvesor flee unhealthy environments.

Communication Activities and Perspectives: Communicating with Church Publics

When asked about how they communicate with their various constituents, pastors generally gave a fairly universal list of methods: announcements from the pulpit, announcements in the church bulletin, information posted on the web site, printed and/or email newsletters, promotional videos, and individual emails and conversations. Not surprisingly, pastors spoke mostly about the information that they disseminate in a one-way, public information (and sometimes publicity) fashion. They consistently believed that such information and persuasion has as its primary goal not the success of the organization but the success (and growth and development and health) of its members.

Almost all the pastors interviewed described communication that regularly flowed down through the organizational structure from leader to department head to volunteer leaders to small group participants and the general membership. They rely heavily on disseminating information in this fashion. When asked about how they received information back from members, volunteers, and staff, most pastors described information flowing back up through that same organizational structure in the same way. Most pastors also suggested that people with concerns or complaints are often likely to email a pastor directly or speak to the pastor personally after regular church services. They did not seem put-off by members approaching them in this way, but described such interaction as helpful for everyone involved. However, pastors seemed to have no intentional strategies or plans for soliciting such feedback, with the exception of two-way communication as a tactic related to limited individual projects or initiatives. When asked

how church leaders included members in the communication process in order to understand members' thoughts and positions, Lawrence admitted, "I'm not sure we do that extraordinarily well." He and others said they routinely publish names and contact information for pastors and leaders of departments, expecting that members who have comments to share will find that information and contact the appropriate person. But, Lawrence said, "that's something that we haven't always made clear, [and] that has bit us in the butt several times."

Two of the churches in the current study had intentionally used two-way symmetrical communication tactics with members in their process of developing new mission and identity statements. One involved members and volunteers in a series of focus groups to help leaders develop and clarify the church mission. A pastor from that church said church leaders entered those groups saying, "Here's what we're trying to accomplish. Here's what we're trying to find out. Here's what we know. Here's what we don't know. Now we'd like you to help us answer what we don't know and see if it changes what we know." While that pastor said including people in the development process made for a better process and produced a better outcome, he also admitted that allowing people to participate in the process was a strategic way of ensuring that people would buy-in to the direction that church leaders would eventually put forth. Another pastor from the same church echoed the importance of including staff particularly in those two-way discussions about new directions for the church in order to ease transitions and reduce potential conflict:

> I have learned over my time here that getting buy-in and allowing the people that are going to be affected by the change to have the chance to process it, you know, is just so important. … If [our staff] are going to live by [this new direction] and enforce it in their ministry areas, the chances of that happening well are infinitely increased if they've been part of the process of understanding why we're doing it, what does it mean, giving push-back if it's needed. … Ultimately, they're the ones that are going to have to implement it within their teams.

The other church that used two-way symmetrical communication tactics in the process of developing new mission and identity statements began by distributing cards to members one Sunday, asking people to write down and turn in their ideas and hopes for the future of the church. Leaders then conducted all-church events during which members and staff participated in group discussions about the member-created topics. Church leaders used the information gleaned from those events to inform and guide their subsequent discussions about the church's identity and mission.

Even in those churches where pastors describe two-way communication happening strategically, that model of communication appears to be used inconsistently on an as-needed basis rather than as a guiding philosophy. However, pastors uniformly expressed their preference for the idea of two-way symmetrical communication over one-way, authoritative communication.

As staff members under more senior leaders, pastors unequivocally said they want their leaders to hear them and allow them to contribute their unique perspectives and gifts to the work at hand. As Carl put it, they want "to be part of bringing solutions to the table" rather than just being told what the solution is. Evan described a leadership team in which the senior pastor used meetings to tell staff about plans and programs rather than to discuss ideas and plans. He said that lack of two-way communication turned the team into a "facilitation team" that executed someone else's plans rather than a "leadership team" involved in actually leading the church. As

a result, he said, "I don't put a lot of personal energy into [my role on the team] because I don't see it as being something I have a lot to contribute to."

As leaders over others, pastors believe that inviting the contributions of their staff, volunteers and members boosts morale, produces a better product, and is essential to their ministry goals. Karen, described the benefits of listening to the input of members by saying, "What I have figured out…is I need to do a lot more listening than talking…. It's amazing what you hear when you don't have an agenda for the person and you're just willing to listen to what they want to tell you." Similarly, Janice said she gets "energy and passion," "fresh ideas," and "a lot of insight" about the different groups they serve in the church from her volunteers of mixed generations. Talking about his volunteer staff, Andrew said, "They're the ones who are helping me shape that weekend environment. I'd be crazy not to listen to their feedback." A couple of pastors described two-way communication as a means by which they could hear from God regarding the plans and programs of the church, suggesting that God speaks through the voices of their staff.

Interestingly, one pastor who passionately described his intentionality in symmetrical communication with members seemed to dismiss the need for two-way conversations with his staff members. Pastors interviewed in the same church who work under him, however, attributed tensions among staff directly to the lack of two-way symmetrical communication with top leaders. Conversely, Lawrence described how he depends on the voices of his staff to improve his understanding and decisions. He said, "It's counter-productive for me to [try to make strategic decisions] by myself. [My staff] brings gifting and wisdom that I don't bring to the table that I desperately need to help cover those blind spots that I have that I don't know about."

Where pastors described two-way communication activities, they described those activities sometimes as symmetrical, sometimes as asymmetrical, and sometimes at a point along the continuum between the two. If the difference between symmetry and asymmetry is essentially the intent toward mutual influence or unilateral influence, it seems that pastors are most often intentionally asymmetrical in matters regarding biblical doctrine, organizational mission, and long-term goals. They desire to hear from their publics, but, at least in part, for the purpose of persuasion rather than mutual influence. Across the board, pastors recognized that giving their publics the opportunity to have a voice in a matter, even if those voices had little to no actual impact on the decision, resulted in increased ownership over the outcome, increased willingness to accept the final outcome, and often the mitigation of conflict. Janice, for example, described how intentional efforts of the senior leadership to include staff in the decision making process was the means for improving morale and staff respect for leadership: "It's definitely helped our relationships. … Even if the final decision remained where [the senior pastor] would have thought it would initially, everybody's been heard. And there's a huge level of respect. Thank you for hearing us." Several other pastors indicated that giving members and volunteers a voice is important to their feeling connected to the church and enthusiastic about church programs.

In some cases, pastors are indeed utilizing symmetrical communication with the intention of letting feedback direct decisions. William, for example, described how the direction of his church's mission was influenced by the results of a survey of members; leaders were surprised to learn that the people in the church wanted to be intellectually and spiritually challenged, and they ultimately altered the focus of the church mission and programs accordingly.

Factors Shaping Communication Choices

Given that all of the pastors interviewed were favorable toward the idea of two-way communication that is at least to some degree symmetrical, the question becomes What are the factors that hinder pastors from practicing two-way communication – whether symmetrical or asymmetrical? And What are those factors that encourage it? Several answers to these questions were apparent in pastor interviews.

First, there are pragmatic limitations of time and workload that prevent pastors from investing the time that is required to seek and hear opinions and perspectives from publics. Kurt admittedly used one-way communication regularly, explaining that he simply didn't have the capacity to build the number of significant relationships that would be required if he were to take a more collaborative approach. Most pastors acknowledged that taking the time to have dialogue makes meetings and projects longer than they would like. As Lawrence put it, "I think there's an efficiency to [having one person make decisions]. … When you get nine or ten people in a room trying to make a decision… the amount of time you're going to spend hearing all of the perspectives, making sure the language is the same…you're going to burn a whole lot of man hours doing that." Another factor that can hinder the use of two-way communication is that leaders fear they may have no control over what constituents will say or over the effects the voices of constituents will have on the larger group.

By far, the single most influential factor in determining whether a church would have an environment conducive to two-way communication—symmetrical or asymmetrical—was the perspective and personality of the senior leader, pastors said.   Nearly all the pastors in this study made it clear that attitudes toward communication began at the top. Routinely they used the words authoritative and collaborative to describe two opposite leadership models, and each of them described the collaborative model as the better suited for their church. (The descriptions of a collaborative model were compatible to the transformational leadership model discussed in the literature review.) Leaders who regularly employed two-way communication tactics were considered collaborative, while leaders that employed one-way and obvious two-way asymmetrical tactics were considered authoritative.

In describing environments marked by authoritarian leadership, pastors described authoritarian leaders as: insecure or fearful; micromanaging; needing to be in control at all times; believing they have the answers without consulting others; expecting others to blindly follow; and relating more to older generations of members. Pastors described staff and volunteers under authoritarian leaders as: fearing the leader; not feeling comfortable voicing ideas; following directives without contributing significantly to the program; and having more concern for pleasing the leader than accomplishing ministry. Communication under authoritarian leadership was described as: clearly articulated by one person (with the expectation that others will simply pass it down through the organization); quick and easy; including only information that is necessary for operations; and limiting the involvement of others.

When it came to describing authoritarian leadership, most pastors did concede that there are some benefits of the style; namely, that it was an efficient way to lead, that it simplified the decision-making process, and that it left no question about roles and responsibilities on the team. However, the vast majority of comments about authoritarian leadership were critical.

In environments marked by collaborative (or transformational) leadership, on the other hand, pastors described leaders as: empowering people to take ownership and initiative; pursuing and rejoicing in the success of others; trusting staff and volunteers; having maturity in their leadership experience; recognizing the gifts and talents of others; willing to learn from others;

being confident and secure in their leadership position; inviting others to participate in the decision making process; willing to accept alternative ideas and solutions; willing to invest time and effort in the communication and decision making process; and being more comfortable with younger generations of members. Pastors described staff and volunteers under collaborative leaders as being vocal with both praises and concerns, and as contributing their talents and perspectives to the decision making process. Communication in collaborative environments, pastors said, reflected a sense of equality rather than hierarchy, a structure in which people were able to communicate as equals.

Unanimously, pastors said they preferred the idea of collaborative leadership. When leaders give that voice to their staff members—the freedom to agree or disagree, the opportunity to help identify and solve problems, the responsibility to share ownership of projects with the larger staff body—morale increases and relationships improve, pastors say. Several pastors were careful to explain that being collaborative—listening to the voices of constituents and considering their ideas as valuable and insightful—does not mean that a pastor is people-pleasing or indecisive. "We've never had leaders who would bend when it was unnecessary…or blow in the wind," Janice said of her collaborative leaders. "Though there's a lot of opinion sharing and think-tanking, if a decision needs to be made, we've got great strong leaders who are willing to make those decisions."

Many pastors said they did not practice two-way—symmetrical or asymmetrical—communication earlier in their career because they didn't know that it was beneficial and/or they hadn't learned how to employ two-way communication. Several attributed their earlier one-way and asymmetrical choices to immaturity, suggesting that as they matured as leaders, they gravitated toward two-way communication (and toward more symmetrical communication). Janice, who is a self-described "real structured, type A personality," said that after decades of ministry work, she "just doesn't feel like I need to micromanage the way I think I used to." Carl said he learned the value of two-way communication over time, slowly realizing that a measure of arrogance was a stumbling block and that including people in the conversation was beneficial. He said, "I think I probably made a lot of mistakes being overly confident in my plans and my direction and my answers…thinking that people would embrace that... that I could be so knowledgeable and generous with sharing my ideas. … In all honesty, I was probably more focused on accomplishing my agenda than in caring for them and involving them in the process." William said that the perspective and contentment he gained with age allowed him to be more comfortable with the risks of allowing people to be forthright with him, and he with them: "I think by the time you're my age you know you're not going to write the best seller. You're not going to be well known. Just be content. … You know, I have modest desires now. So I think that's part of it."

Several of the pastors interviewed were clear that, even though they care about and solicit the opinions and perspectives of their publics, there were areas in which their church as an organization should not and would not yield. Those areas included matters of doctrine (statements that the church viewed as unequivocal truth), biblical principles (instructions and examples drawn from the Bible, the authoritative document of evangelical churches), and the established mission, vision, and/or values of the church. Referencing his church's mission statement, one pastor explained: "We will not compromise on [our core values]. There's no collaboration to develop these things. … We believe in the Bible. We believe in reaching people. We believe in developing community. We believe in growing people into fully developing followers of Christ. We believe in generosity. … [T]hose are things that are non-negotiables. …

These things have been around for thousands of years, and yeah, we don't bend and flex on those." There is a fundamental belief among pastors that although the church exists to serve people, it must serve people according to the truths and standards that God has set-forth in the Bible. Andrew acknowledged that some may be frustrated with the immovability of his church on such issues or practices, and to that point, he said, "We tell people, 'We're not joining you, you're joining us. … This is who God has called us to be. … Do you want to be a part of this? This is our culture here. … This is how we operate as a church.'"

Outside the issues of doctrine and mission, the biblical values and beliefs that leaders hold shape their beliefs about communication generally. One pastor in the pilot study specifically referenced the Bible verse Galatians 1:10 several times, saying he did not want to be a "man pleaser," that is, a person who seeks to please men rather than pleasing God, according to the verse. When pastors believe that God is directing them toward a decision or action, they will be less likely to seek out other opinions or ideas about the matter and more likely to act authoritatively. William described that attitude saying, "I understand that those people…feel a very strong responsibility…that I am called by God to lead the flock. You guys don't know where to go. You're sheep. Sheep will just do crazy stuff, so I have to lead you." Of course, when the people of the church also believe that the pastor is uniquely called, gifted, and responsible for the leadership of the church, they may have no expectation for being involved or consulted through two-way communication. Oscar, for example, described his work under a dictatorial leadership and his ultimate decision to submit, saying, "God's put us here and he put them in charge. And so you have to say, There's something for me to learn in that. And What does submission look like? What does honoring the king look like in that situation? … I think that's what we're called to do, and I think we struggle."

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the use of two-way symmetrical communication by pastors in large evangelical churches, and the factors that influence the use of symmetrical and asymmetrical communication. The analysis of communication practices and perspectives described by the participants in this study shows that while two-way symmetrical communication is indeed a compatible—even preferable—model of communication for pastors and a church environment, pastors regularly use both one-way and two-way communication tactics, and they use both symmetrical and asymmetrical paradigms. Analysis also reveals some of the pragmatic, personal, and ideological factors that move church leaders toward symmetry or asymmetry.

When pastors talked about their best communication practices, they promulgated tactics that are two-way in nature. There is a sincere understanding by many pastors that the influence of their publics in decision making is highly valuable; those pastors explained how the ideas of others inspire them, inform them, give them perspective, help them to see things they would not see otherwise, and generally help them to make better decisions than they would have made in isolation. Most often, the symmetrical communication that pastors described having routinely with members was in the context of unprogrammed, one-on-one meetings prompted by a member's question or complaint addressed to the pastordirectly. These descriptions serve to highlight the relational—rather than programmatic—nature of symmetry and the efficacy of symmetry for conflict management and trust-building at the individual level. Where symmetrical communication was described, pastors affirmed that it not only improved their ability to lead, but it also improved the relationships in the organization. Consistent with the literature (e.g., Gangle

& Canine, 1992; Isaacs, n.d.; Mueller & Lee, 2002; Spicer 2007; Taylor, 1997), pastors routinely linked the concepts of relationship and trust with the way they communicate, saying that high relationship quality, high trust, and symmetrical communication were correlated, as were poor relationship quality, low trust, and asymmetrical communication. As the pastors described them, trust, relationship, and communication seem to have a chicken-egg connection in which one may wonder which comes first: relationships breed trust, but trust also fosters relationships; relationships and trust influence the style of communication a leader chooses, but the style of communication also influences the level of trust people feel with leaders and the relationships they have with them. Pastors described efforts to improve relationships in their staff teams by increasing trust through communication. They also described trying to improve communication by improving relationships and trust. These factors seem inter-related so that improvement in one necessarily improves the others.

Significant factors that fostered the symmetrical communication choices of pastors and a symmetrical communication environment in general included: the leadership style of the senior pastor and/or the executive-level pastors; the pastor's personal knowledge of and experience with a symmetrical communication approach; the pastor's maturity, which tempers ego, perfectionism, and maverick attitudes toward leadership; and an ideology—biblical or otherwise—that places a high value on the contributions of skill and perspective that each member brings to the organization. These factors correspond with some of the 86 factors identified by Cancel, et al. (1997) in their description of contingency theory.

Even though the perspectives of church leaders seem to harmonize with symmetrical communication paradigms, pastors still practice asymmetrical communication with regularity. Pastors generally recognize the limitations and negative outcomes of one-way communication, but they employ it routinely in their teaching, as if they are the ones who have information and need to give it to those who do not. (A structure that is arguably appropriate for a teaching relationship.) Pastors also use one-way communication because it is simply faster and easier than two-way communication, because they are ignorant to the advantages of practicing two-way communication, or because they have a belief-based conviction that they, as the God-ordained leader, do not need to include others in decisions or communication. In some cases, they may believe the decisions to be communicated have already been made and given by God, by a board, and/or by senior leaders and are not up for discussion. In other cases, they may believe (or fear) that employing symmetry (generally or in a specific case) is tantamount to being an indecisive or people-pleasing leader.   Sometimes, pastors are forced to use one-way communication over two-way communication because their hierarchical environment established by more authoritarian leaders over them restricts their communication options; in cases where pastors described such a setting, they did so with regret, wishing they could be more collaborative, believing that symmetrical communication is more effective.

Sometimes pastors communicate in a one-way or two-way asymmetrical fashion unwittingly. The benefits of an asymmetrical approach, as pastors described them, are primarily linked to the public's feeling of being involved that is essential to nurture relationships with church publics. Pastors recognize that giving publics a chance to express their ideas and opinions is often the most valuable aspect of two-way communication; a congregation or staff contented that they have been heard are more willing to accept whatever decision the leaders put forth, regardless of whether their ideas and opinions had any actual influence on the decision.

In all, the participants in this study affirm the value of the two-way symmetrical model of communication as an effective way to build relationships within the organization of the church

and between the church and its publics. Particularly because of the relational focus of a church's mission, work, and culture, symmetry is described the best way to build relationships of trust and express appreciation for individuals as valued members of the church body. Thus, they demonstrate the validity of the theory of symmetrical communication as the most excellent model for building relationships with publics. Even as they hold symmetrical communication as an ideal, however, church leaders intentionally choose asymmetrical communication when they promote or defend their non-negotiable beliefs and doctrines and when certain factors—such as a lack of resources or skill—prevent them from pursuing symmetry.

Because evangelical churches have belief-based missions (as opposed to revenue-based, sales-based, or purely growth-based missions as their corporate counterparts may have), they must maintain aspects of their ideology and missions that symmetry will (perhaps should) never touch; for if the opinions of their publics were to force them fundamentally from their ideology and missions, they would be in danger of contradicting the very beliefs and purposes that validate their existence, identity, and work. (The same could be said for any ideologically-founded activist groups.) But if church leaders are willing to have a measure of symmetry, particularly in an effort to understand their publics and develop aspects of their operational functions—e.g. how they go about serving their mission, which tactics to use to most effectively accomplish their objectives, how to get people on-board and participating in the mission, how to prioritize issues and needs, etc.—they should find that their publics are more engaged and that the church as a whole benefits.   As Grunig (2001) clarified that symmetry does not require unmitigated accommodation to a public and that symmetry can allow organizations to improve relationships (even with repugnant groups) without having to yield their organizational ideals, church leaders, too, mustsee symmetrical communication as a positive relational tool that need not threaten their core beliefs and biblical identity.

The question then becomes how much symmetry—specifically in terms of mutual influence—is appropriate and recommended? Based on the interviews from both the current and the pilot study, there seem to be two factors that should guide a leader's use of symmetry. First is the proximity of the public to the leader organizationally. When a leader has regular, direct contact with, responsibility for, and/or responsibility to a particular public, communication should be as close to symmetrical as reasonably possible. As layers of the organization separate a leader from a specific public, communication can (and probably should) slide along the continuum toward asymmetry. It is important to note here, however, that symmetrical communication at the individual level could generally be viewed as treading in the realm of interpersonal communication and out of the realm public relations, particularly as those individuals have close, regular working relationships with the communicator (as direct-reports with supervisors). What may distinguish symmetrical organizational communication at an individual level from interpersonal dialogue may be the scope of impact (or potential scope of impact) that the communication has: from an interpersonal perspective, the effect of two individuals engaging in dialogue may reach no further than the relationship between those two people alone; however, from an organizational perspective, the effect of two individuals engaging in symmetrical communication is likely to reach beyond that single relationship, as at least one of those people represents the voice of the organization. Although the characteristics of interpersonal dialogue and symmetrical communication at the individual level may be largely the same, the purposes and contexts of the two are distinct, suggesting that they should be studied independently in their respective fields.

The second factor that should guide a leader's communication model is the level of relational dependence (or interdependence) of the organization on the specific public. For example, of the church publics described, the volunteer-public plays a more crucial role than the average, uninvolved member-public. Accordingly, the need for communication from the church is significantly different for the member-public than for the volunteer-public because of the level of investment that each has. As Spicer (2007) suggested, with greater vulnerability and risk, there is a greater responsibilityto build trust. The level of symmetry in communicaton, then, should be higher with volunteer-publics than with member-publics.

Certainly there can be no strict formula for determining the exact level of symmetry that a leader should use, but the guidelines posited here should be beneficial to any leader hoping to improve or maintain the most positive relationships with their publics. Although the church is a distinct kind of organization, the principles for evaluating and implementing two-way communication should be transferable, particularly among non-profit and social services organizations that have people-focused missions and rely heavily on the engagement of their publics—particularly volunteers—for their success.

Limitations and Future Research

The nature of this research presents several limitations. Most obviously, the small, purposive sample reflects only the perspectives of pastors who are evangelical, leading large churches, and located in the south. Pastors of smaller churches, located in other geographical-cultural settings, with worldviews that differ from those of evangelicals may have different views. One must consider, too, that those pastors who were willing to take time out of their schedules to be interviewed by a researcher unconnected with their church may naturally be more inclined toward dialogue and personal interaction with publics, thus shaping their views on two-way communication. Because pastors inclined toward one-way communication and closed systems could be less likely to participate in interviews, it is possible that the population of pastors with those perspectives is under-represented here.

The information from this research does provide insight into the relationship-focused culture of churches and the role that communication plays in developing organization-public relationships in that setting. Future research with other member-centric and volunteer-reliant organizations could add to an understanding about the impact that communication has specifically on volunteer and member publics for whom a relationship with the organization and its members is as much a goal in and of itself as it is a means to other goals. Examining the level of symmetry required to manage organizational relationships with members and volunteers of activist groups would also be beneficial; while symmetrical communication seems essential with volunteer and member publics, the mission of activist organizations—the goals and values that explain why the organization exists—also make pure symmetry virtually impossible on some levels. It seems that those very non-negotiables may define the entry point of relationship between the organization and its publics so that those choosing to join or work in an organization must first accept those non-negotiables in order to become part of the internal conversation of the organization.

Conclusion

While some PR scholars and critics have suggested that two-way symmetrical communication describes a communication model but should not be considered a normative theory, the findings of this study suggests that symmetrical communication—particularly as it is

depicted as a state of mind in approaching communication with publics—may be best viewed as a normative theory. The leaders interviewed for this study each recognized the value of two-way communication, preferring it as a model for communication whenever logistics and circumstances allowed. Although they blurred the lines between symmetry and asymmetry in their descriptions, it is clear that they normally valued the principles of symmetry, believing that they as leaders and their churches as organizations benefitted from the influential contributions of their staff, volunteers and members. Certainly there were obstacles to practicing symmetry, from the leader's lack of awareness about their communication choices, to a pragmatic lack of time, to beliefs about the character of spiritual leadership and submission, to a number of other factors. However, when pastors described the ways they preferred to communicate with their publics, they most often described symmetrical principles. When they described healthy communication environments and healthy working relationships, they described symmetrical communication as a key component in achieving those positive outcomes. When pastors described experiences with poor communication and poor relationships, they most often described characteristics of one-way and asymmetrical communication. In all, pastors who described communication that was symmetrical usually placed the emphasis of the communication on the receivers: What is the receiver thinking? What does the receiver need? How do I understand the receiver's point of view? How do I make sure the receiver feels included and valued as a member of the organization? This other-centered attitude lies at the heart of dialogue and symmetrical communication. An approach to communication that emphasizes symmetry as an attitude—dialogic symmetry—rather than symmetry as a mechanical practice appears to be the most effective approach to building organization-public relations.

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Playing to Publics: The Role of the Media and Public Relations in Negotiating Public Policy

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Abstract

This study continues groundwork laid by Plowman and Walton in 2007 when they examined the effect of the media, public relations, and local governments on a negotiation to build the Real Salt Lake Soccer Stadium in Salt Lake County, Utah. This case study involved the issue of building the stadium so interviews were conducted with print and broadcast media involved as well as city and county governments and public relations personnel of Real Salt Lake. A qualitative content analysis was also conducted of news reports at the time. This study then, examined the public relations strategies and media responses to those strategies in the aftermath of this controversy.

In 2011, Plowman and Walton, in an academic/professional partnership, undertook a new phase of a body of research begun in 1989 when J.E. Grunig began to converge the fields of conflict resolution and public relations. This phase will continue to explore and answer the question: "When public policy negotiations—any kind of protracted public discussion—take place in front of the media, does that change the fundamental fabric of the discussion itself? Do policymakers act differently when the media is a live audience, and do the media, in turn, frame the story differently because they were a party to the discussion?"

Plowman and Walton began this phase in 2007 by conducting a case study-based series of negotiations in a public policy communications course. The objective of the exercise was to explore the role of the media in the public policy negotiation process, as well as its potential impact on the outcomes of that process. In this series of negotiations, the class adopted the persona of various negotiating parties involved in the policy discussions concerning the construction of the Real Salt Lake Soccer Stadium, a major-league soccer stadium for the Salt Lake City-based Real Salt Lake teams. The experiences of the students led Plowman and Walton to conclude that the answer to the above questions for the first part of this research was a resounding "yes"— public conversations take on a different character when discussants play directly to a media audience. The exercise also raised other questions, such as, "How can public policy practitioners deal effectively with media scrutiny in the real world? How, if at all, can the media be leveraged as an effective communications tool in public policy negotiations?" Plowman, Walton and Bates presented the results of this study in a 2007 teaching paper at the Educators Academy of the Public Relations Society of America (Plowman, Walton & Bates).

The above questions, then, were also the focus of the 2011 study by Plowman and Walton. Much of the sensitivity of the issue has passed, since the soccer stadium is now in place. This study then, examined the public relations or public policy strategies for the stadium construction and media response to those strategies in the aftermath of this controversy. To evolve into a second part of this phase of research, the 10 public relations strategies of *contention, avoidance, accommodation, compromise, cooperation, unconditionally constructive, win/win or no deal, principled, perseverance, and mediated or cultural* were evaluated based on interviews with the major players and other information available at the time of the controversy. Those interviews were conducted with media reporters involved with the issue and individuals in local governments of jurisdiction, as well as with the consultant who represented Real Salt Lake. So, along with evaluating the use of the 10 strategies, significant outcomes of the study will help those in public policy understand and prepare for (and not underestimate) the significant role the media will play, and for the media to understand their unique responsibilities when reporting on public policy negotiations. The abiding question for this research then, was, "What was the mediator role for the media in the decision to build the Real Salt Lake Stadium?"

The Roots of Dramaturgy

Over 500 years ago, the Dutch essayist Erasmus explored the notion that when we communicate in front of an audience, the "Face" we show them may be somewhat different than the "Face" of our ordinary lives. He noted: "If a person were to try stripping the disguises from actors while they play a scene upon stage, showing to the audience their real looks and the faces they were born with, would not such a one spoil the whole play?" This tendency has its theoretical roots in the sociological concept of *dramaturgy,* as espoused by Ervin Goffman in his 1959 book, "The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life." Goffman noted, "When an individual appears in the presence of others, there will usually be some reason for him to mobilize his

activity so that it will convey an impression to others that it is in his interest to convey." Goffman referred to this as the art of impression management, and noted that people often tend to turn in what is called a front performance when someone is watching, and a back performance when someone is not (Goffman, 1959). An example might be a customer service representative who is unfailingly polite to a rude customer over the phone, because, after all, the call is being recorded "for purposes of quality and training," as the recorded message often informs callers. However, the service representative's behavior may be much different when he hangs up the phone and discusses the call with his peers in the service center.

As public relations professionals who have both been involved in public affairs and public policy work, the authors of this paper suspected that the notion of "playing to the audience" might be truest of all in the public negotiation arena, where such negotiations are often conducted in the presence of the media. When the authors first began collaborating early in 2007, a situation was playing out that provided a fascinating lens into one such real-life public policy negotiation—the proposed construction of the Real Salt Lake Stadium.

Here is a brief timeline of events (Deseret News, 2007):

- In July 2004—Major League Soccer announces plans to bring a team to Salt Lake City

- January 2005—Salt Lake City leaders announce willingness to buy land for a downtown stadium and consider use of redevelopment agency (RDA) funds—public funds—for the construction of that stadium

- May 2005—Sandy, a suburb of Salt Lake, bids on the stadium

- March 2006—The Utah Legislature passes a bill allowing public funds to be used for the project

- From May 2006-January 2007—a number of funding plans are proposed and rejected for a variety of reasons, including questions about financial viability, gap between funds offered and actual projected costs, etc.

- On January 26 2007, the Salt County Debt Review Committee votes 4-0 against the stadium proposal

- On January 29, 2007—Salt Lake County mayor Pete Corroon supports the DRC decision, and the deal is officially declared dead

- The Real Salt Lake team then announces it is "weighing options," including selling the team

- February 2007-A new stadium proposal, is made, and the State Senate eventually passes the deal. With the intervention of governor John Huntsman, construction of the stadium finally becomes a reality.

- Oct 2008—The Real Salt Lake Stadium, officially named the Rio Tinto Stadium, opens

Literature Review

As already stated, conflict resolution and negotiation in public relations has been a topic of discussion in the field since 1989, when J.E. Grunig started linking the fields together, specifically the two-way models of public relations. That led Murphy in 1991 to bring in game theory and attach terms like *win/win* to the symmetrical model and *win/lose* to the asymmetrical model and use the term *mixed motives* to describe a combination of both. Then in 1995, Plowman developed a number a negotiation strategies that fit into what he called a mixed motive model for public relations that encompassed the entire spectrum between the two-way asymmetrical and the two-way symmetrical models. It included the strategies of *contention, avoidance, accommodation, compromise, cooperation, unconditionally constructive, win/win or no deal, and principled.* In 2001, Plowman, Briggs and Huang added the term *mediated or cultural*. Then in 2007, Plowman tested those strategies in a single embedded case study in a quasi-experimental design. Although *contention* was the most used strategy, it was usually used in conjunction with the *principled* strategy. Mediation, however, was determined to be the most useful and productive technique in resolving conflict. Also in 2007, Plowman added *perseverance,* the tenth strategy.

Related studies in public relations and conflict resolution have included the contingency model of conflict in public relations (Cancel, Cameron, Sallot & Mitrook, 1997). That study initially developed 86 80 specific tactics to utilize. This stream of research led to many other studies (Shin, Jin, Cheng & Cameron, 2003) and is similar to contingency theory in mass communications where the use of a tactic depends on the situation. Journalists have been tied to that theory as well (Shin, 2009). The role of the media in this context of a public policy negotiation would not be complete without considering the media's role in conflict resolution. Other research during this time period also brought together conflict and public relations – in relationships (Y.H. Huang, 1997, 2001), power (Plowman, 1995, 2001), and strategic management (Plowman, 2005). Also, some background on Real Salt Lake and a timeline of events relevant to the controversy will be provided.

Figure 1
Playing to Publics – A Contentious or Cooperative Effort?
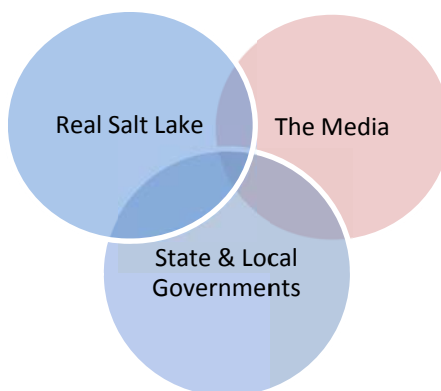
The Media and Conflict Resolution

In spite of the significant role the media have played, especially in international conflicts, there has not been much research in this area (Gilboa, 2009). Most existing studies have focused

on the negative contributions to the escalation of conflict including this study, but there has been, and there is in this study, a focus on potential media contributions to conflict reconciliation and even transformation. The media's role in public policy has been to be a *watchdog* of government or an independent third party similar to a mediator. "Mediators and facilitators know that news coverage can benefit a consensus building process immeasurably," (p. 436) according to Kunde (1999). The news media that provide responsible and balanced coverage that informs the public can legitimize or hinder an ongoing public negotiation, but help to ensure that the players involved are held accountable in serving the publics' interests. "Indeed, sometimes mediators and participants need press coverage to generate support for a process, and actively seek it out" (p. 436). The reconciliation of a conflict is where all parties in the conflict are mostly satisfied with the outcome. Transformation that can be assisted by the news media (Putnam, 2010) is both a process and a product of communication. "As a process, co-constructed interactions among disputants produce different communication patterns that lead to the product of new understandings of problems, changes in relationships, and new ways of working together" (p. 325-26). As media resources shrink and media technologies expand, so does the ability of other stakeholders to influence the media's role in building consensus in a dispute, like RSL, the fans and voters, and state and local governments.

Conflict Resolution and Public Relations

Managing public relations strategically involves a long-term perspective. In conflict resolution terms, a win/win by all parties involved in an issue is better predicted if the parties or stakeholders have a long-term relationship. Stakeholders are more likely to support a win/win in any given short-term involvement if they know they are going to have to deal with one another again and again in the future. Another aspect of managing strategically is the environmental scanning role of public relations. The public relations manager is practically the only individual in an organization that constantly scans both internal and external stakeholders to preempt or predict potential conflicts or crises that may arise among the organization and stakeholders in the future.

These interest-based stakeholders can be defined from the conflict resolution literature as those underlying, broader and more abstract values that individuals and organizations may have in common (Fisher, Ury, & Patton, 1991). Self –interests, as described in the public relations literature, are not necessarily selfish interests but are those interests that have intrinsic value for the survival of an entity, e.g. quality of life, needs of family and friends, and even economic well-being (Wilson & Ogden, 2004). These self-interests motivate individuals and organizations to act and to change behavior. Taken one step further, *enlightened self-interests* help relationships to be mutually satisfactory. There are inevitable effects in a public relations system of one stakeholder on another. This is inherently two-way symmetrical as described in the model's literature, because stakeholders have a constraining effect; they have consequences for each other. The basic survival of an organization in the long-term depends on the relationship of self-interests and enlightened self-interests between it and its stakeholders (Plowman, 2005). L. Grunig, J. Grunig and Dozier (2002) "suggested that using the two-way symmetrical model or the combination of the two-way symmetrical and the two-way asymmetrical models that we then called the *mixed-motive model* could almost always increase the contribution of public relations to organizational effectiveness."

Pursuing self-interests of stakeholders, even asymmetrically, can lead to mutual benefit for all parties or stakeholders. This also relates to mixed motives in public relations where

situations and issues are not resolved at the extremes in a pure asymmetrical or symmetrical manner; rather, there are trade-offs, compromises, etc. that lead to both parties being mutually satisfied in their self-interests. Those enlightened self-interests are not necessarily identical.

Mixed motives. Although the two-way symmetrical model would seem to be the ideal for conflict management, it is difficult to determine the exact point for appropriate behavior on a continuous scale between two-way asymmetric and two-way symmetric communication. Murphy (1991) suggested that a *mixed motive* version of the two-way symmetrical model might better describe what is happening in the actual practice of public relations because it incorporates both asymmetrical and symmetrical strategies. More recent studies acknowledge the more frequently practiced model is the one termed mixed motives (Christen and Lovass, 2010).

In mixed motives, each side in a stakeholder relationship retains a strong sense of its own self-interests, yet each is motivated to cooperate to attain at least some resolution of the conflict. They may be on opposite sides of an issue, but it is in their best interests to cooperate with each other. Mixed motive games provide a broad third category that describes behavior as most public relations people experience it: a multi-directional scale of competition and cooperation in which organizational needs must be balanced against constituents' needs. These parties are really *cooperative protagonists* in the struggle to satisfy their own interests with the knowledge that satisfaction is best accomplished through satisfying each other's interests as well. In the context of this discussion, protagonists are the main characters in the play of negotiation who seek their own values or self-interests. The question is not one of mixed motives where short-term asymmetrical tactics are combined with long-term symmetrical tactics as advocated by Dozier et al. (1995), but rather one of discovering the priority-level of importance for the common self-interests of the strategic parties.

More recently, Plowman, Briggs and Huang (2001) established a number of negotiation strategies that fit into what Plowman called a mixed motive model for public relations that encompassed the entire spectrum between the two-way asymmetrical and the two-way symmetrical models. It included the *strategies* of *contention, avoidance, accommodation, compromise, cooperation, unconditionally constructive, win/win or no deal, principled*, and mediation. *Perseverance* was added in 2007. Note the emphasis on the word *strategies*. In 2004 Plowman began to see that there are multitudinous individual tactics that can fit under exclusive strategies above, or even cross these categories. That is what Glen Cameron did with the 87 factors of his contingency model.

In 2010, Christen and Lovaas developed what they called a dual-continuum approach to conflict management in public relations, extending the work of Glen Cameron and his associates (2008). This dual approach essentially is similar to *mixed motives* and looks at the advocacy or contention of Plowman, 2007, and accommodation or cooperation (Plowman) to examine these strategies in a non-linear fashion. Christen and Lovass maintained that real world disputes are far more complex than a single continuum can represent, and that in a cooperation or a collaborative, win/win situation (Plowman, 1996; Thomas, 1992) where contention and cooperation overlap, there cannot be a single continuum. They said, "Any situation that involves separate, simultaneous movement toward or away from [either contention or cooperation]… can create an untenable paradox." As the field of conflict resolution and public relations becomes more developed, the more complex are strategies and tactics.

Multiple party negotiations. Complexity also is a major factor in multi-party negotiations that may be the next step in this type of public relations research. In 2004 Plowman undertook a qualitative quasi-experimental design with 11 graduate students taking on different

roles in the hot waste issue in Utah. These students framed the issue, defined their self-interests as stakeholders, and then conducted a series of five role-plays on the issue. All nine strategies were paired against each other in different combinations. Preliminary findings revealed that contention was the most used strategy, but was most often combined with the principled strategy. If those strategies were not successful, then role players turned to avoidance. During the third round, role players started using cooperation and compromise. Using these two strategies created a less confrontational atmosphere and the role players were more inclined to discuss alternatives. The most useful strategy in resolving the hot waste issue, however, was mediation.

Most research in conflict resolution has involved just two-party disputes, but in practicality and especially for public relations, there is most often more than one stakeholder involved. Lawrence Susskind, from the Harvard Program on Negotiation, addressed public relations and conflict resolution in public disputes in 1996. His book described public relations using terms that essentially equate to one-way and asymmetrical models, then used a version of Roger Fisher and William Urys' (1991) mutual gains approach to resolve public disputes in a symmetrical manner. The field of conflict resolution has realized more work needs to be done in multi-party disputes, and now public relations is beginning to address it.

A multi-party dispute can be defined as a simultaneous negotiation among three or more parties over multiple issues. In 1989, Saadia Touval (2002) laid out a prescriptive multi-party approach. In such negotiations, the most important work takes place before negotiations and in the pre-negotiation phase. Issues that should be addressed about the negotiation itself include the identity and number of parties involved, possible coalitions among them, different possible roles, and an acceptable agenda to follow. The larger the number of participants in these multiple party conflicts, the more difficulty there will be in defining the problem and agreeing on what an acceptable solution will be. There will be more likelihood of complexity in conflicting positions, the underlying self-interests, and the relationships - as in public relationships among the various parties involved. Mediation seems to be a common strategic direction for the field and concerns the media as well. In multi-party settings, mediators and the media are usually a part of the negotiation. Their intervention does not alter the structure of the negotiation and is not difficult to accept by the parties involved. Such mediators can come from outside the dispute or there can be several, some acting from their roles inside the dispute.

Mediation, Public Relations and the Media

Often in public relations or with the media, there is a dispute between an organization and a key public, however, there does not necessarily have to be trust, especially when both parties represent their own self-interests, but rather a common knowledge of how to negotiate with one another (Plowman, 2007).

In the conflict resolution literature, scholars are beginning to see the advantages of *peer mediation* (public relations practitioners or the media), mediation done by peers in an organization who have a vested interest in that organization. Typically, co-mediators (meaning two) independently meet separately with the parties involved within an organization to investigate issues to find possible solutions to raise in a joint session (Cloke & Goldsmith, 2000). In the authors' view, there is no reason that public relations or the media cannot take on that peer mediation role with stakeholders both in and outside the organization. The stakeholders know the advocacy position of the public relations manager from the initiation of the mediation. The advantages of peer-based mediation are "numerous and well-documented" (p. 31).

Another evolving phenomenon in the field, according to Sherman, 2003 is whether it is absolutely essential for the mediator to be independent from the parties in the dispute to be effective (as in the media and public relations practitioners). In this emerging practice, a professional such as a public relations manager is an affiliated party who is an inside facilitator and acts as an informal mediator empowered to help resolve conflicts before more formalized external and neutral conflict resolution processes occur. Affiliated third parties are often trained in *win/win or two-way symmetrical and interest-based stakeholder* conflict resolution, as well as in basic mediation skills. The successful use of these public relations managers could mean that successful mediation does not always have to be done by a third party not affiliated with any side in a dispute. In this case, the media could be viewed as either a participant in the dispute or as that neutral third party. Such parties could offer valuable advice and even settlement options through evaluation of the different parties' positions (Rome, 2002-2003).

As field studies have documented, mediators believe managing disputants' perceptions of how much insight they possess about the dispute is important (Kressel, 1972; Kolb, 1985). Yet, it is not why but to what extent these perceptions affect disputant's judgments of the mediator. A mediator's ability to cultivate disputant's perceptions that he/she has insight into the conflict may lead disputants to view the mediator as credible. Credibility refers to a mediator's *believability* and is the basic principle of mediation (O'Keefe, 1990; Tome, 1992). In fact, many models of mediation place establishing credibility at the forefront of the mediation process (Moore, 1986). In order to be effective and influential, mediators must be seen as credible (Bercovitch, 1996; Gadlin & Pino, 1997; Kolb, 1985).

Despite the importance of credibility in mediation and negotiation, there is comparatively little empirical research on the credibility construct (Lewicki, Saunders, Minton, & Barry, 2003). Much of the research has been adapted from the persuasion and attitude change literature Birnbaum & Stegner, 1979; Cooper & Croyle, 1984; McGinnies & Ward, 1980; McGuire, 1985; O'Keefe, 2002. Little research, however, has linked the persuasion and mediation literatures, and almost none from the public relations literature (Huang, 1997). Arnold & O'Connor (1999) and Arnold (2000) did show that mediator insight (i.e. information about disputant's interests and needs) will influence stakeholder perceptions of the mediator's competence and, thus, credibility. Perceptions of mediator credibility, in turn, were found to influence how favorably stakeholders responded to third parties (eg. confidence, acceptability, fairness, satisfaction). Third parties who are seen as having greater insight into the various stakeholders' interests, such as public relations managers and the media, may be seen as more credible and better able to craft recommendations that suit those interests.

This study then, examined the question, what was the mediator role for the media in the decision to build the Real Salt Lake Stadium? Subordinate questions were, what was the media's role vs. the State of Utah, Salt Lake County and Sandy City? And how did it play against public relations strategies in the negotiation process?

Method

The strength of interviewing as a qualitative method lies in answering how and why questions, delving in-depth on the controversy to build the Real Salt Lake Stadium. Qualitative interviewing is known as depth, long, intensive, collaborative, informal, semi-structured, and unstructured (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011; Patton, 1990). It is best as open-ended and unstructured, according to Fortner and Christians (1989). These terms are somewhat different in meaning. The essential similarity is that these interviews are conversations with equals, even though that

may not actually be so. The voluntary character of the interview process is vital so that the interaction between researcher and participant occurs as freely as interviewing (possible strangers) can permit. The whole interviewing process leads to a view of something between (<u>inter</u>) people (Brenner, 1985). Lindlof and Taylor (2011) made the point that even though a researcher wants to cover certain areas going into an interview, little structure is placed on what the participant says.

Disadvantages of the interview method are misinterpretation of results because of subjective differences between participant and researcher; dependency on a small group of key participants, which may not allow for participant mortality or unworkable responses; often difficult to replicate; dependency on a participant's honesty; and dependency on the researcher to be resourceful, systematic, and honest while controlling for bias (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). The great weakness, of course, is that findings cannot be generalized to a population, but the findings would be replicable – the standard for quality in this type of research in similar circumstances. The findings, however, are generalizable to theory (Yin, 2009).

Data Analysis and Collection

Bias in this study was controlled for by triangulation. Triangulation of theory occurred in the literature review. Triangulation of patterns and themes occurred using constant comparative analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1977) among the various interviewees.

Each of the interviews was recorded. Initial coding of the interviews took place during an initial review of the three sets of interviews by the three researchers. The media, government officials and RSL consultants were evaluated separately as one level of analysis. A second level of all three sources of data was downloaded into the qualitative computer analysis program NVivo to determine final patterns and themes.

Interviews were conducted with print and broadcast media who covered the controversy, state and local government officials, and a consultant who represented Real Salt Lake. Interviewing is adaptable to <u>theory-based research</u>. Categories and specific questions can be derived from the research questions to follow both the *general interview guide approach* and the *standardized open-ended interview* espoused by Patton (1990). The first approach outlines a set of issues to be explored. Specific questions arise in the interview to cover these issues. The second approach uses a standard set of questions arranged in a specific order. Theory-driven research also means that if this study is to remain *credible* and *transferable* (standards of qualitative research), it must be grounded in the substantive field of study. The term alludes to the overall concept of qualitative philosophy espoused in this study, to determine a reality of meaning.

Figure 2
Conflict Resolution Model of Public Relations

		Win/Win Zone	
	Contention	**Cooperation**	**Accommodation**
One-Way	**Avoidance**	**Unconditional**	**Compromise**	**One-Way**
	Principled	**Win/Win or No Deal**	**Perseverance**

Mediation Applies to All Strategies

Self-Interests of Organization and Key Publics

The box represents all of the independent, complementary and common interests for both the organization and its strategic publics. The box also encompasses the alternatives of conflict resolution strategies as well as mediation that can be applied to all the other strategies. The arrows through the dotted line extending through the win/win zone shows that these alternatives can flow both ways through the win/win zone to less desirable alternatives.

Note the absence of the terms asymmetrical and symmetrical. That is because the definition of mixed motives is a combination of asymmetric and symmetric communication. This model deals with degrees of each over the spectrum of asymmetric and symmetric communication. The only way to represent two ends on either side of the model would be to represent the one-way models of press agentry and public information. The two-way models would not quite extend to the one-way model ends. Two-way symmetrical communication is not entirely win/win. It can include elements of compromise, accommodation, and even avoidance since part of avoidance is unconditional or win/win or no deal. Likewise, two-way asymmetrical is not entirely contention, but can include elements of all the other negotiation tactics.

Results

The analysis for these results first examined separately the media's role in the conflict, then the government entities involved, and, finally, Real Salt Lake's involvement. The members of the media who followed and covered these negotiations developed some distinct conclusions about their role and their experience, as evidenced in interviews with the authors.

The Media

First, the media tried to maintain a watchdog role. As one journalist noted, "They (Sandy City) weren't always happy to see us. The media's influence made the discussion heated; every move they made, we (the media) were watching and reporting."

Second, the negotiation was portrayed in the media as a contentious process. The members of the media interviewed did not view themselves as having created the contention; rather, as one journalist explained, "The media were reporting on a contentious process, so it became contentious in the media."

Third, the media viewed themselves as striving to be objective in this issue, but in hindsight acknowledged that they were influential. Said one, "Politicians were reading [what we wrote] and making decisions."

The media tried to act as a neutral third party mediator. They affected the public negotiation. They provided the public information in an agenda-setting role. And, the media extended the conflict by framing and amplifying the issue, thus extending the life cycle of the conflict until ultimate resolution. In some cases, the media believed that their presence at meetings introduced more circumspection into deliberations, and that in such cases participants were very aware of the media's presence and took that presence into account.

Government Officials

In interviews with some of the government officials who participated in the negotiations, some interesting patterns also emerged. These commonalities reflect the viewpoint of the government negotiators involved.

First, most of the parties interviewed maintained that the media wasn't the source of contention—that they (the media) merely amplified it. This point was agreed on even by those with whom the media relationship was most contentious. As one government negotiator put it, "The key source of contention was [the gap between the amount of money expected by all sides]. From day one, that gap never closed." This gap included the difference between the funding articulated in the various proposals and the actual amount of money needed, and the difference in philosophies about the use of public funds for the project.

At least one negotiator felt that the media may not have received a "fair shake" in terms of how they were perceived to be covering the story. He noted: "People accused [the reporter] at the time of manufacturing conflict…the truth is there was a lot more conflict than he even represented."

Another pattern showed that government negotiators did not expect the media to be impartial. As one noted, "I've never had a project where the media…said, 'Oh yeah, that's great. That's going to happen.' I've always had to fight through whatever it might be."

Opinion was mixed as to whether the media actually influenced actions and outcomes of the negotiations. Some of the government negotiators clearly felt that they did.

"I don't know if [the media's presence] changed how they [the media] dealt with us," said one, "But it certainly did change how we dealt with them. We would have cut off negotiations much sooner, probably." However, yet another negotiator responded, "Nope—it didn't change a thing we did."

Another common conclusion of the interviews was that the media, while influential, could not explain the entire, complex situation. A common theme throughout all the interviews with all stakeholders was that this was an incredibly complex process to explain to the public,

and none of the sides involved felt that there was a fundamentally good public understanding of the situation.

To resolve the conflict, government negotiators struck an accommodation. Some negotiators said they had been confident all along as to what the outcome would be: that somehow a stadium would be built. In this negotiation process, the government negotiators did indeed strike an accommodation to accomplish that.

The role of conflict in these negotiations was primarily a *principled* conflict: it centered around the fundamental disagreement as to whether public money should be used for private projects—and all parties were equally strident in their views of this concept. A cooperative approach to conflict resolution was enacted by Sandy City, a community immediately to the south of downtown Salt Lake City, which eventually implemented the stadium proposal.

And, finally, the government negotiators had a very distinct view of the role of the other two parties involved—Real Salt Lake and the media. Virtually everyone interviewed acknowledged that Real Salt Lake was able to work through the media in enacting strategies of contention and avoidance. And, as noted previously, the government negotiators' view of the media itself was that, while they did not manufacture the conflict, they definitely sounded the alarm, which at times changed or extended the process.

One such instance of this strategy occurred at the point when, as noted in the timeline of events, the deal was initially declared "dead" in late January of 2007, and Real Salt Lake responded with the statement that they were weighing options, including moving the Real Salt Lake franchise to another city.

This statement in turn provoked a response from government leaders, who leveraged that sense of urgency and finality to call for additional negotiations so that Salt Lake City would not "lose" its Major League Soccer team. The government leaders' reactions were captured primarily by the media, who brought those messages to the public and created a sense of drama around the ultimatum and its potential loss to the city if a compromise was not reached.

Real Salt Lake

Results for RSL also revealed several interesting patterns. One of the strongest patterns was that RSL saw the media as trying to promote contention in the negotiation process. "They want contention. They want to rabble-rouse. They want a debate," was the comment of one RSL consultant. He went on to add that one newspaper in particular "wants some agitation. [The paper] wanted Peter Corroon to look like he was taking on Dave Checketts. I mean they want that. They framed stories that way…. They're selling papers and they need that…."

Furthermore, the media not only promoted the idea of a contentious negotiation process, but RSL felt that they were successful in selling their idea of a contentious negotiation process. "Of course they are influential," said an RSL consultant, "and they stir up the public."

Like the other players in the negotiations, RSL also recognized that the complicated funding issue was the main sticking point for all sides. Should public money be used to help finance private ventures, and if so, how much money is too much to give? This was one issue that illustrated the differences in levels of cooperation and conflict that existed among the various parties. RSL found the state government, and then-Governor Jon Huntsman, exceptionally cooperative. Greg Curtis, the Speaker of the House in the Utah Legislature at the time of the negotiations, helped propose an initial funding mechanism by extending Salt Lake County's Transient Room Tax, and diverting a small portion of that tax to fund the stadium. Said one RSL consultant: "We had support from Greg Curtis, we had support from the

Legislature…." Salt Lake County, on the other hand, was a different story. One RSL consultant said a spirit of cooperation existed between RSL and every other government figure and entity involved in the negotiations, except for Salt Lake County. "Contention was with Salt Lake County…. No spirit of cooperation between Salt Lake County and Real Salt Lake."

A further significant pattern that emerged from the RSL data deals with the types of relationships that existed between the media and the other negotiating parties. In spite of his efforts to reach out to the media, including frequenting editorial board meetings, RSL owner "Dave Checketts, according to one interviewer, was the red-headed step-child that the media loved to kick around, and for two reasons: One, he was out of town and he was viewed as this rich New York millionaire coming in…, and it was easy to play that stereotype; and two, he was in a very public battle with [another prominent Utah sports franchise owner]." RSL officials had difficulty in understanding why they were being met with such tremendous opposition in the press, and subsequently by the public who was influenced by the media.

The hostile media environment RSL found itself in began to cool, however, once much of the news begin to slip off the front page and onto the sports page. Said an RSL consultant: "I'll tell you what media ultimately started helping were the sports reporters. Because they got interested in the sport. They caught on…. And when that became the majority of the media and the focus of the community, the team became successful and the team became beloved." The negotiation process changed once the public was able to look beyond dollar signs and see a new, exciting sports franchise to cheer for. And for RSL, one important member of the public was one of Governor Huntsman's children. An RSL consultant shared this story: "[The stadium negotiations] were the first time in [Huntsman's] gubernatorial reign that he stuck his neck out and he did it because his 16-year-old daughter – or son, I'm not sure which—said: 'Dad, soccer's cool! What are you going to do? Let this get away? You're going to let this get away?'… And Jon made it happen."

In summary, the RSL data lead to several distinct findings. RSL's consultants felt the media was pushing the idea that the negotiations were filled with contention, which colored the public's perception of RSL until the reporting moved to the sports pages. Once there, sports reports on RSL helped build public support for the team and for the stadium, in spite of the fact that many of the main sticking points in the negotiations, specifically the tax issues, were never fully understood by the public. The newfound public support, along with RSL's self-imposed deadline to move the team to St. Louis if no funding deal was reached, appeared to help sway Governor Huntsman to step in and act to create the tax mechanism that would keep RSL in Utah.

Axial Patterns of the Parties Involved

These patterns or points of agreement were the second level patterns subsequent to the first level patterns observed within the discrete groups of the media, government entities and RSL First, the presence of the media at committee meetings and other "unaccustomed" places introduced more circumspection and hesitancy into deliberations. Secondly, the media used contention. It was not neutral in its stance to the issue. Rather, it framed the issue for discussion in the public arena. It actually amplified and extended the life cycle of the dispute before it was finally resolved to the mutual satisfaction of the city of Sandy, Salt Lake County, the state of Utah and Real Salt Lake. Third, the media played a valuable role, not in mediation, but in educating and focusing the public on the issue.

Contribution to Theory

The first lesson learned in this study is that no one theory can explain the real interactions of a multiple party negotiation. Nothing can be fit totally into prescribed boxes. Contention spread from the issue, to the process, to the media and back again. The media both sets agendas and has agendas built for it. The media cannot be totally neutral because they are part of the public negotiation process. The conflict resolution strategies of contention, cooperation, principled, avoidance, perseverance and mediation were all in evidence. Mediation is normally viewed from the influence of a neutral third party. But in this case, Utah Governor Jon Huntsman forced mediation; his children played soccer and reportedly came to him for help in getting the stadium approved. The forced mediation was for the "good" of Utah -- business and sports.

Implications and Contributions for Practice

"Playing to different publics" does not always mean using the media in a positive way. Some city council members "…would turn to the audience and say, don't believe them [the media]—they've got it all wrong." The bulk of the public discourse around the construction of the Real Salt Lake stadium was concluded nearly five years ago. But changes in the media industry--and in the technology of media delivery over those five years beg the question: How might these negotiations look different if they were being conducted today?

One distinct implication of the changing media landscape is the shrinking number of reporters now assignment to cover city, county and state governments across the country. In Utah, for instance, significantly fewer reporters cover local governments than so did five years ago. The swarm of journalists reporting on the Real Salt Lake stadium negotiations at that time might be difficult to find today—a reality echoed by one negotiator, who commented that s/he had not seen a reporter in his/her office in two and a half years.

The increasing use of social media also presents an interesting implication for future public negotiations like this one. Today, citizens attending city council meetings would instantaneously tweet the results. The fluidity of the news and the unbroken 24-7 news cycle would change the landscape of 2005-2007, when the publication of news around the negotiations occurred at regular *stagegates*. This intermittent—rather than continuous—release of news allowed all the negotiating parties a "trough" in between major public development, enabling them to react, regroup and re-position themselves before the curtain rose on the next act of this long-running drama.

Another change brought about by social media would unquestionably be the removal of the "layer of interpretation" provide by the media, who viewed one of their main roles as educating the public about this very intricate issue. Today's journalists operate in an era of social media soundbites, frequently issued by citizen journalists who may not have the background knowledge to educate the public—and who, indeed, may not even view it as their role to do so. The Real Salt Lake stadium issue was complicated enough when it was explained by a seasoned corps of journalists who had spent months or years following and studying it and writing literally dozens of stories about it. The authors wonder how effectively such a complex topic could be communicated in 140 characters or less.

Perhaps the biggest shift in how these negotiations might unfold today would be around the changing roles of audiences and the changing nature of how news is found, sourced and corroborated. Alan Rusbridger, editor of Britain's newspaper *The Guardian*, alluded to this

seismic shift in the how information is exchanged when he commented, as quoted in the *Columbia Journalism Review*, "I have seen the future…and it is *mutual."*
The article goes on to note that:

"Reporting is becoming more participatory and collaborative. The ranks of news gatherers now include not only newsroom staffers, but freelancers, university faculty members, students, and citizens…There is increased competition among the different kinds of news gatherers, but there also is more cooperation, a willingness to share resources and reporting with former competitors. That increases the value and impact of the news they produce, and creates new identities for reporting while keeping old, familiar ones alive" (Rusbridger, 2009).

Conclusion

This paper began by talking about theatre—the players, the audience and the interaction between the two. It concludes by espousing the view of British artist and naturalist Andy Goldsworthy, who observed: *"The difference between a theatre with and without an audience is enormous. There is a palpable, critical energy created by the presence of the audience."* The authors believe that the presence of the media, in concert with that audience, not only contributes to that palpable, critical energy, but also helps to ensure greater responsibility and responsiveness by the negotiating parties and greater understanding of the issues on the part of the public.

In short, the media matters—and when it comes to serving the public interest, it matters even more. "Playing to the audience" can at times be messy, complicated, conflictive and self-serving. But as scholars, communications educators and citizens, the authors would be concerned at the thought of a world in which this organic process could not take place. And the authors believe that only with the media standing in the audience's corner of the theatre can the public interest be served effectively.

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What's Important? An Exploratory Study of the Factors Investor Relations Professionals Use to Measure Success

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Abstract

Within the U.S. stock market alone, publicly-held corporations collectively allocate tens of millions of dollars each year to the investor relations function, yet little research has been conducted into how investor relations professionals try to determine the effectiveness of this sizeable investment. This exploratory study, based on a survey ($n = 384$) of the corporate membership of the National Investor Relations Institute (NIRI), found that nearly three out of four (73%) investor relations professionals set specific goals and objectives to measure their investor relations programs. A factor analysis revealed that investor relations professionals use four factors to measure the success of their programs (listed in order of importance): 1) internal C-suite assessment, 2) relationship assessment, 3) outreach assessment, and 4) external market behavior. Additional analysis of these factors indicates that investor relations professionals at large-cap companies place significantly more importance on both C-suite assessment and relationship assessment than their peers at small-cap companies. In the wake of the adoption of the Barcelona Principles, this study makes a needed contribution to our knowledge on program evaluation in the field as a whole, and specifically investor relations—a largely understudied area. The specific theoretical and practical implications of these findings are discussed.

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[1] The National Investor Relations Institute (NIRI), as a matter of policy, disclaims responsibility for any private publication or statement by any of its employees. The views expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the view of NIRI or of the author's colleagues on the staff of NIRI.

There are over 5,000 publicly-traded companies listed on major U.S. stock exchanges, such as the New York Stock Exchange and the NASDAQ (Lucchetti, 2011; Stuart, 2011). Thousands of additional companies trade their stock on the over the counter market (OTC Markets Group, 2011). Many of these companies employ one or more investor relations professionals who serve in a boundary spanning role responsible for managing the two-way communication between the company and members of the financial community (Grunig & Hunt, 1984; Laskin, 2006, 2009). As is the case with most departments, investor relations is judged in part by its ability to contribute to company goals and objectives (Cole, 2004; Goodman & Hirsch, 2010; Laskin, 2011; van Riel & Fombrun, 2007).

Investor relations, much like public relations, generally views itself as a strategic management function that contributes to organizational effectiveness (Grunig, 1992) and the attainment of tangible organizational outcomes (Botan, 2006; Botan & Taylor, 2004; Coombs & Holladay, 2007). Research is fundamental to developing and evaluating communication programs (Stacks, 2010)—whether they originate in public relations, investor relations, government relations, employee communication or some other department—and demonstrating their contribution and value to members of the dominant coalition (L. Grunig, J. Grunig, & Ehling, 1992; Dozier & L. Grunig, 1992; van Riel & Fombrun, 2007). While investor relations professionals talk about the importance of program measurement and evaluation at industry conferences and in trade articles (e.g., Metzker, 2006a, 2010), empirical research that focuses on this topic is rare (Laskin, 2011). The study of investor relations by public relations scholars remains limited (Botan & Hazelton, 2006), and even less is known about how practitioners evaluate and measure the success of this important function (Michaelson & Gilfeather, 2003).

The purpose of this exploratory study is to quantitatively assess whether investor relations professionals set goals and objectives; determine which factors they use to gauge success; and see if there are differences across the profession in the importance accorded these factors. More specifically, this study is based on a survey of the corporate membership of the National Investor Relations Institute (NIRI), the world's largest investor relations association. With a total of 384 respondents, this is one of the first and largest surveys of its kind. In the wake of the adoption of the Barcelona Declaration of Research Principles (Manning & Rockland, 2011), this study makes a timely contribution to the body of knowledge on program evaluation (e.g., Hon, 1997, 1998; Kim, 2001; Lindenmann, 2003; Michaelson & Stacks, 2011), while specifically showing investor relations professionals where they stand relative to their peers. For scholars, this work complements and advances recent efforts (e.g., Laskin, 2011; Penning, 2011) to bring a more research and theory-driven perspective to the study of investor relations.

Literature Review
Investor Relations and the Quest to Demonstrate Value

An outgrowth of public relations (Morrill, 1995), investor relations has emerged in recent decades as a specialty communication function that is important to the success and growth of publicly-held corporations and their many stakeholders (Davis, 2006; Dolphin, 2003, 2004). Ready access to affordable capital is the lifeblood of every company (Morrill, 1995), and investor relations serves as the primary conduit between the company and the financial markets in which corporations compete for capital (Marcus, 2005; van Riel & Fombrun, 2007).

With the typical large- to mega-cap public company committing approximately $1 million or more annually to investor relations, the corporate sector as a whole invests hundreds of millions of dollars per year in this function (BNY Mellon, 2009; Hutton, Goodman, Alexander, & Genest, 2001). Investor relations professionals are regularly among the highest paid professionals among communication-oriented positions (Laskin, 2008). Corporations expect a return from this investment; program evaluation and measurement is one way for investor relations to demonstrate that it is a positive contributor to firm performance and that it wants to be held accountable like more mature departments, such as marketing, sales, finance, accounting, and manufacturing (Gronstedt, 1997; van Riel & Fombrun, 2007).

As a profession, investor relations officers generally believe they deserve a seat at the table with the executive committee (Metzker, 2006b) rather than being restricted to a technician role (Dozier, 1992; Dozier & Broom, 2006). Investor relations is defined by NIRI (2003) as "the strategic management responsibility that integrates finance, communication, marketing and securities law compliance to enable the most effective two-way communication between a company, the financial community, and other constituencies, which ultimately contributes to a company's securities achieving fair valuation" (para. 2). A key word in this definition is "strategic" because in order to contribute to what Botan (2006) calls "grand strategy" (p. 225)—policy level decisions that an organization makes about its goals and relationships with its stakeholders—a department must have access to the dominant coalition and take part in this process. A prerequisite to demonstrating strategic value for the organization is knowledge of research methods and managerial functions, including planning and evaluation (Grunig, 1992; J. Grunig, L. Grunig, & Dozier, 2006; L. Grunig, J. Grunig, & Dozier, 2002).

As mentioned in the introduction, investor relations professionals talk about the importance of setting goals and objectives, and implementing criteria to measure and evaluate the success of their programs, as evidenced by the inclusion of this topic in the trade literature (e.g., Cole, 2004; Marcus, 2005; Metzker, 2006a, 2010; Rieves & Lefebvre, 2002). Some researchers also offer recommendations on how investor relations programs should be evaluated (e.g., Michaelson & Gilfeather, 2003). However, outside of these anecdotal and prescriptive contributions, empirical research that attempts to quantitatively assess whether and what the field is *actually doing* as a whole to measure the success of their programs is almost non-existent (Laskin, 2011). The current investigation helps to fill this gap by surveying a national sample of investor relations professionals to determine real-world practice.

The Need to Set Investor Relations Goals and Objectives

Although investor relations today is a well respected corporate function, companies have a difficult time measuring the actual value of investor relations contributions (Laskin, 2011). In fact, a survey of investor relations officers at Fortune 500 companies revealed that demonstrating the value of investor relations to the top management is one of the biggest challenges facing investor relations professionals (Laskin, 2009). Indeed, investor relations, as well as public relations in general, struggles with the topic of measurement and evaluation. Manning and Rockland (2011) explain that, although almost every year is proclaimed to be the 'year of measurement' in public relations, measurement and evaluation often remains an afterthought: "Yet, as professionals, we still find ourselves putting measurement on the to-do list" (p. 30).

There is no doubt this has to change. The Barcelona Declaration of Measurement Principles adopted at the 2nd European Summit on Measurement in June 2010 marks the first step in this change. The seven principles, referred to as the Barcelona Principles, cover such important topics in measurement and evaluation as transparency and replicability, moving away from advertising value equivalencies (AVEs), effect on business results, and so on. But, arguably, the most important principle is principle number 1: "Importance of Goal Setting and Measurement" (AMEC, 2010, p. 5).

Applying Yogi Berra's wisdom to investor relations, Metzker (2010) claims that "if you don't know the aim of your investor relations program, you won't know whether you're meeting the program goals" (p.10). In other words, if the investor relations department of a company does not have a strategic plan on how to build value for the organization, it does not matter how we measure its contribution – we will still lack an answer. Thus, before we can talk about measurement and evaluation, it becomes imperative to understand how the investor relations function is run – as a strategic management function aimed at achieving specific quantifiable goals or not.

In fact, the Barcelona Principles discuss the need for clearly stated goals and objectives addressing "who, what, when and how much the PR program is intended to affect" and include "changes in awareness among key stakeholders, comprehension, attitude, and behavior as applicable; and effects on business results" (AMEC, 2010, p. 5). Investor relations can focus on different goals and objectives depending on the organization – for a small, newly established company it might be increasing sell-side analyst coverage. For a mid-sized company, the focus might shift to working with the buy-side directly and increasing the amount of large institutional investors in the shareholder mix. For mega-cap companies it might be building long-term relationships with strategic investors and educating buy-side and sell-side analysts on the complexities of value creation in a large corporation. Depending on such strategic goals, the measurement and evaluation of such efforts may also be different and involve different metrics.

Thus, it becomes important to evaluate if investor relations is practiced as a strategic, proactive function. If it is, then investor relations evaluation will be goal-driven and strategic. If it is not, however, then any evaluation programs that companies have will likely be inadequate.

Previous research, however, shows that investor relations tends to not be particularly strategic in practice. Laskin (2009) concludes that investor relations is more reactive in nature, as 93% of respondents in his survey of investor relations officers at *Fortune 500* companies claimed that their most common activity is *responding* to requests they receive from shareholders and analysts. He surmises: "Thus, today investor communications are caused by the other party, with IROs simply trying to cope with the requests. The proactive and strategic way of investor relations is perhaps underutilized" (p. 225). Laskin's study also shows that proactive activities are commonly utilized by less than 30% of the surveyed investor relations professionals. Rao and Sivakumar's earlier study (1999) arrived at the same conclusion: investor relations professionals are mostly consumed by passive technical tasks rather than proactive strategic work.

As a result, the first research question this study needs to address is the presence of strategic goals and objectives in investor relations as a foundation for measurement and evaluation:

RQ1. Do companies set specific goals and objectives for their investor relations programs?

Share Price: A Valid Measure of Investor Relations Success?

As for the specific benchmarks used in evaluating investor relations success, among the most commonly mentioned, as well as arguably the most controversial, is the price of a company's stock. The Institute for Public Relations' research suggests that ''the one bottom line measurement for the investor relations executive is achieving a fair market value for the stock'' (Michaelson & Gilfeather, 2003, p. 10). The Investor Relations Society (n. d.) suggests that ''investor relations can have positive impact on a company's market value and cost of capital relative to its industry sector and the overall economic climate'' (p. 1). The link between investor relations and company share price can be explained by the lower risk premium. If investor relations is successful in providing information about the company to investors, investors become knowledgeable about various aspects of the company's business. With lower uncertainty comes lower risk and, thus, improved securities valuation. Starkman and Klingbail (2004) suggest that pricing a firm's shares in comparison with its peers is the main indicator of investor relations success. Other studies also emphasize the link between more transparent investor relations and share price (e.g., Benton, 1986; Gelb, 2000; Metzker, 2006a; Laskin, 2011).

However, it is very difficult to establish a direct causal link between investor relations and share price. One anonymous investor relations expert in Laskin's (2011) study explains: ''the impact that investor relations has on a share valuation is very, very minimal. Other metrics, such as earnings growth, profitability, management credibility, and others drive 99.9999% of the stock price'' (pp. 310-311). In other words, share price is a reflection of a firm's performance first and foremost – communication about such performance is secondary. Thus, measuring the success of investor relations using company share price could be misleading. Laskin (2011) concludes that investor relations cannot move the stock by itself – the company actually has to perform.

Yet, rightly or wrongly, share price often dominates the discussion of investor relations contribution. For example, a guide to measuring investor relations published by NIRI states: "For investor relations professionals the question that matters most is whether the stock is fully and fairly valued" (Harrison, 2006, p. 2). As a result, the second research question addresses the issue of share price as a measure of investor relations success:

RQ2. According to investor relations professionals, should company share price be used as a measure of success for investor relations programs?

Criteria Used for Measuring the Success of Investor Relations Programs

Investor relations officers are involved in many different activities and desired outcomes and, thus, their success can be evaluated based on a range of criteria. It becomes important for this study to properly identify and categorize these activities. Research by Petersen and Martin (1996), for example, identified five major activities based primarily on McGarth (1974) and Miller (1990): 1. Interacting with top management; 2. Working with industry analysts; 3. Finding new, credible analysts; 4. Interacting with mass media; and 5. Using "benchmarking."

Marston and Stracker (2001) focused on different types of communication activities targeted at the main investor relations audiences: the buy-side and the sell-side. Within each audience, they identified six methods of communications – thus, creating 12 types of interactions. The most common methods of communication were answering telephone queries for the sell-side interactions and in-person meetings for interactions with the buy-side.

Finally, Laskin (2009) identified 11 types of activities that investor relations officers can be involved in, including management tasks, research, report preparation, controlled media, mass media, and so on. The most common activities were, first, responding to requests from shareholders, analysts, stockbrokers, etc., and, second, participating in road shows, presentations, and conferences.

All these activities can serve as the foundation for the factored categorizations used in evaluating investor relations. Thus, the third research question asks which factors are used for investor relations measurement and evaluation:

RQ3. What factors do investor relations professionals use to evaluate the success of their investor relations programs?

Differences in Investor Relations Across Companies

Furthermore, previous research indicates that investor relations may not be standardized across organizations (Marston, 1996; Petersen & Martin, 1996; Laskin, 2009). The investor relations function can have a different focus in companies with different market capitalizations or in companies from different industries. Investor relations may be practiced differently based on the educational background of the IRO, his/her level of experience, or the percentage of the budget devoted to program evaluation. Finally, investor relations has been shown to be practiced differently based on the reporting structure of the investor relations department. Laskin (2009) concludes: "Investor relations jobs vary in activities and responsibilities at different organizations" (p. 227). As a result, one can expect the measurement of investor relations success to not be fully uniform, but rather to differ some from organization to organization.

The extent of these variations, however, remains unknown – previous research did not provide an answer to the question of how investor relations measurement and evaluation factors actually differ between companies. Thus, this study seeks to address this deficiency:

RQ4. What differences exist in measuring investor relations in different companies?
RQ4a. Is there a significant difference in the importance of these factors based on the reporting structure of professionals' investor relations departments?
RQ4b. Is there a significant difference in the importance of these factors based on the professionals' years of experience working in investor relations?
RQ4c. Is there a significant difference in the importance of these factors based on the percentage of the professionals' investor relations budget spent on evaluation?
RQ4d. Is there a significant difference in the importance of these factors based on the industry category of the professionals' companies?
RQ4e. Is there a significant difference in the importance of these factors based on the market capitalization of the professionals' companies?

Method

The data for this study is based on a self-administered online questionnaire of the corporate membership of NIRI, the world's largest professional investor relations association. A total of 384 NIRI members participated in the survey, which was conducted in the fall of 2011.

Instrument

This multipage online questionnaire sought to ascertain investor relations professionals' opinions on the topic of investor relations program measurement and evaluation. The questionnaire was divided into four sections: goal-setting, budgeting and planning, criteria used to evaluate investor relations programs, and respondent demographics. Respondents were first asked several closed-ended questions about whether they set goals and objectives for their programs and, if so, the frequency of setting such goals and objectives. Next, respondents were asked several closed-ended questions about budgeting and planning, including how much of their annual investor relations budget was spent on measurement and evaluation-related activities. Guided by prior research (e.g., Swerling et al., 2010; Manning & Rockland, 2011), the ordinal choices provided ranged from less than 1% of the budget to greater than 10% of the budget.

Using a 7-point Likert-type scale with 1 indicating "not important at all" and 7 "extremely important," respondents were asked to individually rate the perceived importance of 17 different criterion in evaluating the success of a company's investor relations program. The criteria selected for inclusion in this question were based on the review of the extant literature in this area (e.g., Cole, 2004; Laskin, 2006, 2009, 2011; Marcus, 2005; Metzker, 2006a, 2010; Michaelson & Gilfeather, 2003; Marston, 1996; Rieves & Lefebvre, 2002; Petersen & Martin, 1996). The responses to these criteria were then factor analyzed using principal components analysis with varimax rotation and four factors were extracted as described below. An open-ended question provided respondents with the opportunity to share additional criteria.

Respondents were next asked a series of demographic questions. For years of experience working in investor relations, respondents were provided eight ordinal choices ranging from less than one year of experience to more than 30 years. To build statistical power and in the interest of parsimony, this variable was collapsed into low experience (less than five years of experience), medium experience (five to 15 years), and high experience (greater than 15 years). Respondents were asked to identify who the investor relations function reported to at their company and were provided the following choices: CEO, CFO, Head of Finance, Treasurer, Head of Corporate Communications, Legal and Other. This reporting structure question was adapted from prior research (e.g., Laskin, 2006, 2009). To build statistical power, this variable was collapsed into four categories: top executive (CEO), financial area (CFO, Head of Finance, Treasurer), communication area (Head of Corporate Communications), and other (Legal and Other).

Respondents indicated the market capitalization of the company they worked for by selecting one of the following market valuation choices used in prior NIRI surveys: micro-cap (less than $250 million), small-cap ($250 million – less than $2 billion), mid-cap ($2 billion – less than $10 billion), large-cap ($10 billion – less than $25 billion), or mega-cap ($25 billion and greater). This variable was collapsed into three categories: small-caps (less than $2 billion), mid-caps ($2 billion to less than $10 billion), and large-caps ($10 billion and greater). Finally, respondents indicated which industry most closely aligned with their company's primary

business using the categories developed by the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS). For analysis purposes, respondents' NAICS code selections were converted to the more parsimonious Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) system.

Sample

The sample frame for this study was drawn from the national corporate membership database of NIRI. As of the time of this survey in October 2011, the NIRI database contained the email addresses of 2,519 corporate members. An email was sent directly to these members inviting them to complete the survey. The questionnaire was open from September 28 to October 13, 2011. Each recipient was assigned a unique Web address so that he or she could complete the survey only once. Of the 2,519 email addresses that were mailed to, 50 addresses were undeliverable and bounced back, and 5 addresses opted-out from receiving surveys, resulting in 2,469 potential respondents. The response rate was 15.5% ($n = 384$). This response rate is similar to online surveys in general (Kaplowitz, Hadlock, & Levine, 2004), and specifically surveys conducted of communication professionals (Porter & Sallot, 2003, 2005; Porter, Trammell, Chung, & Kim, 2007; Sweetser, Porter, Chung, & Kim, 2008) and students (Sha & Toth, 2005).

Among the respondents reporting this information, a majority ($n = 190$, 58%) have worked for 10 years or less in investor relations, 35% ($n = 116$) have 11 to 20 years of experience in the field, while 8% ($n = 25$) have more than 20 years of experience. The market capitalization of the respondents' companies varied with 43% ($n = 142$) working for small-caps, 36% ($n = 119$) with mid-caps, and 21% ($n = 69$) with large-caps. The top five industries among the respondents were as follows: services ($n = 118$, 30%), manufacturing ($n = 76$, 19%), finance, insurance, and real estate ($n = 58$, 15%), retail trade ($n = 27$, 7%), and transportation, communications, electric, gas, and sanitary services ($n = 21$, 5%).

Data Analysis

An exploratory factor analysis, specifically a principal components analysis with varimax rotation, was conducted to extract the factors that investor relations professionals use to evaluate the success of their investor relations programs. Items that cross-loaded on two or more factors, and those with factor loadings lower than the conservative threshold of +/-.50 were eliminated (Chung, Kim, Trammell, & Porter, 2007; Hair, Anderson, & Latham, 1987; Kiousis, 2004). Factors had to exceed eigenvalues greater than 1 (Kaiser, 1960). The KMO measure of sampling adequacy (.826) and Bartlett's test of sphericity ($p < .001$) both revealed that the data set was appropriate for factor analysis. Following the factor analysis, a series of one-way ANOVAs were employed to test for significant differences in the levels of importance accorded the extracted factors based on the backgrounds of the respondents and their companies.

Results

Starting with RQ1, which asked about goals and objectives, nearly three out of four respondents ($n = 281$, 73%) indicated that they set specific goals and objectives for their investor relations programs. The investor relations department ($n = 233$, 88%) often has input into setting program goals and objectives, followed by the company CFO ($n = 223$, 84%) and the CEO ($n = 157$, 59%). These goals and objectives are most frequently set every 12 months ($n = 211$, 79%).

RQ2 assessed whether company share price should be used as a valid measure of the success of an investor relations programs. A resounding 87% (*n* = 231) of survey respondents indicated that share price should *not* be used.

RQ3 evaluated which factors investor relations professionals use to gauge the success of their efforts. Table 1 provides descriptive statistics for the 17 items used for evaluating success.

Principal components analysis of these items using varimax rotation resulted in a reduced scale of 14 items loading on four factors (see Table 2). Factor 1 was "external market behavior" (Cronbach's alpha = .79), Factor 2 was "relationship assessment" (Cronbach's alpha = .76), Factor 3 was "outreach assessment" (Cronbach's alpha = .67), and Factor 4 was "internal C-suite assessment." Mean indices were created from the variable subsets that emerged from the factor analysis. Alpha reliability scores of .70 or higher are generally recommended, although some suggest (e.g., Nunnally, 1978) that scores of .60 are acceptable.

This analysis revealed that investor relations professionals place the greatest weight on the "internal assessment of the C-suite" (M = 5.94, sd = 1.26), consisting of the feedback from members of the dominant coalition, in determining the success of their investor relations programs. Professionals also place high importance on "relationship assessment" (M = 5.90, sd = 1.03), including their relationship with and feedback from the financial community, and their responsiveness to investor inquiries in measuring success. "Outreach assessment" (M = 5.20, sd = .97), consisting of efforts designed to generate visibility and attention, such as investment conference presentations, individual meetings with large shareholders, and the quantity and quality of coverage by Wall Street analysts is also valued. Less important as a gauge is "external market behavior" (M = 3.30, sd = 1.16), including various financial indicators (e.g., change in stock price, valuation of stock relative to peers, stock trading liquidity), news media coverage (both traditional media and via social media), and external recognition/industry awards.

The remaining set of research questions (RQ4a-RQ4e) sought to determine if there were significant differences in the importance accorded these four evaluative factors based on the characteristics of the respondents and their firms. Starting with RQ4a, there was no difference detected in the importance placed on these factors based on the reporting structure (i.e., reports to the CEO, the CFO, or a non-member of the C-suite) of the respondents' investor relations departments.

No differences were found regarding the respondents' years working in investor relations (RQ4b).

Turning to RQ4c, which probed for differences based on the percentage of the respondents' budget dedicated to measurement and evaluation, companies that invested highly in this area (i.e., greater than 5% of budget, M = 3.87, sd = 1.22) placed more value (*F* (2, 239) = 4.69, *p* < .01) on external market behavior than low investing companies (i.e., less than 1% of budget, M = 3.15, sd = 1.11). Still, it is worth noting that even high spenders on evaluation assign only slightly above average importance to external market behavior as a gauge of success.

Moving on to RQ4d, no differences were found based on the respondents' industries.

Finally, for RQ4e, differences were detected among the respondents based on the market value (i.e., the size) of their companies. Respondents at large-capitalization companies (M = 6.19, sd = .79) placed significantly more importance (*F* (2, 240) = 3.78, *p* < .05) on relationship assessment than respondents at small-capitalization companies (M = 5.72, sd = 1.23). C-suite

assessment was also significantly more important (F (2, 237) = 4.33, p < .05) at large-cap companies (M = 6.25, sd = 1.06) than at small-cap companies (M = 5.66, sd = 1.48).

While modest differences were detected in a few cases, overall these results suggest that despite previous research there is actually a fairly high level of consistency across the investor relations profession regarding the relative importance of these factors for investor relations program evaluation and measurement. The relationship assessment and C-suite assessment factors scored highly across the board.

Discussion

A famous adage attributed to Bill Hewlett, co-founder of technology company Hewlett-Packard, is that "you cannot manage what you cannot measure" and "what gets measured gets done" (see House & Price, 1991, p. 92). The results of this study indicate that investor relations professionals by and large do share some of Hewlett's philosophy on measurement and evaluation, and incorporate measurement into their programs. Nearly three out of four respondents (73%) indicated that they set specific goals and objectives to measure their investor relations efforts. IROs may be consumed by reactive technical work (Laskin, 2009; Rao & Sivakumar, 1999), but they have an interest in being strategic.

Respondents strongly rebuked—with 87% indicating 'no'—the notion of using company share price as a valid measure of the success of an investor relations program. This finding is not surprising given that investor relations has very little control over many of the factors, such as company financial performance and the economic cycle, that often drive a company's stock price (Laskin, 2011). Therefore, investor relations professionals do not feel they should be judged against a metric that is largely out of their hands. Faced with this empirical evidence, those that view the ultimate objective of investor relations as achieving a full and fair valuation for a company's stock should reconsider (Metzker, 2006a).

Instead, the two most important measures of success for investor relations professionals are the internal assessment by the C-suite and relationship assessment with the financial community. In fact, the two individual items with the highest scores were relationship-building with the financial community and qualitative assessment by the C-suite. This supports the view that investor relations professionals, similar to public relations professionals, are placed between the organization and its publics and foster relationship-building efforts between these parties. To achieve this goal, investor relations professionals serve a dual role: being investors' advocates inside the organization and advocates of the C-suite during meetings with investors. Investors benefit from improved understanding of the actions of the company; the company's management also benefits from knowing who its investors are and what they expect from the C-suite. This requires investor relations professionals to have a seat at the table—in other words, to be members of the C-suite and to participate in the decision-making process rather than simply to communicate decisions post-factum through news releases, conference calls, or meetings.

At the same time, items related to external market behavior were rated by professionals as being significantly less important gauges of investor relations success. The final factor analysis revealed that professionals use the following factors to measure and evaluate their investor relations programs (in rank-order, based on the level of importance): 1) internal C-suite assessment, 2) relationship assessment, 3) outreach assessment, and 4) external market behavior.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

In terms of scholarly contributions, this study's finding that investor relations professionals place a high degree of importance on relationships dovetails with the earlier findings of Laskin (2011). That the prior study, which was qualitative, and the current study, which was quantitative, both yielded similar findings bodes well for the validity of the conclusions drawn (Hovland, 1959) across this line of research. While investor relations requires a set of knowledge and skills that are unique to this specialization, such as expertise in securities law compliance and the world of finance, IROs' emphasis on relationship cultivation and management ties this area squarely to the broader communication field (Kelly, Laskin, & Rosenstein, 2010). Given this backdrop, relational-oriented communication theories would seem to provide a promising path for future investor relations scholarship (Botan & Taylor, 2004).

This study finds that IROs at large-cap companies place a greater emphasis on relationship assessment than their small-cap peers. This difference may be explained by the hierarchy of effects perspective (e.g., Michaelson & Stacks, 2011), in which professionals at small-cap companies often must work at simply building awareness and interest in their companies, whereas professionals at large-caps are likely at a later stage along the hierarchy with the financial community. As such, investor relations professionals at large-caps may focus more time and effort on cultivating and building upon the relationships they have *already established*.

Large-cap IROs also place even more importance on internal C-suite feedback than IROs at small-caps. This may be because investor relations departments at large-caps tend to be better established and have more resources (BNY Mellon, 2009), making feedback from the C-suite a more viable option for gauging performance. A long line of research suggests that for public relations to be most effective (e.g., J. Grunig, 1992; J. Grunig et al., 2006; L. Grunig et al., 2002) it must have access to the dominant coalition so that it can play a role in setting organizational strategy and policies. That investor relations professionals place a high premium on feedback from the C-suite in gauging the success of their programs underscores that these professionals feel they must have regular access to—or outright membership on—the executive committee "behind the mahogany doors" (Gronstedt, 1997, p. 34) for the function to live up to its full potential.

Turning to practical contributions, the evaluative factors that emerged in this study may be used by investor relations professionals to develop and refine their evaluation metrics relative to their peers. In terms of industry benchmarking, the findings of this study suggest that professionals should place the most weight on metrics associated with interaction with the C-suite and relationships with the financial community, followed by assigning less importance to outreach- and visibility-related metrics, and, finally, the least importance to external market behavior-oriented metrics, including financial indicators. The general agreement detected across the investor relations profession, based on experience, reporting structure, industry and budget allocation, regarding the *relative importance* placed on these factors may be due to the highly regulated nature of the investor relations profession. The host of rules and regulations that are unique to this function may drive a certain level of conformity across the profession.

This study also has practical implications for the field as a whole. Public relations program measurement and evaluation experts have long argued that there is no magic "one size fits all" metric for gauging the success of a communication program or campaign (Lindenmann, 2003). Rather, a variety of measures working in tandem should be used. According to the

guidelines established by the Barcelona Principles, "measurement should take a holistic approach" (AMEC, 2010, p. 5). Empirical research into measurement and evaluation has found that practitioners indeed evaluate the effectiveness of their programs based upon *multiple criteria* (e.g., Hon, 1997, 1998); the findings of the current study continue that tradition. While this study reveals that investor relations professionals value some factors more than others, four distinct factors emerged, with three of these factors (e.g., relationship assessment, internal C-suite assessment, and outreach assessment) ascribed above average importance by professionals.

Limitations and Future Research

As with any study, there are limitations that should be taken into account when reviewing these findings and the conclusions drawn from these results. While the NIRI corporate membership, which served as the sample frame for this study, is the world's largest group of investor relations professionals, these results may not be generalizable to professionals who are non-NIRI members. Further, these findings may only apply to investor relations evaluation and measurement practices in the U.S. Cross-cultural studies on this topic are needed.

Given that some differences were detected in this study based on company market capitalization, future investor relations research should take this variable into account. Many studies to date have focused on investor relations practices at large- and mega-cap companies. To paint a more detailed picture of the field, more research into investor relations departments at mid- and small-cap companies is needed. A review of the open-ended comments from this study revealed several potential additional criteria for measuring the success of investor relations, including corporate reputation, the number of non-deal road shows, a post investor day report, spending compared to budget, and the accuracy of analysts' consensus estimate versus company guidance. These criteria should be incorporated and tested in future research in this area.

Conclusion

In conclusion, as the investor relations profession continues to mature, a greater focus on program evaluation and measurement would seem like a logical progression for the field. Demonstrating accountability and value through improvements in evaluation and measurement may provide one way for investor relations professionals to "have a seat at the proverbial table" (AMEC, 2010, p. 3). As the results of this study indicate, a strong majority of investor relations professionals are attempting to measure their effectiveness, although much work remains to be done. It is hoped that this study serves as a springboard for future research in this area.

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Table 1
Descriptive Statistics for Criteria Used in Evaluating the Success of a Company's Investor Relations Program

Criteria for evaluating IR success	Mean	SD	N
Social media channels	2.11	1.36	238
Individual meetings with top shareholders	5.91	1.04	245
Presentation(s) to board of directors	4.13	1.71	240
Investor conference presentations	5.22	1.24	242
Investor perception studies	4.41	1.96	241
Financial news media coverage	3.36	1.67	240
Relationship with the financial community	6.07	1.08	245
Responsiveness to investor inquiries	5.78	1.38	242
Composition of shareholder base	5.16	1.45	244
Feedback from the financial community	5.90	1.13	241
Valuation of company stock relative to peers	4.70	1.71	245
Sell-side analyst coverage quality	5.36	1.43	246
Sell-side analyst coverage quantity	4.27	1.65	244
Liquidity / trading volume in stock	3.72	1.61	243
Qualitative assessment by the C-suite	5.94	1.27	243
Change in company stock price	3.29	1.70	243
External recognition / awards	3.09	1.74	241

Notes: Subjects were asked to "please rate the importance of each of the following criteria in evaluating the success of a company's investor relations program..." where 1 is "not important at all" and 7 is "extremely important."

Table 2
Factor Analysis of Items for Measuring the Success of Investor Relations Programs

Factors	Factor Loadings			
	1	2	3	4
Factor 1: External Market Behavior				
Change in company stock price	.76			
Valuation of company stock relative to peers	.68			
Social media channels	.67			
Liquidity / trading volume in stock	.65			
Financial news media coverage	.59			
External recognition / awards	.58			
Factor 2: Relationship Assessment				
Feedback from the financial community		.83		
Relationship with the financial community		.82		
Responsiveness to investor inquiries		.66		
Factor 3: Outreach Assessment				
Investor conference presentations			.74	
Sell-side analyst coverage quantity			.69	
Individual meetings with top shareholders			.58	
Sell-side analyst coverage quality			.58	
Factor 4: Internal C-Suite Assessment				
Qualitative assessment by the C-suite				.91
Eigenvalues	4.88	2.12	1.30	1.04
Percent of variance explained	19.4	15.4	13.5	6.7
Reliability (Cronbach α)	.79	.76	.67	n/a
Mean (sd)	3.39 (1.16)	5.90 (1.03)	5.20 (0.97)	5.94 (1.26)

Notes: Subjects were asked to "please rate the importance of each of the following items in evaluating the success of a company's investor relations program..." where 1 is "not important at all" and 7 is "extremely important." Three items were dropped due to factor loadings lower than the .50 threshold.

**Using International Corporate Communication Theory
for the Strategic Practice of Merger Communication--Why the Globally Oriented
DaimlerChrysler Deal Had to End Up in Conflict Because of a Failure to Take
Communicational Issues Into Account**

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Abstract

This paper will use some current theories of international corporate communication (ICC) as a systematic means of both investigating the communicational causes of intra-corporate conflict and suggesting possible solutions. It will consider the case of the DaimlerChrysler deal. It has two complementary aims: first, to argue that differences in business communication culture between Germany and the US in general; and second, to suggest how a theoretical examination of corporate failure might enable firms more successfully to recognize and target potential areas of conflict and misunderstanding in international corporate communications.

This paper will use some current theories of international corporate communication (ICC) as a systematic means of both investigating the communicational causes of intra-corporate conflict and suggesting possible solutions. It will consider the case of the DaimlerChrysler deal, unquestionably one of the most significant cases of "M&A" failure of the last decade. The paper has two complementary aims: first, to argue that differences in business communication culture between Germany and the US in general, and Daimler-Benz and Chrysler in particular, played a role in the ultimate corporate problems; and second, to suggest how a theoretical examination of corporate failure might enable firms more successfully to recognize and target potential areas of conflict with a view to forestalling such potential failures.

The main theory tested here is an analytic grid called the "International Corporate Communications Compass" (ICC Compass or just ICCC), developed in a number of frameworks, including the "Commission on Global PR Research" under the aegis of the "Institute of Public Relations" (IPR), and the "ICC Compass in Europe" project within the context of the "European Public Relations Education and Research Association" (EUPRERA). This approach is also referred to as the "ICC Onion Theory" due to the main theoretical explanation picture (cf. Sievert 2009): the onion in question denotes a series of layers of particular cultural characteristics with regard to corporate communications, thereby offering a model for both categorizing areas of conflict within and between organizations, and suggesting strategies for resolution.

With this aim in mind, the paper will make in-depth, case-based references to the communicational contexts that constitute an integral part of both this and other theories of corporate communication. In so doing, it will argue for the practical implementation of theories of international corporate communication. Such theoretical approaches can be used to map out potential areas of both conflict and harmony between globally engaged firms from different national, media, and corporate cultures. Inasmuch as this process of mapping is shown to be vital to conflict-avoidance in future international corporate co-operations and mergers, it provides an effective *practical* example of a bridge from theory to practice within the context of Public Relations.

To ensure a systematic approach, our paper is divided into five sections. It begins with an in-depth description of the "ICC-compass", shown to suggest a possible theoretical approach to international corporate communications (Section 1). We follow this with a discussion of the DaimlerChrysler Deal as a case-study in (failed) merger communications. Our theoretical approach is then applied in a systematic comparison between Germany and the US in respect of international PR and its operational contexts, before being comprehensively (and retrospectively) applied to the DaimlerChrysler case itself. A short conclusion summarizes why a theoretical approach to international corporate communications could (and can in future) be successfully used for the strategic process of merger communication.

The ICC Compass: An Example for International Corporate Communication Theory
Context of the Selected Theoretical Approach

The theoretical framework proposed by Sievert (cf. 2007; 2009) develops Siegfried Weischenberg's heuristic model for describing a social system by distinguishing between "normative", "structural", "functional" and "role" contexts within journalism. These refer to the systems, institutions, statements and actors associated with the media (cf. Weischenberg 1992: 67-70); and Weischenberg compares these contexts to an onion with a view to illustrating mutual interdependencies and influences.

In a similarly analogical vein, the social subsystem of corporate communications can be represented by the layers of an onion. Economic and political systems, together with the respective national media environments in which corporate communications occur, constitute

the "normative context". In the "structural context", specific foreign target institutions, usually corporations, are scrutinized with regard to their financial and leadership structures. The "functional context" primarily concerns cultural dimensions and conflicts that can (and should) significantly influence strategies of international corporate communication. Last but not least, the "role context" looks at international target-actors within the media, as set against the backdrop of their different professional characteristics, expertise, and attitudes.

For the purposes of this paper, the authors propose five sub-fields, or dimensions, which characterize each of the contexts, together with each country analyzed according to these contexts. Distinctions between the contexts can thus be systematically defined and the resulting values applied to a compass which is analyzed in order to address specifically the largest disparities between cultural values and structures. In *this* case the theory can be used retrospectively to evaluate the failure of the DaimlerChrysler merger with a view to establishing how far differences in corporate culture contributed to its ultimate demise. More broadly, though, the case-study will show how it can also be effectively used for developing planning strategies to forestall future conflicts within "M&A" contexts.

The individual onions of the respective countries will be examined and described in order to paint a picture both of their corporate cultures, and prevalent cultural (and corporate) attitudes and practices in matters of communication. These 20 selected dimensions will then serve as the axes of an International Corporate Communications (ICC) compass. By plotting the values of both countries on our compasss, we shall create a visual representation of the notional "start system", out of which the communication originates, and the "target system", into which the communication is aimed. The space between these depicts a "cultural gap" which must be taken into consideration when planning international communications between these two systems – or rather, in the case of DaimlerChrysler, which *should have been* taken into consideration. Thus, such a comparison will provide a springboard for speculation on the possible effects of a large "gap" in values with reference to DaimlerChrysler: where there are large gaps, for example, it is reasonable to anticipate these particular dimensions' significant contribution to communicational failure at DaimlerChrysler. On principle, then, it becomes possible to study past events in order to determine whether or not the areas of potential cultural conflict projected from the ICC compass correspond to conflicts of interest in real life, and *therefore* whether or not PR-theory can translate into the practice of resolving such communicational conflicts. A significant theoretical disparity in any of the contexts would suggest a need both to openly discuss these differences as manifest in practice, and to develop case-by-case practical strategies for resolving them.

Let's now turn to the breakdown of the four contexts prescribed by Sievert, applied here to the background of the DaimlerChrysler merger. This investigation will focus on corporate attitudes and culture; and on this basis we shall describe the four levels in more specific terms.

Normative Context

The normative context is used to present a general depiction of the country's media system and assesses the norms which are generally recognized within that system (cf. Sievert 2009: 5). The model developed by Hallin and Mancini (2004) can be used to compare characteristics of the political and media systems in the chosen societies. Hallin and Mancini defined nine parameters which allow for a specific description of these systems. This comparison is focused on only five of these original parameters, selected for their particular applicability to corporate communications. The attributes are: "general role of the state"; "reach of newspaper distribution"; "parallelism between politics and media"; "qualification of the communication profession"; and "importance of the state in media systems".

The criterion "general role of the state" is characterized by either a *dirigiste* model, such as implies that the state is actively involved in market and the media, or a liberal one, which describes a media system extricated from government influence or control (cf. Hallin & Manhini 2004: 127). The attribute "reach of newspaper distribution" examines the newspaper circulation in the relevant countries, whereas the aspect "parallelism between politics and media" investigates how strongly media organizations are tied to contemporary political organizations and events (cf. ibid: 38). The "qualification of the communication profession" reflects the degree to which the business of media communications is professionalized (cf. ibid: 289); and, finally, the parameter "importance of the state in the media systems" describes the ability of the state to directly intervene in the media system in the country (cf. ibid: 49).

In the DaimlerChrysler case, for example, we can expect to develop a picture of both the general media landscape in both countries and the respective relationships between the media and the state. This in turn can be applied to other merger scenarios: through the use of specific examples drawn from DaimlerChrysler's history, we shall illustrate the necessity of systematically accounting for different media norms within the home countries of companies engaged in any kind of international cooperation. These respective norms, once defined, will necessitate very different approaches to the question of corporate self-portrayal – and indeed to the problem of corporate engagement with a wider public – within different media systems.

Structural Context

The structural context centers more narrowly on the typical structure and operation of businesses in a target country, focusing in particular on the financial structures and the cultural implications associated with them (cf. Sievert 2009: 10f). Based on the work of Berglöf (1997), Williams and Conley (2005), and Mallin (2006), the target countries will be analyzed on the basis of five variables, which cover the dimensions of corporate finance and corporate governance. The five dimensions for comparison are: "finance source"; "control culture"; "board system"; "target group"; and "CSR orientation".

"Finance source" is measured by the percentage of the equity ratio in the countries under examination. A higher equity ratio indicates a higher degree of autonomy, such that a company enjoys more freedom to communicate without necessarily being required to take other stakeholders into account. The analysis of "control culture" indicates the existence of either a "control-oriented" or an "arm's-length-oriented" culture. In an arm's-length control culture, investors do not intervene in the company provided that payment obligations are met, whereas in a control-oriented control culture, investor intervention is typically based on a control block of equity or a position as either an exclusive or a dominant creditor (cf. Buckley 2004: 44). The dimension "board system" denotes the form of board governance predominant in the relevant country, the two opposing systems being unitary and dual-board systems. In a dual system, two controlling bodies are responsible for the company, thus ensuring a balance of both power and vested interests (cf. Thompson 2001: 81). The "target group" criterion in turn considers whether the country's corporations are focused primarily on their shareholders, or whether they also take other stakeholders into account (cf. Skrzipek 2005: 9ff). Finally, the "CSR orientation" reviews how much emphasis enterprises put on corporate social responsibility.

In toto, an assessment of these dimensions serves to illustrate the general forms of governance typical of a country's corporate culture. They make it theoretically possible to make certain generalizations about the way businesses both operate and react to both internal and external changes in each target country. For example, a firm focusing on satisfying the demands of its shareholders will tend to work towards different goals than a firm devoted

predominantly to stakeholders' interests. A consideration of this context in the particular case of DaimlerChrysler thus demonstrates the importance of systematically taking different "boardroom" priorities into account within any context of international cooperation and engagement.

Functional Context

The next level down in our onion compares the differences with regards to the functional context. In this paper the functional context describes particular cultural values, whether directly conveyed within a particular cultural context, or portrayed through several interim steps (cf. Sievert 2009: 13). In order to analyze the functional context of the two media systems we draw upon the system devised by Geert Hofstede (2001). This standard method of analysis measures five defining attributes which determine a country's cultural attitude: "power distance index"; "uncertainty avoidance index"; "individualism vs. collectivism"; "masculinity vs. femininity"; and "long-term vs. short-term orientation".

"Power distance index" concerns the equitability of wealth distribution within a society, and the extent to which a given society expects and anticipates financial inequality. Higher-scoring countries tend to expect a less equal distribution of wealth. The "uncertainty avoidance index" is a measure of how cultures deal with future uncertainties, and indicates how open they are to making risky decision. Cultures scoring more highly on this index are more likely to inculcate an adversity to the uncertain and unforeseen. "Individualism vs. collectivism" reflects the value that the society places on individuality, whereas "masculinity vs. femininity" describes the extent of differentiation of gender roles within a country, thus revealing the extent of adherence to traditional gender stereotypes. In a more masculine country, for example, we can expect to see a greater gap between male and female values, and an acculturated validation of individual assertiveness and competitiveness within a professional context. A fifth, more recently added, dimension, "long-term vs. short-term orientation", describes the general cultural importance attached to future planning. Cultures with lower ratings (and so a stronger orientation towards short-termism" tend to set more store by individual and corporate public image (in relation, for example, to CSR) within their origin culture. Their higher-scoring counterparts are more interested in long term goals and consequently attach more importance to strategic pragmatism in view of projected – if necessarily uncertain – future circumstances.

The cultural aspects of international corporate communications provide an overview of both the general perspectives and probable reactions of employees and publics alike. This broader cultural perspective is especially relevant to the question of global engagement and conflict: indeed, such instances of international (and *intercultural*) engagement as the DaimlerChrysler merger not only affect the directly implicated companies and employees, but also become public property through international media reporting and analysis. The general area of culture is one in which we can anticipate significant communicational problems and misunderstandings in the event of polarized scores on cultural context indices. Despite the practical and ethical difficulties tied up with systematically analyzing such cultural differences, the failure of DaimlerChrysler reveals the importance of explicitly recognizing differences with a view to both respecting them and developing sensitive and yet specific strategies for such difficulties as may emerge. Thus, an analysis of cultural difference plays an integral part in developing strategies for ensuring a conflict-free engagement between internationally engaged companies.

Role Context

We now turn to examine the role context, the final layer of the onion, which more specifically examines the players in international communication. For the purposes of this

article the focus is on journalism and journalists in the context of a cross-border comparison (cf. Sievert 2009: 15). David H. Weaver's book *The Global Journalist* (1998), in which 21 countries are analyzed with regard to their journalistic proficiency, features and attributes, can serve as the basis of this comparison; and, indeed, it is his later work, *The American Journalist in the 21st Century - Key Findings* (2002), which is particularly well-suited to the analysis of American journalism, examining as it does these subject areas with a particular focus on North America. Combined with some general characteristics the role context is analyzed by means of five attributes: the categories "statistical sex ratio", "academic degree", and "degree in journalism", cover general journalistic characteristics; and the categories "provide analysis" and "be a watchdog of the government" describe different national attitudes to journalism as an occupation.

The first characteristic describes the distribution between the sexes within the journalistic profession in the investigated countries. Consideration is then taken of the overall percentage of journalists holding an academic degree and, in turn, of the percentage of these degrees gained specifically in journalism. Following this, the professional attribute "provide analysis" investigates the importance attached by journalists to the provision of analysis and interpretation of events and issues (cf. Weaver 2007: 139); and the criterion "be a watchdog of the government" examines the extent to which the journalists self-consciously perceive themselves as a fourth estate, or an independently critical body. This criterion interrogates the self-image of a national press as a representative of the public, a critic of government, and/or an advocate of policies (cf. McQuail 2005: 284).

This final context is relevant to the analysis of the failure of the DaimlerChrysler merger insofar as it indicates the ways in which the deal was approached and presented by both reporters and investigative journalists in both origin-countries. With the help of DaimlerChrysler, we shall show how far a corporation's engagement with different national media environments has to be tailored according not only to overall media structures (as per the above-described normative context), but also to the more amorphous – but nonetheless theoretically analyzable – question of journalists' self-ascribed professional roles in reporting and investigating business issues.

The DaimlerChrysler Deal: A Case for the Strategic Practice of a Merger
Three Phases of a Merger

In the case of DaimlerChrysler, it is important to discern between three phases of development: the merger itself; the post-merger problems; and the companies' ultimate demerger. The next section of the paper considers these three phases in turn, before engaging in a theoretical discussion of the case-study from an economic and political perspective. This contextual information will provide the foundation for the paper's subsequent *practical* application of International Corporate Communication Theory.

The Merger

The two automotive giants seemed in theory to be a perfect fit for each other. Daimler Benz was a leading player in the market of luxury car manufacture, its reputation for technological innovation and exacting quality traditionally guaranteeing a leading position in the high-end European car market. Chrysler, in contrast, represented a lower-end American brand: its reasonably priced trucks, vans, and SUVs had captured a burgeoning domestic market, and by the mid-1990s it was the more profitable car manufacturer in the world. The Detroit-based company had been lauded as a "comeback kid" on account of its frequent escapes from bankruptcy (cf. Finkelstein 2002: 1), its American market share of 23% bolstered by a manufacturing efficiency unsurpassed by either Ford or General Motors (cf. Johann 2006: 4).

Despite their (very different) successes, both companies looked to what they could offer one another in a merger. Whereas Daimler-Chrysler sought to achieve economies of scale in order to compete with such cost-cutting rivals as Toyota (cf. Bell 2004: 109), Bob Eaton, CEO of Chrysler, saw opportunities to respond to increased consumer power and environmental awareness, and to internationalize the company's brand (cf. Golitsinski 2000: 10). The largest trans-Atlantic merger in history took place on May 7, 1998. Reporters in both Germany and the USA spoke of "synergy", underlining the complementarity of the companies in respect of their respective markets (cf. Surowiecki, *The Slate*, May 1998).

Post-Merger Problems

Just as the markets of the two companies were different, so, too, were their corporate identities. Daimler-Benz had come to epitomize a quintessentially German technological and methodological precision. Its cars were engineered to a fault, its production processes were painstakingly comprehensive, and its board meetings were correspondingly bureaucratic and procedure-oriented. Chrysler, by contrast, was a paragon of the can-do optimism of the quintessentially American self-image. Its cars had courted a "mass appeal" by capturing the "bold and pioneering American spirit" (Finkelstein 2002: 1), the company's trademark creativity stimulated by its flexible, relatively unstructured governance (cf. Hollank & Walter 2008: 20). These cultural mismatches related partly to brand, and partly also to the marked economic and cultural differences between Germany and the USA. A mismanagement of these differences within the context of DaimlerChrsyler led, however, to problems in both managerial relations and brand identity.

On a superficial level the differences seemed easily surmountable. It was clear, for example, that German executive pay packages would have to remain inferior to those enjoyed by their American counterparts, on account of Germany's more unionized corporate culture; and American executives and employees had to come to terms with their German colleagues' relatively extravagant company expense claims (cf. *The Economist*, July-August 2001). However, a lack of communication between the boards both precluded a full synergy on the one hand and eroded the respective corporate cultures on the other. The first problem lay in ambiguity regarding the nature of the merger itself: the "Merger of Equals", such as had been widely extolled in the American press, was in fact "never reality", as Daimler CEO Jürgen Schrempp conceded in the German financial newspaper *Handelsblatt*. Rather, the notion of equal footing was little more than a "necessary [ploy] to earn the support of Chrysler's workers and the American public" (cf. Schrempp in *Handesblatt*, October 30, 2000). Schrempp's announcement – backed up by an interview in the *Financial Times* in October 2000 – came as a shock to American colleagues and shareholders used to a more open corporate culture: *Business Week* in reflection of a wider sentiment accused Schrempp of "lying", and therefore of undermining "the little goodwill left between management and the troops" (cf. Golitsinski 2001: 10).

Daimler's dominance had little immediate effect. Executives at the German company saw little need to fix something that wasn't broken in the first place, thinking it expedient initially to adopt a laissez-faire approach with Chrysler, if only "because they have done a great job in the past", in the words of one senior Chrysler executive (cf. Finkelstein 2002: 7). But what was not taken into account was that Chrysler had lost some of its key figures in the meantime, and that far from continuing to thrive, the company's entrepreneurial ethos was slowly beginning to atrophy as Detroit waited for Stuttgart to make its next move.

Despite an initial recognition of both the strength of the Chrysler brand and its distinctive corporate culture, Daimler gradually began to impose its will on the Chrysler board. Such high-profile departures as Bob Lutz and Chris Theodore were followed by the shock firing of Chrysler President Thomas Stallkamp, who was replaced by James Holden in

September 1999. Stallkamp's criticism of the authoritarian German management style had jeopardized his future on a now-predominantly German board for which corporate consensus had become all-important (cf. Hyde 2003: 311). The commercial effects of a perceived German dominance were felt not only throughout the corporation, but on the stock market as well: the once-profitable Chrysler began to lose money, hemorrhaging a sum total of $512 million in the third quarter of 2000 alone (cf. Finkelstein 2002: 4).

Boardroom problems in turn became car problems. Eager to maintain the Mercedes hallmark of uncompromising quality, Daimler executives proved reluctant both to integrate production and actively promote Chrysler cars alongside the prestigious Mercedes brand (cf. *The Economist*, February 15, 2007). Mercedes-Benz division chief Jürgen Hubbert told the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* that his mother's Plymouth "barely lasted two-and-a-half years" (cf. *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, March 17, 2001), a slight on Chrysler which drew an equally critical response from Bob Lutz, Chrysler vice-chairman, that "the Jeep Grand Cherokee earned much higher consumer satisfaction ratings than the Mercedes M-Class" (cf. *Detroit Free Press*, March 19, 2001). Far from maintaining their respective brand-images, however, mutual skepticism served to undermine both companies' marketability. In Europe, for example, such potentially profitable vehicles as the Dodge Neon and the Grand Cherokee were pushed to one side by the Mercedes A-Class, a model which in turn seemed to offer an exacting consumer too little engineering for too much money (cf. Finkelstein, 2002, p.6).

The De-Merger

As *The Economist* remarked months before the final dissolution, the "merger of equals" had singularly failed to create the biggest player in the car industry, instead turning out to be "just another disastrous car-industry takeover" (cf. *The Economist*, February 2007). The financial performance of the corporation bears this out, DaimlerChrysler market capitalization in 2002 registering a zero-sum net-gain in the four years since the merger. Despite its continued profitability, Mercedes had seen its luxury-car supremacy in Europe slowly eroded by both Audi and BMW; and, more problematically, the chronically loss-making Chrysler proved unable successfully to compete even in the American market with a slew of Japanese imports (cf. Finkelstein 2002: 6).

On May 14, 2007, DaimlerChrysler sold Chrysler Group to Cereberus Capital Management, a company which had a reputation for "slashing and burning" troubled acquisitions (cf. Freeman and Russakoff, *The Washington Post,* May 15, 2007). Cereberus took 80% of the company, and accepted a net contribution of some $700 million to take on Chrysler's liabilities, which included a total of $19 billion in employee insurance payouts. The Union of Autoworkers, whose representatives had tried in vain to persuade Daimler to hold on to Chrysler, recognized that the Cereberus deal bode ill for its members; and perhaps in view of this, Chairman Jon W. Snow felt it necessary to portray the takeover as a return of Chrysler to its American roots in his assertion that "the great name of Chrysler is coming home" (cf. *The Washington Post*, May 15, 2007).

However, the concerns were not without justification: while Daimler has returned – weakened but still in good health – to its luxury-car tradition, Chrysler's future remains unclear.

Theoretical Significance of the "Three Phases"

The merger and de-merger of Daimler-Benz AG and Chrysler Corporation are interesting precisely because they constituted a multilateral failure. In large part this might be attributed to an incompatibility of brands; the fact that the merger represented a "marrying up-marrying down" scenario – as quipped by Jim Holden, Chrysler marketing chief – indicates the extent of the cultural mismatch of the companies' respective markets, and in

large measure explains why they failed to form a unitary company (cf. Troe 2006: 17). The distinctive brands of the luxury-carmaker Daimler-Benz AG on the one hand, and the more mass-market-oriented Chrysler Corporation on the other, turned out to be anything but a perfect fit.

Product incompatibility was, however, in some sense merely symptomatic of a wider communicational breakdown between Stuttgart and Detroit. The differences between the Mercedes and Chrysler brands offered a telling insight into far broader structural and cultural contrasts both between Daimler and Chrysler and, more generally, between Germany and the USA. That the merger and de-merger has already inspired a proliferation of literature is testament to DaimlerChrysler's status as a case study *par excellence* of the profound difficulties tied up with international, hence intercultural, mergers and acquisitions. DaimlerChrysler is thus interesting from a public relations perspective, since it highlights the crucial importance of systematically analyzing such differences.

The ICC Onion Theory offers a heuristic model through which structural and cultural difference can be assessed and categorized. By applying this broad cultural comparison to communicational problems at DaimlerChrysler, this paper will consider the ways in which these contributed towards its failure. Aspects examined will include the portrayal of the merger and merged company at its various stages in the US and German media; the nature and extent of DaimlerChrysler's conventions of financial disclosure; and – crucially – (mis-)communication as it played out *within* the company, between exeuctives employees from two very different national and corporate cultures.

We aim to show that the ICC Onion Theory offers the possibility of a systematic examination of structural and cultural differences in the context of any form of global corporate communication and cooperation, hence of mapping out potential areas of conflict and harmony between firms from cultures which are very different by multiple measures. The proposed theoretical mapping will be vital to conflict-avoidance in future international corporate co-operation. Moreover, it illustrates the possibility of establishing meaningful and practically useful links in Public Relations between communicational theory and corporate praxis.

Using the ICC Compass on the "Country" level: A Systematic Comparison of PR and its Contexts in Germany and the US

Normative Context

The German government is more actively involved in the media than its US counterpart, which assumes a far more passive role. On examination of the newspaper distribution within the two countries, we again encounter a large disparity: German circulation rates are high, in contrast to the average distribution levels of American newspapers. Both countries display a (relatively) neutral attitude towards political reporting and return an equally high rating as far as the journalistic professionalization is concerned. However, there is another large gap in respect of the importance of the state in media systems, showing again that the American relationship between state and media is characterized by far greater distance than in Germany. From these results, as summarized in Table 1, we can conclude that, while similarly professionalized and characterized by a similar degree of party-political neutrality, German and the US media systems differ with regard to their respective interactions with the state.

Table 1
Results Normative Context

Country / Attribute	Germany	USA
General Role of the State	Dirigiste	Liberal
Reach of Newspaper Distribution	High	Average
Paralellism between Politics and Media	Medium (neutral)	Medium (neutral)
Qualification of Communication Profession	High	High
Importance of the State in Media Systems	High	Weak (market dominated)

Structural Context

Both Germany and the USA have relatively low equity ratios (the UK, for example, has an equity ratio of 38.5%). However, the US ratio is approximately one third larger than that of Germany, indicating that US corporations can expect to enjoy more autonomy with regard to their communications. This is borne out by the difference in control culture: whereas German firms are likely to be controlled by their investors, US firms here again enjoy much greater autonomy, provided that all payment requirements are met. There is a similar disparity between the board systems and target groups. Whereas a dual board system oriented around the stakeholder is common in Germany, the American system favors a system in which a unitary board acts in the interests of the shareholder. This obvious opposition of ideals and practices offers a potential explanation for some of the major problems faced following the merger of Daimler-Benz and Chrysler Corp., bringing as they did two very different corporate cultures under one roof. German companies attach a high value to their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), such as is generally of lesser concern to American firms. The results of the structural context analysis (collated in Table 2) are clear: the structural contexts of the respective countries vary greatly, meaning in practical terms that the models of management and financing ran a considerable risk of incompatibility.

Table 2
Results Structural Context

Country / Attribute	Germany	USA
Finance Source	19.6% (Equity ratio)	28.5% (Equity ratio)
Control Culture	Control oriented	Arm's length oriented
Board System	Dual	Unitary
Target Group	Stakeholder oriented	Shareholder oriented
CSR Orientation	High	Medium-low

Functional Context

The first dimension demonstrates clear differences in cultural attitudes and values as they apply to the corporate sphere. Whereas Germany's low rating of 31% indicates a concern for relative financial equitability, the US score of 40% suggests an acceptance of a more uneven wealth distribution. Germany, however, scores more highly on the "uncertainty avoidance" index. Its score of 61%, in contrast to the USA's 40%, suggests a greater cultural adversity to the risks tied up with future uncertainties. American culture is more prone to be accepting of new ideas and uncertainties, an openness to different possibilities which will become evident in our specific discussion of DaimlerChrysler in the next section of the paper.

It is, however, the figures for "individualism vs. collectivism" which reveal the greatest difference in this survey. American companies are characterized by a clear orientation toward individualism (scoring 91%, the highest of all the countries studied in Hofstede's original research). German companies tend towards an emphasis on individualism; but a rating of 64% nonetheless still suggests this trait to be less explicitly valued than it is by their American counterparts. That both countries have the same score for "masculinity vs. femininity" (62%) reveals the persistence of gender stereotypes – and the emphasis placed on a traditionally masculine competitiveness in the workplace – on both sides of the Atlantic. The final dimension shows that while both countries returned low scores, such as respectively suggest a high concern for social obligations, Germany's score of 11% (as set against 29%) implies that the Germans are more markedly focused on issues relating to a company's role and public image within German culture. The results of this context analysis (collated in Table 3) underscore a clear difference in the cultural values of the two origin-countries.

Table 3
Results Functional Context

Country / Attribute	Germany	USA
Power Distance Index	31%	40%
Uncertainty Avoidance Index	61%	46%
Individualism vs. Collectivism	64%	91%
Masculinity vs. Femininity	62%	62%
Long-Term vs. Short-Term Orientation	11%	29%

Role Context

Gender ratios in both US and German journalism are similar. Although only 37.2% of its journalists are female, Germany nonetheless currently shows a slightly greater tendency towards workplace gender equality that America, where only 33% are women. 60% of journalists in Germany have an academic degree in comparison to 89% in America, suggesting that the journalistic profession in the USA sets markedly greater store by a college education. A similar emphasis on academic study is suggested in the respective percentages of journalists holding a degree specifically in journalism. The USA's percentage of 36.2% contrasts with Germany's much lower 13%, such as highlights, in the German case, the importance attached to vocational experience as set against academic study.

Turning to the two categories which analyze journalists' vocational self-perception, we observe considerable definitional distinctions. German journalists assign great importance to analytical reporting, 74% seeing it as central to their job, while only half (50.9%) of their American counterparts consider it to be vital to what they do. However, 70.5% of American journalists place a high value on their status as government (and corporate) watchdogs, in contrast to 33% of their German counterparts. Summarized below in Table 4, the results reveal a marked difference between the respective role-definitions, which will be shown in the next section to have had a considerable impact on the DaimlerChrysler merger. American journalists place much importance on their role as critics of both governmental and corporate decisions, whereas their German counterparts arguably consider this to be less of a priority than providing a clinical analysis of the issues at hand.
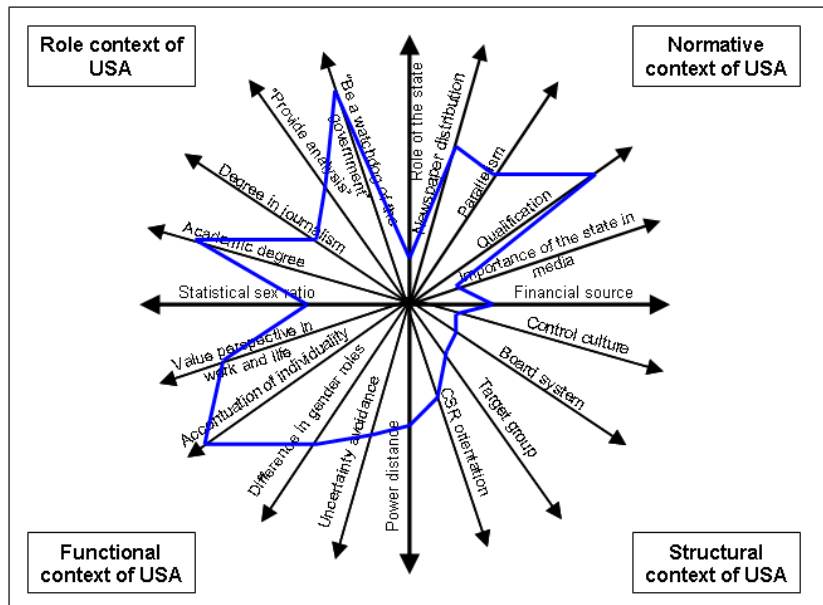
Table 4
Results Role Context

| Country / Attribute	Germany	USA
Statistical Sex Ratio	Medium (37.2% female)	Medium (33% female)
Academic Degree	High (60%)	High (89%)
Degree in Journalism	Low (13%)	Medium (36.2%)
Provide Analysis	High (74%)	Medium (50.9%)
Be a watchdog of the government	Low - Medium (33%)	High (70.5%)

The ICC Compass

By applying the results from these tables to a "compass" structure, whereby each axis represents one of the attributes of each country, we can create a visual representation of the prevailing cultural outlook (Compass 1 & 2). This in turn allows for a direct comparison which clearly illustrates areas of marked cultural difference; and it is to these points of difference which we must look (at least in part) for an explanation of the failure of DaimlerChrysler (Compass 3). An examination of the ICC compass shows that, particularly in respect of the structural context, there are large disparities between American and German corporate environments.
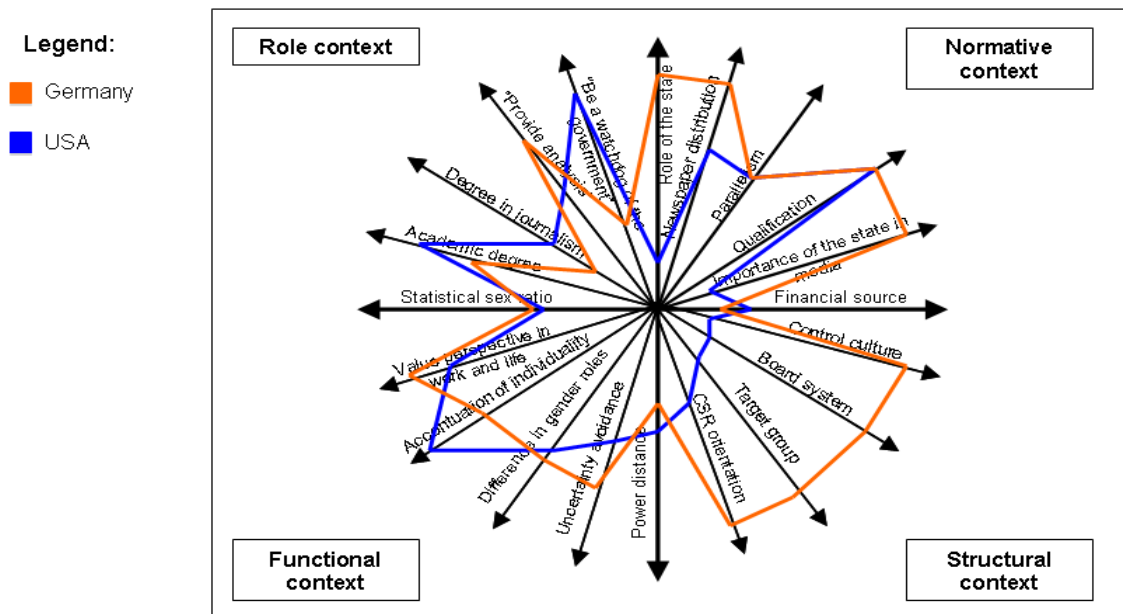
Compass 1
Corporate Culture in the USA

Compass 2
Corporate Culture in Germany
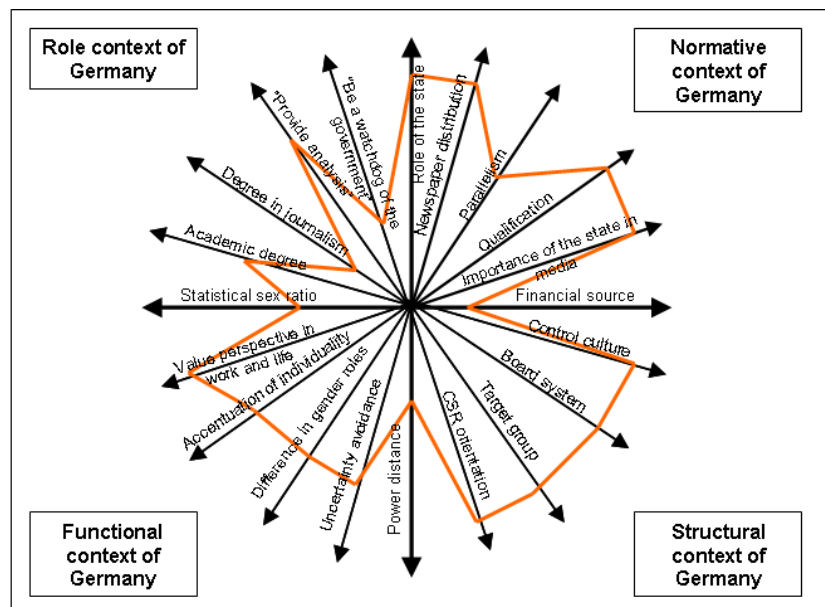
Compass 3
Germany & the USA

The cultural gaps identified in the tables are clearly noticeable. The clearest gaps emerge in the "structural context" quadrant; and such significant differences in the two countries' systems of corporate governance and finance retrospectively suggest how beneficial it would have been for the DaimlerChrysler management *both* to recognize the corporation's constituent structural differences *and* to develop explicit and specifically targeted strategies in order to resolve them. The importance of potential conflict-resolution is, however, by no means restricted to the boardroom and the office: indeed, both the "normative" and "role contexts" also throw large discrepancies into relief, highlighting the question of DaimlerChrysler's self-portrayal on both national and international levels as potentially problematic *if not explicitly addressed.*

In sum, this diagrammatical representation suggests that insofar as two social models were (and are) markedly different, the DaimlerChrysler management should have placed much more emphasis on accommodating differences and resolving problems of corporate (and media) communication. Differences between German and American corporate and media environment, particularly prominent as they are on this assessment, demonstrate the value of using a theoretical model with a view to making such discrepancies (and potential areas of conflict) explicit. In the case of DaimlerChrysler, for example, a systematic consideration of the respective cultural, corporate, and media environments would have revealed considerable differences and allowed for the development of contextually tailored solutions.

In Section 4 we shall retrospectively consider specific examples of these differences. Through an in-depth consideration of the failed merger, we hope to demonstrate the direct applicability of ICC theory to the realities of communicational breakdown. The *diagnostic* application of the theory can, however, foreground its potential use in a *preventive* capacity. Insofar as the particular examples of communication failure at DaimlerChrysler can be easily identified on the ICC model, it is clear how far this theory can in other cases be used

systematically and strategically to prevent the emergence of precisely the kinds of problems we shall analyze below.

Using the ICC Compass on the "Case Study" Level: A Systematic Interpretation of the DaimlerChrysler Deal and its Failure

Normative Context

The media differences between the USA and Germany are unsurprisingly revealed in very different media portrayals of the DaimlerChrysler Deal, and in different expectations and assumptions as to the merger's scope and ramifications.

a) The Media Politics of the Deal's Portrayal

During the preparation for the merger between Daimler-Benz and Chrysler, Jürgen Schrempp had spoken to both incumbent German chancellor Helmut Kohl and his successor Gerhard Schröder in order to smooth the political waters for the largest trans-Atlantic merger in history (cf. *The New York Times,* 26 May 1998). On 7 May 1998, as Bob Eaton telephoned Bill Clinton and implied to the American President that the resulting organization would constitute a merger of equals (cf. ibid), Schrempp contacted both Kohl and Schröder, offering messages subtly tailored to the politicians' respective political persuasions. The right-wing Kohl, champion of German integration and reconstruction since 1989, was told that the merger would be an enormous boon both to Germany's largest company and to the country's economic power as a whole. In a differently Germano-centric vein, Schrempp reassured the nominally left-leaning Gerhard Schröder that no workers would be laid off, and that the company would be German – a discreet promise of German sovereignty indicative of a German government's state and nation-oriented economic agenda (cf. ibid).

The Schröder administration's proclivity for protecting the status of natively German car industries – and the German public's acceptance of such interventionism on the part of this *Autokanzler* ("car chancellor") – is implicit in the policies of a government which on occasion acted to protect German jobs at DaimlerChrysler and held up the car manufacturer as a representative of German industry. The *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* published a report in December 1998 on the European Commission's approval for the German government to pay DaimlerChrysler and several of its competitors a total of DM 400 million in subsidies, so as to encourage them to build factories in Germany rather then Poland. The combined subsidies represented a ceiling-breaking 33% of the total investment costs, constituting in the words of the *FAZ* "another example of how the European Commission flouts its own rules", and demonstrating the German government's avowed commitment to economic protectionism in the name of DaimlerChrysler's continued "Germanness" (cf. *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, December 11, 1998).

This thinly-disguised protectionism arguably sat rather uneasily with Schröder's characteristic preoccupation with business-friendly reform (as spurred on by his "kitchen cabinet" of prominent CEOs, which notably included Schrempp – cf. *Business Week*, May 1, 2000). But protectionism in this context meant the protection of German companies, and in this case of DaimlerChrysler. That Schröder heeded calls – on the part of both Schrempp and DaimlerChrysler CFO Manfred Gentz – to check the left-leaning policies of Minister of Finance Oskar Lafontaine or face the possible move of DaimlerChrysler from Stuttgart to Detroit, is indicative of an essential commitment to a German car-making tradition (cf. *World Socialist Website*, 24 March 1999). Moreover, the chancellor clearly recognized the *media* value of aligning his administration with DaimlerChrysler, as illustrated in his prominent personal appearance at the inauguration of the corporation's Sino-German joint-development factory in Beijing in December 2004 (cf. *Danwei*, December 7, 2004). Herein, then, we see both an alignment between the German government and German industry (in this case

DaimlerChrysler), and a concern with its positive and prominent media portrayal. While this cannot be seen as an irrefutable proof of the state's increased prominence in the media, it nonetheless in some measure reflects a shared expectation on the part of both government and media that German companies should remain true to their German roots and retain a commitment to their German employees.

A cultural expectation of (relatively) state-oriented economic policy is manifest in an embeddedness of the media within German political and civil society. Publicly-funded media remain democratically accountable to the constituencies they represent, top managers being appointed through the voting of both political and civil-societal representatives. The managers of the *Anstalten Öffentlichen Rechts*, for example, responsible as they are for the bulk of regional, state-funded TV broadcasting, are chosen by councils which are composed of politicians, union, church and business leaders (cf. Kleinsteuber & Thomass 2006). Thus, while government does not actively and directly interfere in reporting and broadcasting, the bureaucratized, civil-representative structure of German media nonetheless reflects markedly *dirigiste* patterns in a relatively large state's relationship with the national and regional media.

It is certainly important to avoid national stereotyping with regard to the interrelation between politics, civil society, and industry; and in view of this, it is simply not possible to generalize about Americans' and Germans' respective commitments to protecting their own. Indeed, concern for "our workers" was certainly not confined to Germany. As CNN reported after the announcement of the merger on May 7, 1998, both the American government and the car manufacturing workers' union, United Autoworkers, likewise showed similar concern that American jobs be protected. UAW president Stephen Yokich assured journalists, in staunch defense of members' jobs, that "we're going to take a hard, good look at it", and suggested that UAW's official stance would need a 90-day gestation period (cf. *CNN Money*, 7 May 1998).

Regardless of union and government preoccupation with "keeping American jobs American", however, it is significant that American media, whether written or broadcast, has traditionally enjoyed a far greater degree of independence than in Germany from any kind of political influence. Its commercial roots and ties – far more prominent than in Germany – thus arguably exercised a far greater influence on media reception of the DaimlerChrysler deal. As Hans J. Kleinsteueber points out, the "commercial influence" on US broadcasting systems has led to the development of a media system shaped primarily by consumer-oriented considerations, rather than by a marked politico-economic agenda (cf. Kleinsteuber 2009: 1217). Four commercial networks, namely NBC, CBS, ABC, and Fox, are responsible for the bulk of (predominantly entertainment-oriented) programming and advertising, supplying local broadcasters with standardized advertising to which the latter add in the creation of their own TV schedules. The notably trans-national scope of the *News Corporation*-subsidiary, *Fox,* as well as of the cable news network CNN, ensures the independence of such broadcasting corporations from strong federal or state control; and such political bias as there arguably exists, most notably the right-wing orientation of a number of the press organs and broadcasting corporations owned by *News Corporation*, is shaped by the commercially interested political persuasions of the directorship. The press landscape is strongly characterized by transnational and/or commercial preoccupations, as reflected in the relatively large circulations of the financial/business daily *The Wall Street Journal* on the one hand and the colorful, notably reader-friendly, and wide audience-targeted *USA Today* on the other. Despite a prevalent commercial coloring, however, the lack of political influence on the part of federal and state governments has ensured the development of a relatively neutral mass press. While self-regulation is institutionalized, its low profile has been integral to the

evolution of a strongly investigative, *Pulitzer Prize*-capped journalistic culture (cf. Sievert 2006: 116).

It is indisputable that a commercially cosmopolitan and economically liberal orientation within the American press – itself doubtless the concomitant of minimal state influence – shaped reactions to the May 1998 reporting of the DaimlerChrysler merger. Indeed, the American media generally proved politically and culturally receptive to the resulting emergence of a multinational super-corporation. Revealingly, the idea of a cross-cultural "merger of equals" was celebrated in the American media as representing a mutually beneficial synergy of very different (but complementary) corporate and brand values, an alliance which would singularly avoid the dilution of one company's identity through the other. "No, this merger isn't about savings", duly contended *Forbes Magazine* in May 1998. "It isn't about blending German caution with Yankee freewheeling… It is about taking two splendid companies and transforming them into a real world-scale, truly multinational business" (cf. *Forbes Magazine*, May 1998). The American media sensitization to topics of "intercultural communication" (cf. Hinner 2009: 45) is implicit in an evidently enthusiastic American embrace of the fully globalized, multinational status of DaimlerChrysler. "The merger of Daimler-Benz and Chrysler Corp. will clearly rock the global auto industry", prophesied *Business Week*, with the qualification that "the creation of this new powerhouse is more than an industrial mega deal" (quoted in Troe 2006: 16).   Stressing the cultural import of the merger, the article suggested that the deal was "perhaps the first sign that the forces of globalization have succeeded in reshaping Europe Inc. companies such as Daimler-Benz now seem to be strong and confident enough to deal on an equal footing with their American counterparts" (*ibid*).

German press coverage was for its part less hyperbolic in its analysis of the deal's scope. The quality weekly *Die Welt* matter-of-factly reported that DaimlerChrysler AG "firmiert als deutsches Unternehmen", eschewing an extended analysis of what many US journalists quite openly celebrated as a cultural milestone. Meanwhile, writing about the deal's reception in the American car magazine *Ward's AutoWorld*, Chrysler executive Stephan Scharf tellingly suggested that the overwhelmingly positive American press reaction would hardly have been mirrored in the hypothetical German reaction if Daimler had been absorbed by Chrysler and subsequently Americanized. "American newspapers seem to be very positive about the merger", commented Scharf. "If it [were] the other way around, I'm sure the German newspapers would look at it very negatively" (cf. Scharf, *Ward's AutoWorld*, June 1, 1998). In the light of Scharf's words, it is, however, revealing that the (admittedly left-leaning) German weekly *Der Spiegel* reacted to news of the merger with an edition whose front cover implicitly questioned the multinational ambitions of DaimlerChrysler. The title, "Die neue Sucht nach Größe" ("The New Addiction to Size"), was accompanied by an image of the Mercedes insignia superimposed on a picture of the world, a wry nod to corporate imperialism which suggested *Spiegel*'s underlying skepticism of an apparently overbearing commercial hubris (cf. *Der Spiegel*, May 11, 1998).

b) The Chosen Media of the Deal's Portrayal:

While the written press offers a revealing insight into the undergirding relationship between politics and the media in both the US and Germany, the *medium* of portrayal itself sheds much light on the *nature* of portrayal. In this context, it is perhaps illuminating to consider the relative importance of the written and audio-visual media as they reported and analyzed the rise and decline of DaimlerChrysler.

Newspaper circulations have been steadily dropping over the past twenty years in both Germany and the USA. Citing the 2002 annual report of the World Association of Newspapers, Sievert points to a significant drop of 6.4% in German newspaper circulation

between 1997 and 2001 (cf. Sievert 2002: 106). American weekday newspapers, which have traditionally reached a proportionately far smaller readership, in turn registered a far more precipitous drop between 2008 and 2009, sales falling by 10.6% in this period alone (cf. *The New York Times*, 26 October 2009). As Kleinsteuber emphasizes, "today's US press landscape is marked by stagnation", commenting that despite an overall increase in population, "a slow but steady in decline in newspaper sales is discernible" (cf. Kleinsteuber 2009: 1213). Adding to the lack of numbers is a lack of scope: the internationally renowned and read New York Times and Wall Street Journal, for example, have traditionally been read by New Yorkers, not Texans. In other words, despite the relative size of the USA, "none of the press organs achieves the same level of circulation as the German *Bild-Zeitung*, or other European tabloid newspapers" (ibid). The German landscape is in contrast characterized not only by relatively high (if gradually falling) daily circulation of over 20 million, but also by a newsstand of almost 360 newspapers (cf. Kleinsteuber & Thomass 2006). A small number of national newspapers together reach a relatively small readership compared to their myriad local cousins; and, as in the USA, a significant proportion of newspaper readers gravitate towards both the regional press and a widely diversified magazine market (cf. Kleinsteuber 2009: 1214).

The marked difference in newspaper circulation figures, and the relative importance of different modes of information distribution, finds unmistakable resonance in the merger's official announcement. That the press conference of the merger, which took place on May 7, 1998 in London, was conducted primarily in English, is testament not only to the status of English as the international business *lingua franca*, but also to a need to make the announcement accessible to a primarily audio-visual US media (cf. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KfgrNYHyEkc). The image of an English-speaking company was paramount, given that the largest American audience would be reached through their TV sets.

In view of the calculated media-friendliness of the (admittedly short-notice) announcement, a positive US reception to the merger might therefore in part be attributed to the sense that this merger represented – as *Business Week* subsequently suggested – the embrace of an American English-speaking globalization by a quintessentially German, even "European" company. The notion that Daimler was taking over Chrysler, and that the emergent DaimlerChrysler would be a German-dominated corporation, was hardly to be deduced from Schrempp's announcement that "we are creating the world's leading automotive company for the twenty-first century… one which will set the pace in the automotive world in the next millennium" (ibid). As the Daimler CEO put it, this represented a combination of a mutual "passion for making great [but admittedly very different] cars and trucks" in "a perfect fit" which would "utilize each others' strengths" to find "a pre-eminent strategic position in the global market place, for the benefit of our customers" (ibid).

The image of the formidable luxury-car mainstay adding global weight to its nimbly efficient American "equal" therefore did not (as later) portend the subsuming of the latter to the former. Quite to the contrary, it offered the possibility of the global resurrection of Detroit's rusting automotive industry, and of the rapid global expansion of Chrysler's market. As such, it is perhaps not surprising that many American journalists reacted with such opprobrium both to the creeping realization that Daimler was coming to dominate, and to Jürgen Schrempp's eventual "fessing up" over the fallacy of the "merger of equals" (see below). Scharf's assessment, that the merger represented "the ultimate outsource" for Chrysler, was grounded in an informed judgment that, far from the two corporations' industrially and commercially complementing each other, "the essential part of the organization, such as engineering and cost-control, will be predominantly German" (cf. Scharf, *Wards AutoWorld*, June 1, 1998).

c) The Significance of the Normative Context:

The differences between the two parent cultures' respective media landscapes were reflected in the development of very different expectations as to how DaimlerChrysler should operate. In view of DaimlerChrysler AG's adoption of elements of the Anglo-Saxon "shareholder model", questions of public expectation and corporate image were to become crucially important (see *Structural Context*, below). Daimler's growing dominance of Chrysler – and Chrysler's steady decline – related both to cultural and brand differences between the two parent organizations (see *Functional Context*, below); but there can be no doubt that cultural differences between respective US and German media portrayals also played a crucial role in undermining investor- and shareholder-perception of DaimlerChrysler AG. Such headlines as Gail Edmonson's "DaimlerChrysler comes clean (finally)" (c.f. *Business Week*, 1 Feb 2006) epitomize a generally resonant indignation within the American media that the corporation had remained taciturnly German instead of opening its account books to inspection by a global market. In telling *celebration* of Dieter Zetsche's new management approach (and in the wake of Schrempp's long-awaited departure), Edmonson argued that "DaimlerChrysler is becoming a transparent company in both word and deed. Schrempp promised shareholders a new-style German company and failed to deliver. He hid from the Anglo-Saxon press – not granting *Business Week* a single interview in three years – and blamed poor results on the market while his Anglo-Saxon rivals prospered under the same conditions" (ibid). As will be argued in reference to the *"Structural Context"*, such resentment largely reflects differing standards of financial accountability within the US and German corporate worlds. But it also reveals more fundamental differences between the two countries' respective media cultures, and between the public expectations generated by different styles of media portrayal.

This case-based comparison of the potential conflicts relating to the "normative context" reveals the extent to which all questions of cooperation, engagement, and crisis-management within and between companies, especially those from different origin-cultures, must be grounded *from the outset* in a systematic assessment of *national* media relations and representations. Just as there is no such thing as a "European" media (c.f. Sievert 2008: 3), it likewise cannot be assumed that globalization has succeeded in breaking down the traditional distinctions between national media systems. As such, differences between these systems (and states' respective roles within them) exert a considerable (if often dangerously overlooked) influence on approaches to international corporate communications. Effective praxis in international corporate communications should, as this theoretically informed analysis of media systems shows, take account of a landscape that stretches far beyond both the boardroom and the shop floor.

Structural Context

Structural differences in corporate governance had a significant detrimental effect on DaimlerChrysler corporate image – a weakness largely explained by the differing systems of both internal corporate communication and external financial reporting in Germany and the USA.

a) Economic Differences between the Companies

The German predominance of the stakeholder model, as illustrated in the gap comparison of Germany with the shareholder-oriented American corporate model, ensures that standards of financial reporting are determined according to stakeholder interests. Ray Bell argues that "code-law systems typically assume that firms transact with stakeholder representatives, who by dint of their representation in governance are privately informed about relevant events" (cf. Bell 2004: 116). It is not assumed that stakeholders – considered

effectively to be company insiders – will have to rely on information that has been publicly disclosed. As Bell points out in analysis of a markedly hermetic corporate culture, "investment and lending decisions, as well as decisions in relation to the election, reappointment, and compensation of managers, are more likely to be made as a consequence of information that is directly acquired through representation on the supervisory board" (ibid: 117). In contrast, corporate governance in the USA relies far more strongly upon shareholder vote. An "arms-length control culture" foregrounds the role of the shareholder in corporate decision-marking; and, since individual shareholders have to rely on publicly reported financial information, standards of financial disclosure are far more exacting and comprehensive.

Differing degrees of corporate accountability are thus reflected in different degrees of reporting transparency. The German *Handelsgesetzbuch* ("Commercial Code"), which outlines principles of corporate accountability to the wider public, is couched in open-endedly abstract terms, thus allowing boards relative freedom both to disguise losses on the one hand and underreport available assets on the other (ibid: 123). Managers are therefore able to keep a firm check on earning volatility; and a fairly constant fiscal predictability in turn smooths the financial relationship between the company and the government. The benefits of such a system extend in turn beyond the realms of management, notably favoring employees as well as employers. It is, for example, in the interests of labor representatives to maintain a relatively closed system of financial reporting insofar as it minimizes the risk to employees' jobs in times of economic crisis. In marked contrast, a shareholder's interest in a company remains purely financial; and, as such, he or she expects a regular and accurate disclosure of the company's balance sheets. If the company underperforms, the shareholder – whose money is invested – has a far greater (if necessarily more clinical) say in the measures taken as a result, whether this involves plant closures or mass redundancies (ibid: 118).

Daimler-Benz had undergone a radical restructuring under CEO Jürgen Schrempp in the years before the merger with Chrysler Corporation. It had cut loose a number of its subsidiary businesses, especially in the aerospace industry, and in the process had closed several plants and laid off a very large number of workers (ibid: 108). To signal the extent of his commitment to change, Schrempp turned Daimler-Chrysler radically towards an American shareholder-based financial model, offering his executives unprecedented stock options and – a first in German corporate history – announcing the company's half-year earnings under US GAAP regulations in September 1993. The figures registered a loss, and the new-fangled (and distinctly un-German) embrace of corporate openness caused consternation throughout the German business world (ibid: 131). However, significantly, DaimlerChrysler did not *fully* embrace a shareholder-oriented corporate model, instead remaining rooted within German corporate conventions. As Bell argues, "it remained a German corporation, complying with German governance rules, and grafted elements of shareholder value onto its governance and reporting system" (ibid: 104f).

The merger terms of DaimlerChrysler imposed precisely this hybrid system: the new company was to retain the two-tiered board structure of the old Daimler-Benz, thereby according considerable weight to both employee representatives and Daimler-Benz's three largest bank shareholders (c.f. Monks & Minow 2004: 328). DaimlerChrysler was thus an *Aktiengesellschaft* (an LLC) incorporated under German law, Chrysler Corporation in turn a subsidiary of the larger German company. Financed by an exchange of shares into the new company from both Daimler and Chrysler, the merger ensured that both companies were subsequently taxed as if they had never existed separately. DaimlerChrysler shares started trading across the world on November 14, 1998.

However, despite the apparent consensus on both company governance and finance, the constituent companies' history of corporate structural differences was to create significant

problems for the merged DaimlerChrysler. In contrast to Chrysler's former, open, shareholder-oriented governance, Daimler continued to operate along the bureaucratic lines of old, progressively bringing its corporate structure to bear on its American partner (ibid). DaimlerChrysler's first annual report duly "caused palpitations in America", containing as it did "no details on executive pay, director stock ownership or information on largest owners" (ibid). In addition, and in a gesture apparently totemic of its board's opacity, DaimlerChrysler refused to accept electronically cast shareholder votes prior to the annual meeting, adhering instead to resolutely traditional paper vote-submission deadlines (cf. ibid).

Such a closed corporate image was compounded by an impression, both within and outside of the organization, of a rigid hierarchy of decision-making. Michael B. Hinner points to a "monopolization of information" within a typical German corporate structure (cf. Hinner 2009: 51), underlining the degree of "compartmentalization" of German companies (ibid) and consequent systematization of governance. Indeed, despite a markedly CSR-conscious insistence on worker representation and cross-corporate consensus in board decision-making, as notably reflected in the German *Mitbestimmungsgesetz* (ibid: 50), Daimler's governance in the wake of the merger remained characterized by hierarchy and procedure. This sat in stark, and indeed unfavorable, contrast to Chrysler's considerably more flexible, bureaucracy-free and team-oriented approach to problem solving and corporate communication. As such, American investors were gradually given the impression of a company whose culture remained essentially closed to outsiders (cf. Johann 2006: 11). "Some investors will doubtless claim disenfranchisement", duly remarked international governance commentator Stephen Davis in critical analysis of DaimlerChrysler's tight-fisted first annual report (cf. Monks & Minnow 2004: 329); and in reflection of a growing mistrust of the perceived German influence at DaimlerChrysler, Standard & Poor dropped the company from its S&P 500 Index in early 1999, a move which "caused numerous US tracker funds to drop the stock from their portfolios", and precipitated a drop in US share-ownership of the company from 44% to 25% by mid-1999 (ibid).

Most damaging in this clash of corporate procedures, however, was Jürgen Schremp's announcement to the German financial daily *Handelsblatt* that his widely-extolled "merger of equals" was in fact little more than a "necessary [ploy] to earn the support of Chrysler's workers and the American public" (c.f. Schrempp in *Handesblatt*, 30 October 2000). DaimlerChrysler, he averred, was in effect the result of a takeover of Chrysler by Daimler. American journalists unsurprisingly seized upon Schrempp's calculated deception of investors, stressing just how brazenly his actions and words had flown in the face of American standards of openness, both within and outside of DaimlerChrysler. Within weeks, Kirk Kerkorian, previously the holder of 14% of Chrysler stock, had filed an $8 billion lawsuit against DaimlerChrysler, on the basis that Jürgen Schrempp had "misled Chrysler Corp. shareholders when he billed the 1998 deal a 'merger of equals'" (*Autoparts Report*, 1 July 2001). Despite the fact that, as Monks and Minnow concede, the underlying reason for Kerkorian's lawsuit undoubtedly related to the poor commercial performance of DaimlerChrysler, the accusation of deception nevertheless revealed a growing discontent at the company's reluctance fully to communicate with its shareholders: indeed, "the significance of the multi-national lawsuit… is the questions it raises about the ability of shareholders to raise questions and create meaningful accountability in a company with global operations" (c.f. Monks & Minnow 2004: 329).

b) *The Significance of the Structural Context*

The ultimate structural incompatibility between Chrysler and Daimler had fundamentally undermined ChryslerDaimler's corporate image, in turn revealing underlying (and, crucially, unaddressed) structural differences between the two parent companies'

systems of corporate governance. The cultural discrepancies between the two companies jeopardized the possibility of fully successful corporate synergy; and the consequent failure reflects the essential differences between corporate governance systems within the two parent-cultures. We might point, in this vein, to a two-way relationship between (national *and* corporate) culture on the one hand and structures of corporate governance on the other, insofar as "structure" and "culture" both reflect and inform one another. The greater American emphasis on accountability, for example, is reflected both in the boardroom and the office and (as per the functional and role contexts) on "Mainstreet USA" itself. This interconnectedness reveals the implicit cultural underpinnings of corporate structure; but the fatal significance of such interconnectedness for DaimlerChrysler foregrounds a more general need both to make explicit and explicitly to respect corporate differences between companies as deeply embedded in, and reflective of, national contexts. As in the normative context, structural differences should be accommodated, not unquestioningly ironed out, *insofar* as they are themselves originally cultural products.

Functional Context

In this sub-section we shall consider the functional context as it relates to the DaimlerChrysler deal. In so doing we aim to elucidate the key cultural differences themselves and so to suggest the importance, however unquantifiable, of cultural considerations in international communicational praxis.

a) Differences in Management Culture between the Two Countries

Differences in "power distance" can be related in the context of DaimlerChrysler to marked salary differences between the American and German executives. Robert A.G. Monks and Nell Minnow attribute the relative modesty of German executive pay to "Germany's consensual, egalitarian corporate culture", pointing out that in the year before the merger, the top five Chrysler managers "took home more than three times what their ten Daimler counterparts made" (cf. Monks & Minnow 2004: 329). While Bob Eaton, Chrysler CEO, earned some $4.6 million in salary and bonuses and cashed in $5 million in share options, Jürgen Schrempp was paid little more than $1.5 million of the $11 million sum total earned by the Daimler-Benz board (cf. ibid). On account of the strength of union representation on the Daimler *Aufsichtsrat* ("supervisory board"), an imminent standardization of executive salaries was out of the question: rather, an agreement was reached that respective pay grades would remain unchanged for a period of two years (cf. ibid).

A notable difference in "power distance" in some measure reflects the differing emphases placed upon the value of individualism in Germany and the USA, as reflected particularly clearly in the case of DaimlerChrysler. Chrysler Corp. for its part enjoyed a reputation for cultivating "a sense of youth, creativity, and opportunity" in attracting "bright, talented people" (cf. Hollank & Walter 2008: 20). As D. Ostle, a senior engineer at Auburn Hills, commented in November 1999 in *Automotive News Europe*: "[At the old Chrysler], if an idea had merit, you didn't worry about approval, you just went ahead and did it. People working on the shop floor feel empowered to do things. It's based on management trust" (cf. Gibson 2002: 2). An apparently liberating spirit of individualism pervaded the company, one that is perhaps more broadly reflected in the USA's 91% "individualism versus collectivism" rating (see above). Indeed, as Michael B. Hinner argues of American corporate culture in general, and as was clearly the case at Chrysler, US-style problem-solving typically takes place in a small team on a relatively unstructured brain-storming basis, the experiences of every team member being "applied to solve the problem" (cf. Hinner 2009: 52). This sits in

stark contrast to a painstakingly methodical, systematic, linear and compartmentalizing German approach to problem-solving (cf. ibid.).

Robert Gibson quotes Roland Klein, Daimler's Manager of Corporate Communications in Stuttgart, in his elucidation of the considerable differences between such a formally collectivist, typically "German" approach on the one hand, and a more individualized American problem-solving strategy on the other: "Germans analyze a problem in great detail, find a solution, discuss it with their partners, and then make a decision. It's a very structured process… Americans start with a discussion, and then come back to new aspects after talking with other people – after a process which they call creative – they come to a conclusion" (Gibson 2002: 1f). In the German focus on methodology we therefore encounter an adherence to a rigid, role-assigning system of decision-making which utilizes the highly specialized skills of employees as part of a formally specified collective procedure; and, by contrast, it is clear that an American focus on creativity places rather more emphasis on the creative input of the individual than on his pre-set role in the collective.

Insofar as Daimler-Benz executives found such a system "chaotic", and were "puzzled by the American tendency to return to a subject they thought had been settled" (ibid), it is possible to demonstrate markedly different tendencies towards "uncertainty avoidance" in the USA and Germany. Following on from this, it might be argued that a relatively strong German tendency (at 61%) to *avoid* uncertainty in large measure reflects Daimler's emphasis on consensus as distinct from individualized decision-making. In the case of DaimlerChrysler, however, such an emphasis on consensus had a substantially negative effect on Chrysler's corporate ethos. As Charles K. Hyde points out in his volume *Riding the Roller-coaster: A History of the Chrysler Corporation*, the American press – most notably *The New York Times* – focused on the swift post-merger exit from Chrysler of the managerial "dream team" supposedly central to company's success in the early 1990s (cf. Hyde 2003: 310). A number of key figures, such as Chris Theodore, senior vice-president for platform engineering, and Steve Harris, vice-president for public relations, defected to Ford and General Motors respectively, taking with them considerable technical expertise and a comprehensive understanding of and familiarity with the American press (cf. ibid). Hyde points in particular to Harris' discomfort at the rigid methods of his new boss, his former German opposite number Christoph Walther, whose approach to press communications involved writing press releases in German in time for a morning press conference in Germany, before translating them into English and releasing them at 2am Eastern Time (ibid). Likewise, DaimlerChrysler TV, the company's in-house promotional TV channel, remained a primarily German project, its broadcasts translated into English from the German original by an external translation service (cf. http://englisch-express.net/2000/daimler-chrysler.htm).

This unilateral approach to public relations in a sense typified Daimler's collectivized, unified perspective on corporate management; and this, in turn, reflects a more general tendency among German executives to view themselves as agents of consensus rather than as decision-makers (cf. Bell 2004: 119). To make matters worse, such an emphasis on agreement, stability, and the avoidance of uncertainty, seemed to translate in the context of DaimlerChrysler into a perceived authoritarianism. Bob Eaton's firing of the increasingly critical Chrysler President Thomas Stallkamp in January 1999, for example, illustrated a largely German preoccupation with consensus and reliability, which was perceived to be stifling a distinctively American corporate culture traditionally reliant on the unquantifiable flair and creativity of the individual (cf. Hyde 2003: 310). The result, as Sydney Finkelstein argues, was the progressive atrophy of the Chrysler brand. Tellingly, as one senior executive at Chrysler put it, Jürgen Schrempp "saw the forest, but…didn't realize that removing four or

five key trees was going to radically change the eco-system in that forest" (cf. Finkelsetin 2002: 7).

The inability of both companies to reach a successful compromise might in turn be partly attributed to the high "cultural masculinity" ratings of both the USA and Germany. A high degree of cultural masculinity refers to a cultural acceptance and endorsement of supposedly gendered characteristics (c.f. http://www.geert-hofstede.com). In the context of DaimlerChrysler this might be seen reflected in Daimler executives' (and most notably Jürgen Schrempp's) apparent inability to compromise – such as is regarded an important quality within more feminine cultures – and their resultant tendency to impose a German management style upon (a minority of) American executives (cf. Hyde 2003: 311). Already by December 1998, indeed, the board of DaimlerChrysler comprised ten Germans and seven Americans. That this had not been a merger of equals was certainly becoming increasingly clear (ibid); but the possibility of any successful *future* synergy was also being gradually undermined for lack of systematic attention to cultural differences both between Germany and the USA in general, and between Daimler and Chrysler in particular. Even German newspapers were increasingly reporting (if in reflection of their American counterparts) that Chrysler's corporate culture was withering at the hands of German dominance: as early as January 2000, for example, *Die Welt* commented on the American perception that "the flexible corporate culture of Chrysler is being undermined", pointing to *The Wall Street Journal's* judgment that Robert Eaton's departure revealed DaimlerChrysler's identity as "without doubt [that of] a German company" (cf. *Die Welt*, 28 January 2000).

b) *The Significance of the Functional Context*

The corporate cultural differences between Daimler and Chrysler reflect the importance not only of an appraisal of potential *structural* incompatibility, but also of a (less quantifiable) *cultural* incompatibility. A comparison of functional contexts therefore reflects the centrality of cultural consciousness to all HR issues relating to any form of international corporate cooperation. The merging process of Daimler-Benz and Chrysler Corp. reflected a lack of explicit attention to precisely this question: it is significant, for example, that financial and legal issues took precedence both during initial discussions between Jürgen Schrempp and Robert Eaton, and after the two boards had been informed of the plans to merge on 19 April 1998. In their analysis of the HR-dimension of the deal, *Mergers and Acquisitions: Managing Human Resources*, Günter K. Stahl and Mark E. Mendenhall argue that the issue of human resources had remained of little concern in merger negotiations, despite the post-merger commitment systematically to integrate the employees of the two companies (an integration process which involved not only cross-cultural training, but also an active internal promotion of the new merged company via the internal business TV channel) (cf. Stahl & Mendenhall 2005: 360).

Stahl and Mendenhall here underline the apparent assumption, as implicitly shared by the management of both companies, that "people issues would create no special problems". In this unfortunate light, the planning and closing of the deal was almost entirely "based on factors such as market share, technology, product strategy, legal frameworks, and finance", with human resources personnel not involved "until the deal had been closed" (ibid). The case of DaimlerChrysler thus illustrates the importance not only of a financial "due diligence", such as is an integral part of processes of "M&A", but also of a "cultural due diligence" (ibid). This must involve a ground-preparing, systematic stock-taking of cultural difference, and the consequent development of an effective strategy to ensure not only the different cultures' effective coexistence within a single merged company, but also, more generally and with a broader applicability beyond the domain of "mergers and acquisitions", a respect for cultural differences between internationally cooperating companies.

The ICC Onion Theory offers a clear picture of the problems that DaimlerChrysler faced in the view of cultural difference, and at least in part suggests reasons for the deal's ultimate failure. Once again, its diagnostic efficacy (as illustrated in this retrospective analysis) can be translated into preventive potential, insofar as it foregrounds potential areas of conflict and miscommunication in an international and inter-cultural context, and therefore allows for the development of specifically focused solutions.

Role Context
a) Analysis of the CEO role

In his analysis of the failure of DaimlerChrysler, Michael B. Hinner points to very different portrayals in US and German media. While US media cited cultural differences as the cause of failure, German media were quicker to blame costs or model disagreements. The German weekly *Spiegel*, for example, suggested in May 2007 that Chrysler had lost its competitive advantage on account of a strategic misfire: "The company opted to concentrate on gas-guzzling minivans, pickups and SUVs, and this business model saw the company lose €1.12 billion ($1.5 billion) in 2006" (cf. *Spiegel International*, 14 May 2007). The American car magazine *Edmunds Auto Observer*, on the other hand, speculated that the merger "could have worked if both sides had found common ground beyond their cultural differences. […] Differences could have been overcome with more exchange of personnel to show them on a personal level that they had more in common than not" (cf. *Edmunds Auto Observer*, 17 May 2007). In these quite distinct analyses we might discern (as argued above) what Hinner suggests to be the relative "sensitization" of the US media "to the topic of intercultural communication", in contrast to the topic's relatively low profile in the German media (cf. Hinner 2009: 45). It might additionally be suggested that a strong penchant for political analysis in the US media (as reflected in a 70.5% affirmation of journalism's "watchdog" status) is reflected here in a *politico-cultural* analysis of the deal's failure, in contrast to *Spiegel*'s primarily *commercial* analysis.

The importance of US journalists' avowed watchdog status is implicit in their reactions to signs that the deal was going awry. Schrempp's admission in the fall of 2000 that the merger had not been one "of equals" provoked *Business Week*'s accusation that "he had lied [to employees]" (quoted in Golitsinski 2000: 19), and that Chrysler's biggest resultant loss was now "the little goodwill left between the management and the troops". In contrast, the self-styled image of Schrempp as a characteristically honest executive was endorsed in German business reporting, the financial daily *Handelsblatt* painting him as "a friend of straight-talking" (cf. "Porträt: Jürgen Schrempp, der Autoboss", in *Handelsblatt,* November 30, 2003). Emphasis was thus placed on Schrempp's honesty in conceding the motivational underpinning of the "merger of equals" declaration, in contrast to the accusations of deception leveled by American journalists and, after the dust had settled, *The Financial Times*. The London-based financial newspaper – perhaps partly in reflection of relatively high *British* standards of accountability (56%) – pointed out, within weeks of its interview of Schrempp, that "employees at DaimlerChrysler's Chrysler Group were still reeling from their first quarterly loss… when they found out that DaimlerChrysler Chairman Jürgen E. Schrempp had lied to them all" (*The Financial Times*, October 30, 2000).

In American reactions to Schrempp's revelation we thus see evidenced both a journalistic expectation of corporate openness and a strong cultural recognition of journalism's investigative role. By contrast, a German cultural expectation of selectiveness in German corporate reporting may be read into the initial (German) press reaction to Jürgen Schrempp's decision to publish Daimler-Chrysler's half-year earnings on 17 September 1993. German tabloids dubbed Schrempp "Neutron Jürgen" in a sly nod to the ruthless CEO of General Electric, "Neutron Jack" Welch, and protestors carried coffins through the streets of

Frankfurt (cf. Bell 2004: 131). Managers of other German companies, such as Bayer AG, and Siemens AG, were particularly tenacious in their criticism of Schrempp's move, pointing out that German standards of accounting had underpinned the steady increase in stakeholder-wealth throughout post-war economic growth. Such a departure from these standards, characterized by an embrace of Anglo-Saxon openness of financial reporting, both undermined and continues to undermine the "stakeholder model", central as it had been to Germany's status as Europe's economic powerhouse.

b) The Significance of the Role Context

The press reaction to Schrempp's embrace of conventions of shareholder governance in a sense reflects the German journalistic assumption of discretion in financial reporting. By contrast, the notion that companies should fully reveal their financial situation to a share-holding public is indicative of the Anglo-Saxon media's attachment of greater importance to investigative financial journalism – and of a wider culture of corporate accountability in general. Much damage was done to DaimlerChrysler's public image by repeated failures to consider differences between American and German journalistic cultures.

This categorical application of the ICC Onion Theory reveals the importance of paying specific attention to such otherwise vague (and relatively overlooked) notions as journalists' self-perception. Positive media relations in general obviously remain central to the cultivation of a corporation's public image; but successful communications with *culturally different* media systems and publics rely not merely on such large-scale systemic analyses as is developed above in the normative context, but also on a closer analysis of reporting practices themselves.

Conclusion: International Corporate Communication Theory and how to Use it for Strategic Practice of Merger Communication

As the in-depth case-analysis in Section 3 shows, there is much cross-over and interpenetration between the constituent contexts of the ICC Onion Theory. Most obviously, we can draw parallels between the role and normative contexts, suggesting ways in which a general journalistic self-perception is reflected in overall national media structures and vice versa. Moreover, we can consider the ways in which cultural differences have informed and shaped structural/corporate differences; and, conversely, we can ask how far a company's corporate structure reinforces a particular micro-culture in reflection of a national culture at large. Both the degree and type of accountability demanded by a public – via a national media – in turn reflects and shapes communicational practices *within* corporations themselves (and vice versa).

The inexhaustibility of such connections by no means points to the insufficiency of the ICC Onion Theory (which is itself a necessarily heuristic and greatly simplified model). Rather, it highlights the importance of using theoretical models for the sake of categorizing potential problem-areas and (if need be) actual conflicts in the context of international (and intercultural) corporate communications. Such a categorization is vital not simply to successful merger communications, as per this paper's title and case-study, but also in relation to all forms of cooperation and engagement between internationally operative corporations. The model applied here is useful because it highlights and explicitly defines differences, many of which would otherwise remain latent and so (as in the case of DaimlerChrysler) persist to the point of becoming irresolvable irreconcilabilities. In this light, we should remember that the act of naming a potential problem constitutes the first step towards addressing it.

However, as this paper's in-depth exploration of the DaimlerChrysler case-study has also tried to show, the practical problem-solver cannot lose touch with a reality ultimately

unquantifiable in its complexity, a complexity which manifests itself (in each case with a certain latent consistency) on an interpersonal, cultural, corporate, and national level. While PR theory furnishes us with the definitional and analytical tools necessary for finding solutions to problems both potential and actual, it is by contrast an engagement with the unique situation at hand which reveals the specific ways in which theory might be applied, and contextually targeted, not to mention humanly aware, approaches developed. As we hope this paper has shown, the relationship between practice and theory in international corporate communications constitutes an endlessly (and mutually) fructifying dialogue.

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Non-profit Organizations, Values and the Crisis of Legitimacy

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Abstract

Using grounded theory and semi-structured long interviews with 11 non-profit managers, this study examined the espoused values of a small group of local, regional, national and international non-profit organizations and determined how they convey their values and legitimacy to the communities and stakeholders they serve. Findings revealed a total of 14 values that participants feel as though their organizations convey to the public and the majority of participants did not view communicating their values as a top priority because they felt as though their organization's values were apparent.

Introduction

In order to create and maintain beneficial relationships with stakeholders, managers in an organization must understand the presence of environmental influences on the organization that directly affect its survival. Understanding the importance of aligning organizational values and behavior with expectations of stakeholders who possess "legitimacy-determining power" is also essential to their success and continuance (Patel, Xavier, & Broom, 2005, p. 2).

Today, more than ever, non-profit organizations can benefit from a clear understanding of the connection between legitimacy, values congruence, and the societal expectations toward the non-profit sector as a whole. Salamon (1999) described the concept of legitimacy as the major crisis for non-profit organizations operating in today's society. He pointed out several daunting challenges for non-profit organizations that include facing the hardships of economic restraints, supporting the communities they serve, and the challenges of operating for self-interest instead of for the causes they purport are the pillars of their existence.

As the disconnect between the operation of a non-profit and the "quaint 19th century image of charity and altruism" is widening, it becomes necessary to focus on environmental forces that can bridge the gap (Salamon, 1999, p.14). Organizational values are a way to convey to stakeholders that actions and behaviors of the organization operate in line with expectations of society or in congruence with a certain level of social appropriateness (Rokeach, 1973).

The current qualitative study examined the espoused values of a small group of local, regional, national and international organizations, and determined how those organizations convey their values and legitimacy to the communities and stakeholders they serve. Using grounded theory and semi-structured long interviews, the authors interviewed 11 non-profit executive directors in the mid-Atlantic region to determine what specific values they believed they were conveying to their community and those they serve, how they are conveying those values, how they define the concept of values and if they understand the importance of conveying values to stakeholders.

Organizational Legitimacy

Organizational legitimacy has been defined as a process by which an organization justifies its right to exist within a larger environment (Maurer, 1971). Decades of debate regarding the definition of legitimacy have stemmed from its multi-faceted quality of operating differently in various contexts with regards to the environment in which it operates and the organization's social audience (Suchman, 1995).

Suchman (1995) attempted to establish a point of summative agreement regarding how legitimacy should be viewed by scholars by defining organizational legitimacy as "a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions (p. 574). His definition implies that an organization indicates its legitimacy when it operates in a manner that is in alignment with values that are socially constructed within the external environment in which it operates. The congruence between the organizational and societal value systems is the essence of legitimate organizational behavior; if a potential disparity exists between the two, there exists a threat to legitimacy (Dowling & Pfeffer, 1975).

Suchman (1995) categorized into two fairly accepted perspectives, strategic and institutional, the broad views of legitimacy offered from decades of debate. He argued that the strategic tradition viewed legitimacy from a systems perspective as an operational resource extracted from the environment through the use of an almost limitless malleability of symbols

employed in pursuit of societal support. Dowling and Pfeffer (1975) argued that organizations attempt to acquire legitimacy by adapting their output, goals, and operating practices with prevailing ideas of legitimacy.

Conversely, the institutional tradition of legitimacy is synonymous with the concept of institutionalization. According to Barley and Tolbert (1997), institutional theory posits "organizations, and the individuals who populate them, are suspended in a web of values, norms, rules, beliefs, and taken-for-granted assumptions that are at least part of their own making" (p. 93). Institutionalization involves the processes in which members of society collectively discuss and create rational market or industry-wide standards that must be met by organizations that are deemed as legitimate (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1977).

Values

Rokeach (1973) defined a value as "an enduring belief that a particular mode of conduct or that a particular end-state of existence is personally and socially preferable to alternative modes of conduct or end-states of existence" (p.5). This definition describes a value as an consummate state of being that is personally (individually) preferable, socially accepted and preferred when compared with other end-states of being, and can persist and survive in the face of difficulty.

Values are an essential part of establishing organizational legitimacy. They are both part of the instrumental side of assessing legitimacy and the concepts that relate to desirable end-states of an organization (Dowling & Pfeffer, 1975; Rekom, Riel, & Wierenga, 2006). According to Posner and Schmidt (1992), "Values are at the core of our personality, influencing the choices we make, the people we trust, the appeals we respond to, and the way we invest our time and energy" (p. 81). Values are not only embedded deep within the internal fabric of both the individual and organization, but they also determine the core of legitimate organizational behavior (Dowling & Pfeffer, 1975).

Rekom, Riel and Wierenga (2006) defined organizational-level values as "concepts or beliefs that pertain to desirable end states or behaviours that transcend specific situations, and guide selection or evaluation of behaviour and events" (p.176). Values can also be viewed as the driving forces behind various organizational behaviors and strategies (McDonald & Gandz, 1991). Meyer & Scott (1983) pointed out that values combine to represent the culture of the organization and determine every facet of an organization's functioning–from the macro-level of culture and subcultures, all the way to the micro-level beginning of the individual. Schein (1985) argued that the manifestation of culture is created only by a pattern of communication that "[strives] toward patterning and integration" (p. 11).

Non-profit Organizations

Non-profit organizations are the preferred venue for service delivery because they are viewed as being trustworthy and credible (Strickland & Vaughan, 2008). However, as the number of non-profit organizations continues to increase, so too does public scrutiny of their ethical guidelines (Aaker, Vohs, & Mogilner, 2010; Strickland & Vaughan, 2008). According to Strickland and Vaughan, "organizational culture is one of the most important factors, if not the most important, influencing ethical behavior [of non-profit organizations]," thus influencing legitimating behavior and their survival (p. 234).

Non-profit organizations are said to exist due to a government or market failure to provide a service or accurately evaluate certain services, thus requiring an organizational form in

which to place trust (Dart, 2004). Although their existence is a response to much broader contexts and implications, this explanation resonates with most public conceptualizations of non-profit groups (Salamon, 1999). The United States non-profit sector is regulated by its legal and tax definitions, with organizations being classified under section 501 of the Internal Revenue Service Code, a strict regulatory code restricting the organization from passing along any profit to owners (Meisenbach, 2005). The non-profit sector includes member-serving organizations such as professional organizations, business groups, and social clubs. The other half of formal organizations in the sector is composed of a far greater number of public-serving organizations in fields such as education, healthcare, human rights, social services, and environment/sustainability (Salamon, 1999).

An integral differentiating factor between for-profit and non-profit organizations is the defining source of revenue. For-profit organizations primarily depend on revenue generated by the sales of products or services provided to customers, whereas non-profit organizations primarily depend on charitable contributions of time, funding, and materials needed to carry out a particular mission (Moore, 2000). The U.S. non-profit sector now faces what Salamon (1999) refers to as the "four-fold challenge" of fiscal limitations paired with crises of economy, effectiveness, and legitimacy (p.8) Not an entire direct quote, but part of this needed to be corrected anyway.

According to Salamon (1999), the increase scrutiny faced by non-profits is partially because recent scandals and the growth in non-profit and state partnerships, in order to respond to public needs as well as those of non-profit organizations' stakeholder groups, immediately calling into question the advocacy purposes of non-profit organizations. He pointed out that non-profits are advocating for their focal causes while they face charges of advocating for their own self-interests. When facing seemingly endless challenges for societal support and competition from for-profit organizations existing in the same commercial markets, legitimacy may be the determining factor in public perception and support for the organization and its cause.

Research Questions

Extant research has examined the socially constructed values that society uses to evaluate legitimacy based on the type and sector of the organization (Brummette & Zoch 2010). These researchers revealed approximately 21 values that society expects of various organizations. Of the total values recorded, nine were specifically associated with non-profit organizations, including honesty, accountability, competence, efficiency, trustworthiness, personalization, accreditation, visibility, and corporate social responsibility.

There is a gap in legitimacy research that focuses specifically on the legitimation endeavors and the values communicated by non-profit organizations. If non-profit organizations are to overcome their potential crisis of legitimacy, communicating their values is a way to show that their organizational activities are in line with the norms and societal values of the larger external environments in which they operate. In light of these theoretical assumptions, the following research questions are posed (from the perspective of non-profit organizations' management):

R1: What are the specific values that managers of non-profit organizations perceive they are conveying?
R2: How do managers in non-profit organizations define the concept of "values"?

R3: How do managers in non-profit organizations believe they are conveying their values (both internally and externally)?

R4: Do managers in non-profit organizations understand the importance of conveying values to stakeholders?

Methods

The study consisted of eleven in-depth interviews with managers and directors of non-profit organizations in the southeastern United States. Using a grounded theory approach, the study explored the perceived value systems of these non-profit organizations from the perspective of the organization's management, particularly that of the executive director and communication director.

Qualitative interviews were used for data collection, because they provide the opportunity to learn "about physically unbounded social realities, identities, and meanings that cut across, lie outside, or transcend settings" (Kleinman, Stenross & MicMahon, 1994, p. 43). By eliciting such responses from well-informed directors and managers of non-profit organizations, the researchers were able to penetrate and explore the social reality and perception of values and value systems from a member of the direct source, the organization itself, which would not be observable otherwise (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002).

Participants

Due to monetary, geographical, and time restraints participants were recruited by convenience sampling. Organizations were selected based on non-profit status as identified by the Internal Revenue Codes 501(c)(3) and 501(c)(4) as organizations that are not organized for profit, but operating exclusively for charitable causes and promoting social welfare (Reilly, Hull, & Braig-Allen, 2003). Participants were also selected based on their position in the organization, with interviewees limited to those holding roles of executive directors, managers, and communication professionals.

Respondents were recruited from local, regional, national, and international non-profit organizations, as well as all areas of non-profits: arts, social service, health, youth development, funding groups, family support, and community building to first ensure a broad array of organizational types, with a secondary emphasis on balancing the operational characteristics of the organization. This process ensured input from a broad array of non-profit organizational types, as well as operational characteristics, contributing to a diverse group of participants.

Procedures

Interviews were conducted on site at each organization's offices to increase comfort levels of the interviewees and to provide artifacts relating to their organizational values that could be relevant to discussion in the interview (Lindlof and Taylor, 2002). -Any follow up questions were sent to participants by e-mail per each participant's consent during the de-briefing period of the interview process. -The interviewing process was conducted over a month-long period at the convenience of all participants. The researchers adapted and altered interview questions and adopted certain findings from previous interviews for each consecutive interview to better inform the data collection process.

Open Coding

All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim for analysis utilizing Strauss and Corbin's (1990) grounded theory approach. Any follow up-questions sent by e-mail were transcribed verbatim and added to the end of the initial interview transcript to be coded by the same grounded theory approach. First, data was broken down into distinct conceptual units, incidents, ideas, events, acts, or other conceptual units relevant to the study or deemed significant by the researcher, and then named (Strauss & Corbin, 2009). The attributes and characteristics of each category were used as a basis for the emerging themes of each category defined. The themes were used as a response to the posed research questions of this study.

Findings

Participant Demographics

Participants ranged from 25-60 years of age. Eight participants were female and three were male. All participants were Caucasian. Nine participants held the title of Executive Director. One participant held the title of Advisor to Management and another held the title of Chief Professional Officer. Although official titles varied, all participants assumed the role of Executive Director within their respective organizations. Four of the participants have held their position for between one and ten years, and two of the participants have held their position for less than a year. Four of the 11 participants have held their positions for more than ten years. The average length a participant held their position was 8.9 years with a median of six years, a mode of one year, and a range of 30 years.

Research Questions

The first research question focused on identifying the specific values that managers of non-profit organizations perceive they are conveying. A majority of participants expressed difficulty in identifying their organizational values. Ultimately, participants identified 14 values: caring, respect, responsibility, accessibility, collaboration, efficiency, honesty, innovation, accountability, diversity, integrity, timeliness, transparency, and trustworthiness.

The second research question focused on identifying the manner in which managers in non-profit organizations define the concept of *values*. Eight of the eleven participants defined "values" as the foundation of their organization, including who they are and how they operate. The second largest subcategory of definitions in this category included associating the concept "values" with setting expectations or standards that guide behaviors within the organization or that differentiate the organization from other organizations working towards a similar goal. Four of the eleven participants defined "values" in this way.

The third research question focused on identifying how managers in non-profit organizations believe they are conveying their values. Participants identified eight different strategies of conveying values to external stakeholders. Listed in descending order they are: actively living their values; governing and policy documents/publications; storytelling/verbal/word-of-mouth; Website/online content; mission statement; ornamental/plaques/posters; local radio, TV and print media; and reputation/longevity of the organization.

The strategy of actively living the organizational values through programs, services, or day-to-day activities was unanimous among all participants. Most organizations justified this strategy by saying "actions matter most," or "actions speak louder than words."

Ten of the 11 organizations identified governing/policy documents and publications as another primary strategy of conveying organizational values to external stakeholders. Examples of commonly identified documents include: strategic plans, annual reports, bylaws, governing documents, and codes of ethics. Other common documents, although identified less frequently than the first set, includes: print publications and brochures, books, newsletters, and handouts. Although this strategy was the second most frequent strategy identified by participants, only two participants stated that their values were explicitly stated or defined in the documents.

Nine of the eleven participants identified storytelling and word-of-mouth as another primary strategy of conveying their values to external stakeholders. Interviewees described this process as a way to reflect on activities and success stories, as well as to disseminate testimonials. A dominant theme emerged whereby values were perceived by the participants to be inherent in any verbal conversations staff members might have with constituents. After being asked about the primary ways in which their organization conveys their values, the Executive Director of a local social organization stated, "I think… just asking… which right now would be the easiest way."

Storytelling was perceived as another dominant way to verbalize and reflect on how the organization actively lives its values, therefore being perceived by respondents as an extension of actively living organizational values. Participants explained that they are able to initiate the process of disseminating their values into the community by first verbalizing how organizational activity reflects their values. The Executive Director of a local organization dedicated to community building with an international affiliation noted, "When people build… and we tell them about [the organization] and their role… they're more likely to tell 10-12 other people, 'Here's what I did on the weekend,' you know. So, it spreads word-of-mouth…"

Eight of the 11 participants also perceived their organizational values being embedded in the content of their Website or online materials. However, out of the seven organizations identifying their Website as a strategy of conveying values, only two of the organizations' Websites explicitly listed and defined their values.

The dominant theme underlying this particular strategy is in line with the overarching perception of most strategies of conveying values to external stakeholders – most participants perceived values being embedded in online content, instead of being explicitly stated. In the context of this theme, "embedded" refers to values that are not explicitly communicated outright and are perceived to be inferred from other information presented, such as a description of an organization's mission.

Only five of the 11 participants identified local TV, radio, and print media as a method of conveying their organizational values to external stakeholders. Three of the 11 participants also identified conveying organizational values through ornamental methods, including posters, plaques, name cards and business cards. Three of the 11 participants identified their organization's longevity and reputation as a means of conveying their values to external stakeholders.

Internal Strategies for Conveying Values

Participants also identified five strategies for conveying values internally, in descending order they are: actively living their values, storytelling/verbal/word-of-mouth, training materials/orientation, governing and policy documents, and ornamental/plaques/posters. Actively living values. Eight of the 11 participants identified actively living their organizational values as the primary strategy of conveying values to internal stakeholders. A dominant theme

emerged in which managers of non-profit organizations perceived volunteers, employees, and other internal audiences as participating in an inherent process of learning values through the programs, services, and day-to-day activities of the organization.

Another dominant theme emerged in which managers of non-profit organizations perceived that internal stakeholders learn values based on modeled behavior. Participants described this process as an extension of learning values through service delivery, programs, and day-to-day activities of the organization. To them it included behavior modeled by supervisors, executive directors, and other members of the organization.

Seven of the 11 participants identified storytelling and word-of-mouth as a primary strategy for conveying values to internal stakeholders. Five out of the 11 participants identified orientation, the training process, and training materials for volunteers and employees to be another strategy of conveying values to internal stakeholders. The other four participants perceived that values were embedded in the materials and processes of training and orientation for employees and volunteers.

Four of the 11 participants also identified their governing and policy documents as a strategy of conveying values to internal stakeholders. Common examples of policy documents included codes of ethics, codes of conduct, personnel policies, strategic plans, and documentation of disciplinary actions.

Four of the 11 participants identified ornamental methods as a strategy of conveying their organizational values to internal stakeholders. The most commonly identified ornamental methods were posters, plaques, and name cards. Only two participants of the four, however, perceived that their values were stated explicitly through posters, plaques, and name cards.

Through follow-up questions, participants also described a critical underlying perception influencing the particular strategies used to convey their values. Eight of the eleven participants expressed a common perception that values are self-evident in the programs, services and day-to-day activities used to fulfill an organizational mission. This assumption in relation to the strategies identified by participants is a potential reason for using less explicit strategies of conveying values to external stakeholders.

Two dominant themes emerged from discussions about this assumption. First, managers or directors perceived values to be self-evident based on a bank of institutional knowledge inherent in the programs or services of the organization. The Executive Director of a local medical organization stated, "we take for granted that others see what we see." When asking the executive director of a local theatre why values have not been a part of their strategic planning process, she responded, "I think it's because people think they're obvious."

The fourth research question asked managers in non-profit organizations understand the importance of conveying values to stakeholders? Data revealed that the answer to this question is no. Only five of the 11 participants explicitly expressed a need to communicate their organizational values to stakeholders. When asked how the values of stakeholders affect evaluations of their organizations, only three participants expressed a deeper understanding of aligning organizational and societal values. Only two of the five participants defined and listed their organizational values in some way.

One interesting finding was that during the interviews, five of the eleven participants realized there was a need to communicate their organizational values to stakeholders and explained that they had not thought about it until the interview process. These participants had a realization that communicating values to stakeholders could be important, but that action had not yet made it onto the agenda of the organization. When asking the Executive Director of a local

health organization if they foresaw any plans to have values communicated in more specific ways, she stated, "You know, I hadn't thought about it until you brought it to my attention."

Additional Findings

Participants in the study perceived resources to be a critical issue affecting the communication of values among the non-profit sector as a whole. Resources in this context referred to human capital within the organization with adequate training to communicate values effectively. The Executive Director of a local funding group stated, "I would say the sector as a whole is not only limited in the resources it has to do really good communications of values, but also I would say it doesn't have the kind of training that you need to do it effectively."

Discussion

This study found that the majority of non-profit managers interviewed indicated their organizations possess certain values that play an influential part of their organization's survival. However, there was no overall consensus regarding the importance of explicitly conveying values to stakeholders. Only three of the 11 organizations explicitly communicated their organizational values, introducing two crucial questions for non-profit organizations: Why are explicit manifestations of communicating values essentially missing? Is there another explanation for a lack of explicit strategies?

Interviewees expressed immense difficulty identifying their own organizational values without the aid of their computer, organizational artifacts on hand, or clarification from the researcher regarding the definition of the concept "value." Some of the participants were unable to state their organizational values without first defaulting to lengthy examples of their services, projects, and missions. Any examples or descriptions of an organization's work that eventually led to the identification of an organizational value did not clearly relate to meeting expectations of society. Instead, the values identified were initially described in a way that related only to accomplishing their mission, which, in all cases, is connected to providing some type of benefit to the community.

The first set of values identified by the interview participants were not in line with Rokeach's (1973) definition of "values." The second group of values identified by participants included those that non-profit managers feel serve as the standards by which they are evaluated by the public. These fourteen values (caring, respect, responsibility, accessibility, collaboration, efficiency, honesty, innovation, accountability, diversity, integrity, timeliness, transparency, and trustworthiness) were difficult to define, and harder for participants to explain in comparison with the first set of values relating to their mission that seemed to resonate with interviewees.

The top organizational value cited by nearly all interviewees was caring. Interviewees commonly defined caring as "being helpful to the community and to others," being "courteous," being "friendly," or "providing an environment of hospitality." A national social welfare organization defined caring as, "making a positive impact on people or on the environment or on business or just doing good. I think it's an organization that is grounded in doing good, whatever that might be."

The next most commonly identified value was respect. This value was most frequently identified as "treating everyone with respect [or dignity]," or, "respecting the community and the people we serve." The other dominant definition reflected the internal respect of other's opinions and ideas. Most participants defined respect in this context as "having respect for other peoples'

opinions." Another participant described this value as "inclusion." She stated, "We do promote [inclusion] so everybody can voice their opinion and no one feels like they have to keep quiet."

The third most common value identified was responsibility and was defined in various ways. One participant defined responsibility as "stewardship responsibility of money." Another participant defined responsibility as "responsibility to be leaders in the community, leaders with an eye to service." Other definitions were related to being "responsible to the community" or having a "commitment" to the community to carry out their services in a way expected by the community.

Another value identified among interviewees was accessibility. This value was defined by participants as being "available" and "responsive" to stakeholders or people in the community experiencing a need. The Executive Director of a local funding organization explained its significance, "people can call and ask us what the process [for applying for funding] is… [they] can ask if there are comments about particular applications." Other values identified, but listed infrequently, included collaboration, efficiency, honesty, innovation, accountability, diversity, integrity, timeliness, transparency, and trustworthiness.

These values differ significantly from those of for-profit organizations. The research of Brummette et al. (2011) uncovered that honesty and integrity were values listed most often on Fortune 500 organizations' websites, followed by customer centered; employee diversity, inclusiveness, opportunity and safety; employee experience, training, teamwork and talent; as well as innovative, adaptable, creative, or working toward constant improvement. Non-profit organizations, on the other hand, only identified honesty twice and integrity once. Collaboration, which can be associated with teamwork, and adaptability, were both identified only once.

For non-profit organizations, the values identified are in line with the findings of Aaker et al. (2010), and contribute to the public perception that non-profit organizations are "warmer" than for-profits, but simultaneously less competent (p. 224). Warmth, in this context, refers to societal judgments of generosity, kindness, sincerity, honesty, trustworthiness, and thoughtfulness. Competence, on the other hand, refers to societal judgments of intelligence, confidence, competitiveness, effectiveness, capability, and skillfulness. Thus, managers of non-profit organizations can benefit from identifying and better understanding their explicit organizational values and ways to strategically convey those values to stakeholders that affect social judgments of both competence and warmth. Such social judgments are prime examples of how values influence socially constructed perceptions, ultimately leading to societal evaluations of organizations.

Although these primary values identified by interviewees were perceived by them to be integral elements of how the organization functions, they were also perceived to be self-evident, leaving to stakeholders the responsibility of associating organizational behavior with terminal values; a game of chance that is taking its toll on perceptions of non-profit organizations. Two participants in the study expressed these sentiments when asked about the lack of strategies to explicitly communicate values. One participant stated, "you get to a place where there is that institutional knowledge of how we treat people and what we value." Another participant affirmed, "we take for granted that others see what we see."

Instead of relying on self-evident values, non-profit managers should focus on clearly understanding their own values and reassessing how these values fit in with societal perceptions of the non-profit sector. If non-profits want to attract resources and societal support, identifying explicit manifestations of their own organizational values could help the organization convey to

society that they are not only "warm," but also just as "competent" as their for-profit counterparts.

The Need for Explicit Strategies of Communicating Values.

The third research question addressed how managers in non-profit organizations believe they are conveying their values, internally and externally. When asked about the strategies used to convey their values to stakeholders, two different perceptions became evident. The largest group of managers held a perception that values are self-evident to constituents and inherent in the programs, services, and mission of, or communications with the organization. Only three organizations made the distinction between conveying values explicitly and embedding them in some other peripheral, inexplicit strategy; all three perceived values to answer the question of "why" the organization exists, what the organization believes, and what the organization does.

Non-profit managers perceived that values are conveyed through both action and communication, although both strategies leave to stakeholders the responsibility of inferring or extracting values from organizational action or materials. This lends to the underlying notion explained above, that values were inherently self-evident and were reflected in every strategy identified by the managers to convey values to stakeholders, including actively living values and storytelling/word-of-mouth as primary strategies for both internal and external conveyance of values. The majority of managers interviewed perceived that conveying values by utilizing indirect strategies and inexplicit means alone was sufficient, because they believed organizational values were extensions of stakeholders' preexisting value sets.

The primary strategy to convey values internally and externally was actively living the organizational values. The majority of interviewees perceived that, by observing the programs, services, actions, and behaviors of the organization, external stakeholders were able to "pick up" on the values informing their organizations' missions. In a few cases, values were perceived as inherent due to the intent of the organizations' missions and organizational purposes of instilling values into the community. Interviewees perceived stakeholders to be inherently drawn to the organization because of their own preexisting values, and thus naturally observe extensions of their values in action. The belief was that the work of the organization seems meaningful without the need to explicitly express or convey values to such constituents.

Storytelling/verbal/word-of-mouth is another primary strategy serving as an extension of the first, reflecting the same underlying belief that values are self-evident. This strategy relates to the institutional perspective of legitimacy, whereby people come together, talk about organizational expectations, and rely on these established networks of societal standards (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). By using storytelling, non-profit organizations contribute to this discussion of societal expectations by portraying examples of their values in action. They share action-based accounts of their values to stakeholders in these networks as an indirect way of showing stakeholders how their organizational behaviors are congruent with expectations. In this instance, non-profit organizations can be perceived as making a legitimation effort by way of strategic dialogue, or creating a narrative easily understood by the public. However, such accounts or stories of values in action still limit the discussion to values that are "embedded in a narrative," or stories that require stakeholders to extract the correct elements that reflect terminal values and associate those terminal values with the behavior of the organization. The possibility of misunderstanding is huge; relying on stakeholders to truly make the connection between values in action and actual organizational values that are deeply embedded in communications,

behaviors, or other peripheral strategies poses the risk of misunderstanding, and the organization being deemed not legitimate.

Perhaps such strategies work for these non-profit organizations, however, those that are attempting to grow or raise more money in a tough economy have to reach beyond people that already "pick up" on their values and reach to others in society. In order to attract or encourage others to become involved in the organization, non-profits have to directly communicate to stakeholders what it is they truly believe, as well as what they are accomplishing as an organization.

More explicit strategies to communicate values can bridge any gap of misunderstanding between values that interviewees perceive to be self-evident and societal expectations, serving as a proactive attempt to relate organizational activity, successes, or accomplishments with the values that comprise the "core" of the organization; those values that essentially drive organizational successes in a way that is congruent with the expectations of society. Because most of the managers interviewed already believe that actively living organizational values is their primary method of conveying values, a simple resolution is to improve strategic communications that are already in place by explicitly communicating values to constituents. This can be done by simple repetition; explicitly conveying values to stakeholders in any communication medium possible, whether it be directed e-mails, newsletters, Website content, pamphlets and brochures, or other media. Repeatedly conveying to stakeholders the values that inform organizational behaviors, beliefs, and actions is a method that reinforces the beliefs of the organization, but simultaneously expresses what the organization is doing.

When values of the organization match those of society, a harmonious relationship results, making it easier for stakeholders to become involved in the organization (Brummette & Zoch, 2010). Conversely, if values are not explicitly communicated and are instead embedded in a mix of peripheral strategies, it then becomes difficult to encourage people to become involved or to think the organization is a good one to become involved in. Such difficulty stems from the need for a shared value system among stakeholders and the organizations they become affiliated with. Therefore, it only seems natural for managers of non-profits to take every opportunity to repetitiously communicate their organizational values to stakeholders in an attempt to raise awareness that shared value systems do exist.

Perceiving the Importance of Communicating Values to Stakeholders.

The fourth research question attempted to identify whether managers in non-profit organizations understand the importance of conveying values to stakeholders. The majority of non-profit managers interviewed do not feel that it is important to communicate their organizational values. Thus, there are societal expectations in the community that are left unaddressed and non-profit organizations making no attempts to justify how they operate in a way that sufficiently addresses these expectations.

All interviewees felt as though actions were more important in terms of conveying values, with the majority of interviewees feeling that embedding values in communication content and stories is sufficient to convey what they believe. This lack of explicit strategies leaves to stakeholders the responsibility of adequately extracting values from communication media, inferring values from the organization's actions, and associating an organization's behavior with terminal values. This underlying notion of self-evident values reinforces organizational action, but leaves stakeholders without the certainty of knowing what values an organization possesses. Instead of "[pointing] to their non-profit status [and actions] as ipso facto

evidence of their trustworthiness and effectiveness," there should be an attempt to strategically and explicitly convey organizational values (Salamon, 1999, p. 5) to explain beliefs informing the action. This also requires reassessing management's perspective that it is sufficient to solely provide society with enough information to "pick up" on what they believe to be self-evident values and to also reinforce the importance of reaching beyond select members of society that already harbor the same values.

Many interviewees expressed concern over lack of resources financially and in terms of intellectual capital, as well as a dearth of employees or volunteers possessing the adequate skill-sets to "communicate values effectively." Although lack of resources is a legitimate concern among non-profits operating in a tough economy, all interviewees have the capability to further develop existing communications by simply adding values components, a cost efficient way of providing legitimating accounts of their existence that requires neither special training nor an unusual amount of communication expertise. Several interviewees already have functional Websites used to communicate with stakeholders. Managers simply need to integrate explicit organizational values into already existing content, explain what these values mean to the organization, and strategically convey organizational values in a way that is congruent with those of stakeholders. Repeating these explicit values to stakeholders at every opportunity is essential. Whether it is in organizational Websites, publications, or policies, explicitly repeating values can bridge any gap of understanding that has occurred because of values that are perceived by management to be self-evident, but in reality are embedded so deeply "in a narrative" that their existence is clouded.

More importantly, non-profit managers need to become more cognizant of what society expects from their organization. By first understanding their own values, and then honing in on what the community identifies as an expectation of their organizations, managers will be able to reevaluate their own values and communicate them in ways that do not leave stakeholders challenging their competence, efficiency, and effectiveness (Aaker et al., 2010; Salamon, 1999). Being direct with stakeholders and emphasizing value congruence by way of more explicit strategies is a way to create "[…] a credible collective account or rationale explaining what the organization is doing and why" (Suchman, 1995, p. 575). It is not only what the organization does that is crucial, but how the organization communicates what it does to ensure congruency with societal expectations of vigilant constituents who possess "legitimacy-determining power" (Patel et al., 2005, p. 2). In today's tough economy, operating in a manner deemed legitimate by normative societal standards can help non-profits repress any of these challenges and garner widespread support that is crucial for their survival and continued success.

Limitations

Due to monetary, geographical, and time constraints, the researchers utilized a convenience sample of non-profit organizations within a 50-mile radius. The sample was composed of organizations that replied to an initial email to 33 organizations. The managers were available during the necessary time frame, and the organizations represented a variety of philanthropic foci (health, social, community-building, funding, health, family strengthening, etc.) Although the convenience sample encompasses many areas of the non-profit sector, it does not include animal welfare or religious organizations.

Another limitation of the study was the short amount of time that the majority of the participants had been employed by their organizations. Many of the interviewees had only been employed by their non-profit organizations for a year or less and this could have resulted in an

overall lack of knowledge about the values of their organization. Some of the comments expressed by the newly hired participants could have also been based on recollections of the espoused values indicated in the training materials.

Implications for Future Research

Future studies should focus on further exploration of the different values identified by interviewees. For example, a future study could analyze the content of strategic business plans to identify the specific actions used by non-profits to indicate their organization's values to their stakeholders. Further research could also focus on utilizing quantitative methods to test the findings of the current study.

Conclusion

The field of public relations revolves around the mutually beneficial relationships created between an organization and its stakeholders. To truly be effective at maintaining these relationships, it is essential that managers and communication professionals working with non-profit organizations understand the environmental influences affecting an organization's survival. Legitimacy has proven to be a key issue for non-profits — a misunderstood environmental influence threatening to limit the support so desperately needed in a tough economy.

Non-profit organizations exist in a culture of scrutiny driven by public perception that is becoming progressively more negative. According to Aaker et al. (2010), the public perception of non-profits is based on social judgments of "warmth," including kindness, generosity, sincerity and thoughtfulness. Because the perception of "warmth" takes precedence in public perception, non-profits are inevitably viewed as less competent than are profit-making organizations.

Lack of attention to societal value systems leaves non-profit organizations struggling for support in a culture propagating the belief that they operate in ways that are kind and thoughtful, but lack the competence and skillfulness to essentially be effective.

Managers in non-profit organizations possess a myopic view of their stakeholders that is reflected in the ways by which they convey their values. Stakeholders are perceived to exist within a privileged circle of understanding, and to share the same mission-driven values as the organization, thus there is no need to explicitly communicate those values to them. On the other hand, societal expectations are ignored, leaving stakeholders existing outside of the "circle" apprehensive about the organization's competence, and thus uneasy when determining whether to support the organization and its causes. Understanding the importance of legitimacy and aligning organizational values with those of society is the first step to changing these perceptions. It is fine for non-profits to be perceived as "warm" but, to be successful, they also must be seen as no less competent than for-profit organizations.

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Are You a Pradvertiser?

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Abstract

Media has always been considered a major player in public relations. Public relations and advertising have been regarded as different functions, both supporting the organizational success (Hon, 1998; van Woerkum & Aarts, 2008; Bendixen, 1993). As technology develops and new and social media open up, the traditional mass media are undergoing major changes. New media have opened up direct channels for interaction between organizations, brands and their publics, and are changing the way people interact with brands and each other (DuMars, Sitkiewicz & Fogel, 2010; Karjaluoto, 2008; Hennig-Thurau, Malthouse, Friege, Gensler, Lobschat, Rangaswamy & Skiera, 2010). Despite the new possibilities for advertisers, few studies have focused on what do advertisers really expect from the media in the new media environment. Expectations have a crucial role in defining the future of the media as they guide behavior (Thomlison, 2000) and operate as standards against which organizational performance is assessed (Walker & Baker, 2000; Creyer & Ross, 1997). If expectations and reality do not meet, the legitimacy of an organization is at stake (Fombrun & Van Riel, 1997).

By presenting a recent study on the expectations of 10 large advertisers in Finland, the paper sheds light on what advertisers expect from media today and whether the new media environment has changed their expectations. This traditionally outside the boundaries of PR-topic has suddenly become interesting to public relations scholars, as the findings point out that advertisers expect things from the media that have thus far fallen in the category of public relations. For example, advertisers expect ongoing dialogue with consumers, which can be considered a traditional function of public relations (Kent & Taylor, 2002; Kitchen, 1997; Stockholm Accords, 2010). A fundamental change is suggested to be taking place as advertising and public relations are moving closer to each other (Michaelson & Stacks, 2007). The paper introduces a new concept: 'pradvertising', to describe what advertising is becoming, and discusses the implications of pradvertising for public relations.

Public relations and advertising have been regarded as different functions, both supporting organizational success (Hon, 1998; van Woerkum & Aarts, 2008; Bendixen, 1993). The interlinks between the two fields have been noted by public relations scholars who have placed advertising under PR functions (Applegate, 2006), as well as marketing scholars who have seen marketing communications encompassing public relations together with advertising functions (Hennig-Thurau, Malthouse, Friege, Gensler, Lobschat, Rangaswamy & Skiera, 2010). However, public relations professionals have considered integrated marketing communications as 'an imperialism on public relations' (Lauzen, 1991). Recently, the broad definition of advertising has been explained by the blurred lines that have arisen within marketing due to the rise of social media and other forms of digital communication (Taylor, 2011). Recent examples of the changes in advertising are reported by for example bloggers (see Wheeler, 2011), who claim "advertising campaigns to be dead".

The development of mass media is closely linked to the development of advertising (Nyilasy, Whitehill King, Reid & McDonald, 2011), and changes in one affects the other. In the media environment, communication technologies have expanded and a shift from the dominance of mass print media towards a multimedia environment has taken place (Papathanassopoulos, 2011; Barry & Fulmer, 2004). New media open up direct channels for interaction between organizations, brands and their publics, and are changing the way people interact with brands and each other (DuMars, Sitkiewicz & Fogel, 2010; Karjaluoto, 2008; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010). Today, traditional advertising spending is increasingly shifting towards digital, including mobile, online and social media (Chu & Kim, 2011; Truong, McColl & Kitchen, 2010; Owyang, 2012; State of Social Media Marketing, 2012).

These new media do not only change the tools of advertising but also shift the control from organizations to consumers as they enable consumers to take a more active role in the whole marketing process (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010; Deighton & Kornfield, 2009). Consumers have greater online access to information about brands and the opportunity to voice their opinions (see The Company Behind the Brand, 2012). The shift in power and the convergence of brand and corporate reputation indicate a new era of marketing thinking (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010; Company Behind the Brand, 2012). Organizations need to integrate paid, owned, and earned media and integrate these tools cross channel, cross experience, and cross audience (Owyang, 2012).

While the impact of social media on brand-consumer relationships has been questioned (Taylor & Kent, 2010), it has been claimed that new and social media have changed communications functions from the traditional concept of a one-way mass communication process towards an ongoing dialogue between organizations and consumers (Papathanassopoulos, 2011; Weber, 2007). New media offer companies novel ways to reach consumers and communicate with them and thus have potential to impact traditional marketing models (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010) including advertising. It has been suggested that advertising and public relations are moving closer to each other, bringing similar value (Michaelson & Stacks, 2007). This study focuses on this merge and asks have public relations and advertising become more alike, and if so, what would this imply for the theory and practice of public relations?

Recent studies of advertising have covered areas such as social media marketing (Chu & Kim, 2011), effectiveness (Yilmaz, Telci, Bodur & Iscioglu, 2011) and new demands such as interactivity (Voorveld, Neijens & Smit, 2011). Despite the new possibilities for advertisers brought about by new and social media, few studies have focused on what do advertisers really

expect from the media in the new media environment. Expectations become central, as they operate as standards against which organizational performance is assessed (Walker & Baker, 2000; Creyer & Ross, 1997) guiding the behavior of stakeholders (Creyer & Ross, 1997; Reichart, 2003; Thomlison, 2000). In fact, organizations have 'an expectational relationship' to their stakeholders (Podnar & Golob, 2007, p. 326) where organizations need to meet or exceed stakeholder expectations in order to keep the relationship running and gain competitive edge (Thomlison, 2000; Ledingham, 2003; Olkkonen & Luoma-aho, 2011).

To tap into advertisers' expectations of the media and the service of the media: media advertising, the paper first looks into previous literature on the new media landscape, PR and advertising. We propose a new concept, pradvertising, to best describe the new needs in the changing media environment. To empirically explore whether the concept of pradvertising exists in practice, we present a recent study on the expectations of 10 large advertisers in Finland. The paper sheds light on what advertisers expect from media today and whether the new media landscape has changed their expectations. To conclude, the implications of pradvertising for the PR field are discussed.

The Changing Media Landscape

Through times media has shaped the way information is distributed, consumed, and shared (see Innis, 1951). For advertisers, the media is understood as an outlet, but it is one guided by the industry and organizations behind it. Media organizations sell the attention of people (Nordfors, 2006) for advertisers, and provide a service of space through which products and/or ideas can be promoted (Grossberg, Wartella, Whitney & Wise, 1998). Thus, media organizations can be considered as service providers. From a business perspective, the media industry today faces major challenges. While investment in social media marketing is on the rise and marketers want to increase presence across social media (see State of Social Media Marketing, 2012), the media industry is going through a structural change that is reshaping the media landscape towards more competition with a multitude of channels and participatory elements (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Miel & Faris, 2008).

While some of the current media practices stay the same – people still read news from the newspaper, for example – at the same time new practices are penetrating as the amount of internet users grows and new media devices are introduced (Leckner & Facht, 2010). Digital products, social networks, consumers' pro-activeness, the visibility of consumers' activities online, and sharing experiences real-time characterize the new media environment (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010). Moreover, in the new media landscape, social media highlight participation, sharing and co-creating (Bowman & Willis, 2003; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Miel & Faris, 2008). In a sense social media could be considered to come close to non-media (Seabra, Abrantes & Lages, 2007) having the appeal of a straight connection between an organization and a consumer without a notable media device working in between. Through non-media, information is typically actively searched for and the information is customized (ibid.).

In the new media environment, people are increasingly in charge of their own media experiences (Rainie, 2011). With both 'old' and 'new' media, the means of production and publishing are available to anyone at any time with a device they can connect to the Internet (Gillmor, 2006; Rosen, 2006; Jenkins, 2004). At the same time, it has become increasingly harder for advertisers to reach audiences: consumers are able to choose what they consume and when, and even avoid advertisers' messages. "Armed with tools that not only allow them to

screen what media they see, but also to shape and contribute to it, consumers are seizing control" (Edelman, 2007, p. 131).

In order to respond to changes in the media environment, the media business model is switching from catering to the public interest to identifying and enabling online communities (Matikainen, 2008). While in the new media environment, organizations' trust building is done in the context of more intimate audiences and networks, media experiences now are not as much about mass events for mass audiences as they are about personalized experiences (Rainie, 2011). Social media open doors for user participation and discussion (Hujanen & Pietikäinen, 2004), but also bring along challenges that the traditional media and tools of advertising are not always able to meet, such as speed. New media threaten established business models, but also provide opportunities for new marketing strategies (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010) and advertising tools.

It's Advertising…or is it PR?

The core objectives of advertising have been defined as creating awareness and knowledge, fostering favorable attitudes and feelings toward a product or organization, producing action (Lavidge & Steiner, 1961), and achieving profitable sales (Bendixen, 1993). Effectiveness measures and performance evaluations also characterize the field (Patsioura, Maro & Manthou, 2009; Lavidge & Steiner, 1961; Nyilasy et al., 2011; Assael, 2011). Advertising has an impact on the development of brand loyalty through perceived quality and satisfaction (Ha, John, Janda & Muthaly, 2011), and has been used also for public relations purposes, e.g. advocacy advertising (Sethi, 1979; Sethi, 1987; Haley, 1996). In this paper, advertising is considered as investing resources in purchasing time or space (Aaker, Batra & Myers, 1992), being an essential part of marketing functions.

Whereas advertising has been considered as a marketing function, public relations has been seen as a management tool (Kitchen & Li, 2005). Public relations has been considered fundamental for monitoring organizational activity and controlling an organization's reputation (Eisenegger & Imhof, 2008) or even as reputation management (Hutton, Goodman, Aleksander & Genest, 2001). Public relations mediates between organizations and their environments (van Woerkum & Aarts, 2008) by analyzing and interpreting public opinion and issues that might impact the organization (van Woerkum & Aarts, 2008; Ledingham, 2006; Applegate, 2006). A recent definition of public relations holds that it is the creation and maintenance of organizational social capital (Luoma-aho, 2009).

Public relations is about evaluating the quality of the relationship between an organization and its publics (Ledingham, 2006). As the expansion of the network society (Castells, 1996; van Dijk, 1999) accelerates and stakeholders become more influential, it has been suggested that the relationship perspective of public relations as well dialogue with stakeholders gains even more meaning (Stockholm Accords, 2010). Social media have been understood as an opportunity for relationship building in the new stakeholder environment: a new tool for facilitating two-way communication between organizations and their publics, developing relationships with them, accelerating the power of word-of-mouth, and visibility (The Public Relations Strategist, 2009; Wright & Hinson, 2008; Scott, 2010). However, at the same time social media face the challenge of being equal to traditional media in terms of accuracy, credibility, truth and ethics (Wright & Hinson, 2008).

In advertising, mass media has allowed marketers to reach (and communicate with) mass audiences across space and time (Nyilasy et al., 2011). However, the increasingly fragmented and individualized audiences (Livingstone, 2004) have introduced the growth of personalized

and segmented advertising (Leiss, Kline, Jhally & Botterill, 2005). As the audience has splintered across the multiple new media options and traditional media (Ha et al., 2011), the disaggregation of content and advertising has become evident (Miel & Faris, 2008). At the moment, "brands are hard-pressed to determine the most effective and efficient allocation of advertising monies" (Ha et al., 2011, p. 674).

The most evident development in media advertising recently, has been the proliferation of channels and possibilities (Ha et al., 2011). From the new media choices, the Internet has gained importance and growth (Spilker-Attig & Brettel, 2010; Barnes, 2004), becoming a mainstream medium for advertisers (Cheong, de Gregorio & Kim, 2010). "Social media represent a revolutionary new trend" (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 59) both for advertising and public relations. In addition to possibilities provided by online media, sponsoring, advertising integrated in content, real-time advertising, personal advertising and advertising based on location have become more common (Viljakainen, Bäck & Lindqvist, 2008).

In the new media environment, consumers are not passive receivers of advertising but have an active role in deciding what they do with advertisers' messages (O'Donohoe, 1994). Traditionally advertisers have had control over their content as they pay for the space for their content, whereas public relations primarily use communications tools that are not paid for (Applegate, 2006). However, the shift of power in advertising and the field of marketing is changing. It has been suggested that marketing in the new media era resembles "the art of pinball playing": marketing managers try to guide brand communication, which is diverted by the new media bumpers (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010). Consequently, marketing has lost control over brands and moved away from traditional marketing actions, but now at best marketing participates in conversation with consumers about issues related to the brand (Deighton & Kornfeld, 2009; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010). As a marketing function, this also affects advertising.

Instead of providing information, today's advertising needs to be about building brand-consumer relationships and highly connected to non-marketing uses such as appealing to emotions and entertainment (McDonald & Scott, 2007; O'Donohoe, 1994; Hudson & Hudson, 2006). Instead of interrupting media use, advertising should be relevant, evoke interest, offer experiences and let people interact with brands (Edelman, 2010). Even though it has been claimed that conventional advertising online will not sustain media organizations (The Pew Research Center, 2010), Internet and social media services have been suggested to offer consumers the possibility of interactive advertising and to engage with brands (Patsioura et al., 2009). Understanding consumer engagement with the media and what impact engagement might have on the effectiveness of advertising is also of interest to advertisers (Nyilasy et al., 2011). In the new media environment, further development of the means to optimize consumer reach and measure cross-media effectiveness is needed (Nyilasy et al., 2011; Assael, 2011). Such areas of expertise run close to the know-how of public relations practitioners.

Pradvertising Defined

To manage the pinball effect of messages in the new media environment, it becomes clear that traditional advertising alone is not sufficient. What is needed is a more comprehensive view on advertising that by its functions reminds almost public relations. We propose this new function to be a combination of advertising and public relations, and call it *pradvertising. Pradvertising can be defined as cross-media, issue-centered, long-term relationship building efforts that aim at engagement and increased sales brought about by the demand for non-media*

style communication and need for dialogue. The goals of pradvertising go beyond advertising and public relations, as they combine the relationship building with immediate results that can be measured. The end-goal of pradvertising is to turn stakeholders into faith-holders who recommend and evangelize the brand, product or organization. What differentiates pradvertising from public relations is the money: it is clear that brands, products and organizations pay for it, and it is not "earned" as publicity through public relations. Successful pradvertising, however, is not alone enough: a combination of paid, owned and earned is needed. Table 1 puts together the definitions of advertising, public relations and pradvertising, the new type of function combining advertising and public relations.

Table 1
Advertising and Public Relations

	Advertising	Public Relations	Pradvertising
Definitions	"Investing resources in purchasing time or space in mass media in order to accomplish an organizational objective" (Aaker et al., 1992) "Communicating with current and potential customers" (Bendixen, 1993)	"A management function including analysis, planning, implementation and evaluation" (van Woerkum & Aarts, 2008; Ledingham, 2006) "Reputation management" (Hutton et al., 2001) "Mediates between organizations and their environments" (van Woerkum & Aarts, 2008)	"Cross-media, issue-centered, long-term relationship building efforts that aim at engagement and increased sales brought about by the demand for non-media style communication and need for dialogue" (*the authors*)
Goals	"Enhancing the buyer's response to the organization and its offerings to achieve profitable sales in the long run" (Bolen, 1984; Bendixen, 1993) "Creating awareness and knowledge, fostering favorable attitudes and feelings towards a product, producing action" (Lavidge & Steiner, 1961) "Measuring effectiveness and evaluating performance " (Patsioura et al., 2009; Lavidge & Steiner, 1961; Nyilasy et al., 2011; Assael, 2011)	"Creating and maintaining organizational social capital" (Luoma-aho, 2009) "Building and maintaining beneficial relationships between an organization and its publics" (Cutlip, Center & Broom, 1994) "Controlling an organization's reputation" (Eisenegger & Imhof, 2008)	"Engaging customers with brands, products and organizations resulting in sales" *(the authors)* "Turning stakeholders into faith-holders who recommend and evangelize the brand, product or organization" (*the authors)*

Next, we describe data that empirically explored the idea of pradvertising. The aim was to find out whether the idea of pradvertising exists in reality. For this, Finnish advertisers were interviewed on the expectations they currently pose on media and media advertising, and a social media observation was conducted.

Methodology

In order to explore the expectations of advertisers and how these unfold in social media, a mixed-method research approach combining qualitative interviews and social media observation was selected. The interviews were semi-structured, and the analysis was theory-driven, with a focus on the content. The interviewees were chosen from a listing of the largest advertisers in Finland between 2007 and 2010 (Honkaniemi, 2011; Honkaniemi, 2010; Maste, 2009). Altogether 10 marketing experts responsible for media planning were interviewed in March and April 2011. The recorded and transcribed interview data were analyzed through theory-driven content analysis.

As the interview data suggested that the expectations regarding traditional media and social media were in part different, a two-phase social media observation was conducted in order to study how the expectations of social media were fulfilled in consumer-brand -interaction online. The organizations' presence was examined in three central social networking sites (YouTube, Facebook and Twitter) in April 2011. In the first part of the observation, comments on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube were analyzed. On Facebook, the ten most recent user comments on a relevant Facebook page were analyzed. On Twitter, the organizations' name was searched after which the ten most recent tweets were analyzed. On YouTube, videos were searched with the name of the organization. The three newest videos related to the organization's advertising and the ten most recent comments on each video were analyzed.

In the second observation phase, two advertising campaigns by two of the interviewed advertisers were explored on YouTube, Facebook and Twitter. On YouTube, the first 30 comments on the newest and most relevant video were analyzed. On Facebook, the first 30 comments on the newest and most relevant page were analyzed. Also on Twitter, the latest 30 tweets, which were searched with the names of the campaigns, were examined. On all social networking sites, Finnish and English speaking groups and comments were analyzed. All the data from the social media observation were categorized according to the expectations derived from the interviews. The interview and observation data were merged for analysis, as the goal was to get an overall picture of the expectations in the new media environment.

Results: Expectations Go Beyond Advertising

The results of the expert interviews and social media observation showed that advertisers have different expectations of specific media channels and media organizations and their services. The results are combined in Table 2. The results are divided into 3 major categories: traditional expectations (such as enhancing sales and ensuring reach), which are pervasive in advertising literature (Lavidge & Steiner, 1961; Bolen, 1984; Bendixen, 1993), incremental expectations (traditional expectations with minor changes such as engagement, recommendation, innovative services and measurability), which are increasingly present in recent advertising literature (McDonald & Scott, 2007; Hudson & Hudson, 2006; Nyilasy et al., 2011; Patsioura et al., 2009) and new expectations (such as long-term relationships, customized and holistic services, flexibility, setting realistic goals and dialogue), which have thus far not been widely identified in research literature. Table 2 also suggests what the contribution of public relations could be in meeting these expectations of advertisers.

Table 2
Expectations of the Media as Reported by the Advertisers in the Study

Expectation type	Expectation	Changes in expectation	PR contribution
Traditional	ENHANCING SALES (Return on investment)	No changes	Understanding the link between relationships and purchases
Traditional	REACH (Reaching mass and target audiences)	Reaching target audiences now emphasized	Doing research on consumers, monitoring changes in people's behavior and expectations
Incremental	ENGAGEMENT (Affecting emotions and decision-making)	Social media a new platform for engagement	Engaging through relationships, setting realistic goals and building social capital
Incremental	RECOMMENDATION (Enabling consumer recommendation)	Social media a new platform for recommendation	Contributing knowledge of how to increase e-WOM
Incremental	INNOVATIVE SERVICES (Staying on top of things, providing new solutions)	Online media have raised expectations of new solutions	Monitoring weak signals in people's behavior and expectations
Incremental	MEASURABILITY (Measuring attention value)	Online media have raised expectations of measurability, demand for measuring attention value rising	Contributing knowledge of measuring the value of relationships
New	LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIP (Interactive relationship)	Social media may offer a platform to reach consumers directly	Relationship management, creating social capital
New	CUSTOMIZED SERVICES (Understanding the customers' line of business and providing customized services accordingly)	Competition might raise the importance of customized services	Building trust and monitoring changes, behavior and expectations
New	HOLISTIC SERVICES (Offering media and communication mixes)	Competition might raise the importance of holistic services	Contributing knowledge of integrated communication, building active communications between different actors
New	FLEXIBILITY (Possibility to alter campaigns)	Online media have raised expectations of flexibility	Using social capital and monitoring advertisers' behavior and expectations
New	REALISTIC GOALS (Delivering what is promised, not promising too much)	Social media may offer stakeholder expectations a greater voice	Monitoring weak signals and responding to them, establishing behavioral standards that meet expectations
New	DIALOGUE (Direct contact with consumers, interactivity)	Social media a new platform for dialogue, a rising expectation	Listening and interpretation-skills, establishing relationships and mutual understanding, trust maintenance, turning stakeholders into faith-holders

Traditional Expectations: Enhancing Sales and Reach

From the marketing experts' interviews, it was evident that the traditional expectations of enhancing sales and reaching consumers through media advertising hold their ground as the fundamental expectations of advertisers. Enhancing sales was portrayed as the last-end goal for advertising activities whereas reaching consumers was seen as the core reason for using media for advertising.

Regarding the expectation of reach, the experts emphasized the possibility provided by the media to reach mass audiences quickly and efficiently. This emphasis supports the traditional function of media, i.e. to provide advertisers with mass audiences (Grossberg et al., 1998), while it could be questioned whether mass audiences exist in the new media environment. The experts also stressed the need to reach target audiences and gain quality consumer contacts. Especially online media were seen to provide opportunities for quality consumer contacts through targeted and personalized marketing. Targeted advertising was expected to have an important role in the future. As the shift from reaching mass audiences to targeted publics will characterize advertising in the coming years, advertisers should be offered new, personalized services accordingly.

Incremental Expectations: Engagement, Recommendation, Innovative Services and Measurability

The expectations of engagement, recommendation, measurability and innovative services had all been influenced by the rise of online, and more precisely social media. Regarding engagement, the media were expected to construct a favorable media environment and relationship with consumers through which advertisers could enhance engagement. The extent to which the media were considered to have met these expectations varied between the different media channels, but online media were considered as responding well to the expectation by providing new opportunities in the environments where audiences nowadays spend their time. According to the social media observation, social media had to some extent functioned as a channel for positive and negative feelings invoked in consumers by advertising. For example, Facebook had been used to express one's commitment to a brand and Twitter as a channel for emotional responses.

It was proposed that social media could similarly provide advertisers with new possibilities for enhancing consumer recommendations. Although recommendation can be considered a traditional expectation and advertising tool, it was suggested by the advertisers that media affects the recommendation process, as it plays an important intermediary role. It was predicted that consumers would increasingly be the ones using media, and "doing media advertising". The expectation of recommendation highlights the shift of control from advertisers to consumers. The shift suggests that trust building, which can enhance consumer recommendation, will be an important factor in advertiser-consumer relationships in the future.

Online media had also raised advertisers' expectations by providing new solutions and innovative services. The advertisers expected the media to provide information on new possibilities, especially with respect to online media. The media was also expected "to stay on top of things", an issue of even more importance for advertisers in the new media environment. Although the expectations of innovative services were of a more ideal kind, it should be noted that, while expectations of the online media are high, advertisers did not have a clear view about how the expectations will be met and who will meet them: the media or for example media agencies.

One of the most central incremental expectations derived from the interviews was the expectation of the measurability of value, more precisely, attention value. As the advertisers expected the importance of measuring attention value in advertising to increase, the attention value of the media and measuring it, as well as what has attention value in general, will have an important role in defining the future of different advertising channels and tools. To meet advertisers' expectations, advertisers will have to be offered innovative possibilities for attracting the attention of people and improving ways of measuring the attention value of specific media.

New Expectations: Long-term Relationships, Customized and Holistic Services, Flexibility, Realistic Goals and Dialogue

Despite the new possibilities provided by social media, advertisers expect close and long-term relationships with the media, the importance of media-advertiser relationships to grow, but also new relationships with new media actors to emerge. It was also mentioned that while relationships with the media will also be needed in the future, with the advent of social media, organizations are more independent and no longer have to rely solely on the traditional media to reach consumers. The expectations related to advertiser-media relationships could also further change as advertisers engage more with social media.

In addition to relationships, advertisers' service expectations were linked to the competence of the media and media marketers offering services to advertisers. The advertisers expected customized, holistic and flexible services and it was predicted that as competition increases, media services would also improve. With respect to service, the importance of setting realistic goals about the outcomes of service interactions and advertising co-operation between media and advertisers was also highlighted.

The impact of social media on the new expectations of advertisers was actualized in advertisers' expectation of dialogue in media advertising. In particular, social media were considered to open up a new channel for interactivity and getting closer to the consumer. It was suggested that social media allow organizations to have a conversation and interaction with consumers and engage them, which is something that was not previously possible. Social media were considered to open up opportunities for "dialogue instead of a monologue", and to act as "a conversation hub".

However, according to the social media observation, even though advertisers were present in social media, a strong dialogue between advertisers and consumers was not found. Rather, the social media observation showed that the level of interaction had more to do with consumers giving feedback. Moreover, the observed discussions could be characterized as short-term conversations among consumers. When the social networking sites were used for asking questions, some discussion was generated between consumers and organizations. Among the small sample investigated in this study, only one campaign had generated conversation, thereby demonstrating the unrealized potential of this resource.

Overall, regarding the rising expectation of dialogue it could be suggested that advertisers would like to move from mediatized advertising towards non-media (Seabra et al., 2007) advertising, which encompasses advertising that does not rely on the mass media as such. The rising expectation also suggests that the brand-consumer relationship is moving from mediatized relationships towards non-mediatized relationships with consumers. One means for this could be social media, which could be seen as situated "in between" the advertiser and the media. Even though social media are also categorized as media, they offer interactivity and non-mediatized appeal for advertisers as opposed to traditional media.

Conclusions and Implications for PR

Some have declared advertising dead (Wheeler, 2011), but we feel that it is instead merging with PR. A fundamental change is suggested to be taking place as advertising and public relations are moving closer to each other in their contents (Michaelson & Stacks, 2007). The current actions of advertising practitioners no longer match those definitions and goals set out for them, and major changes are taking place in the field of public relations as well. This paper suggests that advertisers' expectations are moving closer to expectations of public relations, indicating the emergence of a new field combining advertising and public relations, *pradvertising*. This paper has argued that the line of public relations and advertising has blurred, especially due to the developments of social media. The findings of the research interviews point out that advertisers' expectations now include ongoing dialogue with consumers, an expectation that until now has fallen in the category of public relations (Kent & Taylor, 2002; Kitchen, 1997; Stockholm Accords, 2010).

The trend is not only visible through rising expectations, but also on the practice side and agency level. In fact, we suggest that what many companies are currently practicing is pradvertising. The fundamental change in the media field, and thus advertising and public relations, suggests that a more holistic view should be taken on the two fields by both practitioners and academia. As public relations and advertising are moving closer together, the curricula of both PR and advertising should acknowledge the change and take it into account when planning educational programs. The skills of public relations will be crucial for students of advertising and vice versa.

There are several ways how public relations can contribute and has already contributed to pradvertising. Firstly, public relations can contribute knowledge of building relationships and enhancing engagement through the relationships. Secondly, public relations can contribute by monitoring weak signals, taking part in the creation of e-WOM, and sharpening the skills of listening and interpretation. Finally, public relations can help to align expectations with performance, and take a role in establishing the behavioral standards needed to meet expectations (Brønn, 2012). All of these are functions, which together contribute to building corporate social capital. In pradvertising, the key is to eventually turn stakeholders into value-generating faith-holders, stakeholders who have frequent contacts with companies and trust them highly (Luoma-aho, 2005). A central focus of public relations is managing relationships, and this is also something, which advertisers could benefit from in their pradvertising. In addition, to help provide holistic services with cross-media and cross-communication, public relations can contribute to pradvertising by emphasizing interaction in communication.

It should also be noted that public relations functions might have to prove themselves when the fields of advertising and public relations move closer together and if dialogue and engagement is not attached primarily to organizational relations but brand and product relations. Furthermore, the introduction of pradvertising might cause reputational risks for public relations, if the function of advertising is mixed with earned publicity. On the other hand, the possibilities for fruitful co-operation between public relations and advertising, brought about by pradvertising, should also be acknowledged.

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Are Green Companies More Dialogic? Exploring the Relationship Between Corporate Environmental Responsibility and Website Communication

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Abstract

This study examines the relationship between companies' environmental responsibility performance and their websites communication with investors. Using data from KLD Research & Analytics dataset, petro-chemical companies listed in the S&P 500 Index were coded into four environmental responsibility performance classifications: green, toxic, gray, and neutral. The results of a website content analysis showed that in their communication with investors corporations adopted dialogic communication principles reasonably well. Correlation analyses demonstrated that companies with more employees and larger profits adopted dialogic communication in greater extent. Furthermore, the multiple regression analysis revealed that green companies provided significantly more dialogic relationship-building features on their websites than neutral companies. Implications for corporate communication and public relations are discussed.

Socially responsible investing (SRI) has been thriving in the U. S. in part due to increasing influence of social norms on investor behavior (Hockerts & Moir, 2004; Social Investment Forum, 2007). *US SIF: The Forum for Sustainable and Responsible Investment* estimates that the total value dedicated to socially responsible investing stands at more than $3 trillion and experienced a growth rate of 13% in recent years.[1] Investor activism for environmental issues is also high; US SIF reports that the environmental issues account for the largest portion of shareholder resolutions on corporate social responsibility. Being a major part of corporate social responsibility, corporate environmental policies receive close scrutiny by both public and private entities, and environmental practices elicit extensive reporting and attention from the media. Corporate environmental successes and failures are frequently cited in the popular press, and major news outlets release rankings based on corporate environmental performance (e.g., *Newsweek*'s Green Rankings). The growing shareholder demand for socially responsible corporate behaviors has helped fuel this visibility. In response to this growing interest and increasing investor activism on corporate behavior, many companies have recently adopted environmental friendly policies while exploring further channels to address investors' expectations and concerns through corporate communication.

Corporate website can provide an efficient channel for corporations to communicate with norm-constrained investors. Today, much of the information available to and sought by investors comes directly from companies in the form of public relations efforts (Laskin, 2009; Penning, 2011). Consequently, corporations largely rely on their corporate websites to disseminate information to investors. The critical question is then whether corporations use their websites to engage their investor community in an open conversation through dialogic communication. Building on Martin Buber's (1965) *dialogic theory of communication*, Kent and Taylor (1998) defined dialogic communication as "any negotiated exchange of ideas and opinions" denoting communicative give and take (p. 325) and proposed five dialogic principles for building relationships through website communication. Focusing on this potential, several studies in public relations literature examined organizations' website communication with media (e.g., Callison, 2003; Pettigrew & Reber, 2010) and with activist groups (e.g., Kent, Taylor, & White, 2003; Yang & Taylor, 2011); and found that, in spite of the interactive and dialogic features on the websites, organizations mainly employed one-way communication format. And, thus, they missed the opportunity to engage these stakeholder groups in a genuine dialogue. However, the degree of prominence that a company deems on a certain stakeholder group may generate variations in its corporate communication. Several studies showed that corporate website communication prioritizes investors among other stakeholder groups by paying abundant attention to their informational needs and integrating a variety of interactive features for their convenience (Callison, 2003; Kim, Park, & Wertz, 2010).

The way corporations communicate with their public may also vary depending on many factors such as company size and profit. For example, Callison (2003) found a positive relationship between ranking of *Fortune 500* companies and the level of relationship-building efforts on their websites. Furthermore, Esrock and Leichty (1998) found a statistically significant positive relationship among the number of social responsibility items on a company webpage, the implementation of tools to make a website more navigable, and the size of a company. In consistent with these findings, this study predicts that *S&P* companies with more employees and larger profits employ more dialogic communication features on their websites.

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[1] For full details see the US SIF webpage at: http://ussif.org/resources/sriguide/srifacts.cfm

This study explores the relationship between companies' environmental responsibility performance and their websites communication with investors. The construct of corporate environmental performance has been widely used in many academic fields (e.g., business, management, finance). Lacking a clear and uncontested definition in literature (Poser, Guenther, & Orlitzky, 2012[2]), corporate environmental performance often refers to minimizing environmental harm and disclosing information about the use of energy and water as well as greenhouse gas emissions and toxic releases (Rahman & Post, 2011). This study used the KLD Research & Analytics, Inc. social performance dataset to determine the environmental responsibility performance of the companies in the sample. The KLD provides information on corporate social performance to a large number of money managers and institutional investors who integrate environmental, social and governance factors into their investment decisions (e.g., Graves & Waddock, 1994; Rahman & Post, 2011). For environmental responsibility dimension, KLD provides seven sub-indicators for environmental strengths (e.g., Pollution Prevention; Recycling) and seven sub-indicators for environmental concerns are (e.g., Hazardous Waste; Ozone Depleting Chemicals). If a company meets or exceeds the KLD threshold in each sub-indicator category, it is assigned a value of one, and zero otherwise. Using the total number of strengths and concerns, the companies in the sample were categorized into four groups: green – those companies that only have environmental strengths; gray – companies that have both environmental strengths and concerns; neutral – those that have neither environmental strengths nor concerns; and toxic – those companies that have only environmental concerns. Thus, the KLD data enabled the researcher to obtain a consistent, easily classifiable measure of environmental responsibility performance to assess its relationship with corporate website communication.

While past research examined structural features on corporate websites for their potential to build dialogic relationships (Callison, 2003; Capriotti & Moreno, 2007; Jo, 2006; Park & Reber, 2008; Pettigrew & Reber, 2010; Reber & Kim, 2008; Seltzer & Mitrook, 2007), these studies focused mainly on media relations function of websites. To date, few studies have examined communication with investors via corporate websites. In fact, investor communication, in general, has received scant attention in the public relations literature (Laskin, 2009, 2011; Penning, 2011). Given that public relations efforts via corporate websites prioritize investors as the primary publics (Callison, 2003; Esrock & Leichty, 1998, 2000; Kim, Park, & Wertz, 2010; Pettigrew & Reber, 2010), the use of websites for investor communication deserves more attention. To address this gap, the current study analyzes website communication with investors and tests whether green companies—positive environment performers—are more dialogic in their website communication. At the theoretical level, this study contributes to our understanding of the intrigue relationships among corporate social responsibility, corporate behaviors, and corporate communication. At the practical level, this study sheds light on the website communication patterns with a key stakeholder group and highlights the potential impact of social norms on corporate communication. Moreover, the novel methodological approach can guide future corporate communication research for systemically classifying companies based on their CSR performance and analyze potential relationships between CSR and corporate communication.

The organization of the paper is as follows. The first part reviews the literature on the theory of dialogic communication as it developed in the organization-public relationship

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[2] See Poser, Guenther, & Orlitzky (2012) for a comprehensive review of corporate environmental performance definitions across the fields.

literature. The second part briefly discusses CSR in relation to website communication. The third part explains the methodology and discusses operational variables. The final part presents results, and provides discussions and implications of the findings for corporate communication.

Dialogic Theory of Communication and Organizational Websites

Dialogic theory of communication is a co-creational approach to public relations developed in the organization-public relationship literature (e.g., Botan & Taylor, 2004; Grunig & Huang, 2000; Heath, 2001; Kent & Taylor, 1998, 2002; Pearson, 1989). Pearson (1989) introduced the idea of dialogue as the goal of public relations and argued that dialogue could be achieved by maximizing participation of all competing voices. Building on Martin Buber's (1965) dialogic theory of communication, Kent and Taylor (1998) defined dialogic communication as "any negotiated exchange of ideas and opinions" denoting communicative give and take (p. 325). In their co-creational approach to public relations, Botan and Taylor (2004) argued that dialogic theories, process, and practices should lead the public relations theory and research. They emphasized an understanding of an engaged public as active participants of a meaning-making process. According to the co-creational approach, public relations efforts build relationships with stakeholders and engage in dialogue (Botan & Taylor, 2004). The notion of socially responsible investing illustrates such a co-creational approach where corporations try to create shared meaning with investors through CSR.

As an interactive means of communication, the Internet offers a dialogic platform that could affect organization-public relationships (Coombs, 1998; Heath, 1998; Kent & Taylor, 1998). Recent literature demonstrated that the design features of websites and the content provided on the web pages could indeed improve stakeholder relationships in corporate organizations (Capriotti & Moreno, 2007; Esrock & Leichty, 1998, 2000; Jo, 2006; Seltzer & Mitrook, 2007). Kent and Taylor (1998) identified components of dialogic relationships on websites by suggesting five principles: dialogic loops, providing information relevant to a variety of publics, generation of return visits, ease of interface, and conservation of visitors (1998, p. 266). Elaborating on the dialogic potential of organizational websites, Kent and Taylor (2002) argued that organizations could build long-term relationships via the website communication by incorporating features such as "real time discussions, feedback loops, places to post-comments, sources of organizational information, and postings of organizational member biographies and contact information" (p. 31). In the follow-up studies, Taylor, Kent, and White (2001) and Kent, Taylor, and White (2003) operationalized these principles. Adopting the instrument of dialogic principles, many public relations scholars examined the dialogic potential of websites in various contexts (see McAllister-Spooner, 2009 for a review of the literature; Pettigrew & Reber, 2010; Seltzer & Mitrook, 2007; Yang & Taylor, 2011).

Today, investors could seek information about a company via several sources including financial media, analyst reports, and corporate public relations. Yet, Penning (2011) suggested, "public relations communications content has much or more value than information from the news media or other sources in an investor relations context" (p. 627). Because investors are more likely to rely on company as the most useful source of company information such as management, annual reports, conference calls, and news releases (Laskin, 2009; Penning, 2011), corporate websites have become one of the primary means of communication with investors. In addition to offering rich information content, corporate Web sites could provide accurate, reliable, timely, useful, and accessible information and resources, which are crucial for investment decisions (Brown, 1994; Markus, 2005). Furthermore, interactive and dialogic

features on websites could lead to build and enhance company-investor relationships based on genuine dialogue. Yet, we have only a limited understanding in the literature of whether corporate websites are actually being utilized to build relationships with the investment community through an open dialogic communication. Specifically, because norm constraint investors (particularly individual investors as they have limited resources to acquire information) turn to corporate communication resources to obtain information about CSR policies, the use of website communication for addressing this issue carries tremendous importance. The following two sections provide a brief discussion on corporate social responsibility and website communication that will guide the formulation of the research questions and hypothesis.

Corporate Social Responsibility and Corporate Websites

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) has induced considerable discussion in the academic literature since the term came into use in the1960s. The core of CSR is that "corporations have obligations to society that extend beyond mere profit-making activities" (Godfrey & Hatch, 2007, p. 87). Carroll (1979) explained that the social responsibility of business encompasses "the economic, legal, ethical and discretionary expectations that society has of organizations at a given point of time" (p. 500). Rooted in a free market approach, the main criticism of CSR states that corporations have no responsibility to society other than shareholders (Friedman, 1970). Accordingly, the only responsibility of business is to maximize shareholder profits.

Because of the effects of CSR on organization-public relationships, the concept has been widely studied in the public relations literature (e.g., Clarke, 2000; Grunig, 1979; Heath, 2006; Heath & Ryan, 1989; Taylor, 2011). Indeed, Botan and Taylor (2004) argued that CSR is an example of public relations activity in modern public relations that is grounded in building organization-public relationships. Several public relations scholars have generically studied CSR in relation to corporate communication on the websites (e.g., Capriotti & Moreno, 2007; Esrock & Leichty, 1998; Esrock & Leichty, 2000). By examining *Fortune 500* corporations' website communication, some studies found that these corporations prioritize investors and that, among all stakeholders, shareholders' needs are most frequently addressed on the websites (Callison, 2003; Kim, Park, & Wertz, 2010). Therefore, it is likely that companies follow a different approach on the websites communication with investors—the key public. The first research question inquires:

> **RQ1:** Do S&P 500 petro-chemical companies employ dialogic principles on their websites in their communication with investors?

The research hypothesis of this study focuses on the relationship between companies' size and their website communication. Callison (2003) found a positive relationship between ranking of *Fortune 500* companies and the level of relationship-building efforts on their Web sites. Furthermore, Esrock and Leichty (1998) found that the number of social responsibility items on a Web page was positively correlated with the size of an organization and the implementation of tools to make a website more navigable. Given these findings, it is plausible to think that companies with higher revenues are more likely to employ higher level of interactive and dialogic features on corporate websites. Thus, the following research hypothesis was posed:

H: Corporations with more employees and larger profits are more likely to integrate dialogic principles on their Web sites communication.

The extant literature on environmental responsibility and firm performance suggest that companies increasingly engage in green behaviors in response to the investors' growing demand for corporate environmental responsibility, which, in turn, is likely to positively affect their financial performance (e.g., Dowell, Hart, & Yeung, 2000; Hart, 1997; Hart & Ahuja, 1996; Heinkel, Kraus, & Zechner, 2001). The important question is: How do companies, engaged in green behaviors in response to norm-constraint investors' expectations, communicate with their public? In addition to other communication characteristics (e.g., content, frequency, and quantity), green companies might differ in their degree of willingness to initiate dialogue with their stakeholders via corporate communication channels. Consequently, the second research question asks:

RQ2: Is there a relationship between corporate environmental performance and the direction of communication corporations practice on their websites?

Method

To address the research questions and the hypothesis, this study used companies listed in the *S&P 500* Index in 2011 as a sample. The *S&P 500*® is a comprehensive gauge of the large cap U.S. equities market. The index includes 500 leading companies in leading industries of the U.S. economy, capturing 75% coverage of U.S. equities (*S&P 500*, 2011). Only companies in the petro-chemical industry (with SIC codes between 2000 & 3999) were included in the study (*N* = 46). Because of the nature of products they handle with products, petro-chemical companies are constantly scrutinized by public and private entities with regards to their environmental responsibility performance. Moreover, these companies are likely to have higher exposure to environmental accidents, and associated fines and litigation (e.g., The Exxon Valdez Oil, 1989; The BP Oil Spill, 2010). This present study employed three steps of assiduous coding procedures. Details of the each step are presented below.

Website Coding for Direction of Communication

In the first step, a content analysis of the *S&P 500* petro-chemical company websites was performed between October 1 and December 10, 2011.The company websites were accessed through the *S&P 500* (http://www.standardandpoors.com). The analysis focused on Homepage, Investor Relations, About the Company, and Corporate Social Responsibility (or Sustainability/Environment) sections. The companies were coded for their website content using four constructs of dialogic communication: ease of interaction, usefulness of information to the investors, presence of dialogic features, and relationship initiation and enhancement. To measure the relationship building potential of corporate websites, Taylor et al.'s (2001) instrument of dialogic communication was deployed with some modifications based on the following studies Pettigrew and Reber (2010) and Yang and Taylor (2011) (see Table 2 for details).

To maintain reliability of coding, two coders (the researcher and a graduate student who previously received training) independently coded 20% of the research sample. The intercoder reliability was assessed using Krippendorff's alpha (Hayes & Krippendorff, 2007). The intercoder agreement ranged from .88 to .97, which is above the accepted value for this type of test (alpha greater than .80) (Krippendorff, 2004).

Company Size

In the second step of coding, accounting information (e.g., sales and profitability) and stock return were coded for each company, using two different datasets: Compustat and CRSP.

Environmental Responsibility Performance

In the third step of coding, the environmental responsibility measures were coded based on the KLD Research & Analytics, Inc. social performance dataset. The KLD data covers six CSR dimensions: Community, Corporate Governance, Diversity, Employee Relations, Environment, Human Rights and Product. If the firm meets or exceeds the KLD threshold in each area, it is assigned a value of one, and zero otherwise. (Details are available from the author upon request).

Results

Descriptives

Table 1 reports descriptive statistics for the sample of petro-chemical companies listed in the *S&P 500* index with non-missing information on Compustat. The firms in the sample are large: the mean total assets is $41.454 billion and the number of employees has a mean of 32,079 thousand. The profitability measure also indicates a large variation ranging between 0.04 and 0.37. Of the sample, 43.2% are green while 45.5% and 4.5% are gray and toxic, respectively. The profitability measure also indicates a large variation ranging between 0.04 and 0.37. The mean for Relationship Index is 0.72 and attains values ranging between 0.49 and 0.86.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Petro-chemical Companies			
	M	*SD*	Min	Max
Total Assets ($ Million)	41454	63321	2872	302510
Number of Employees (Thousand)	32.07	33.00	2.50	127.00
Profitability	0.17	0.06	0.04	0.37
Relationship Index	0.72	0.08	0.49	0.86
n	46			

Table 2 demonstrates the four constructs of dialogic communication (Relationship Index) and presents the findings based on the survey of the websites. Regarding the RQ1, results revealed that companies in the sample employed dialogic features on their website communication ($M = .72$, $SD = .08$). The *ease of interface* feature ($M = 93$, $SD = .03$), was the most employed dialogic principle, while *dialogic features* was the least one ($M = 47$, $SD = .04$).

Table 2
Relationship Index Measures

Categories and Variables (*N*=46)	*M*	*SD*
Ease of interaction		
Site map	0.84	0.36
Major links to rest of site	0.97	0.15
Search engine box	0.97	0.29
Usefulness of information		
SEC filings	1.00	0.00
Earnings	1.00	0.00
Updated press releases (last 30 days)	0.97	0.15
Financial presentations	0.95	0.21
Annual financial reports	1.00	0.00
Stock information	1.00	0.00
Downloadable documents	0.97	0.15
Investors FAQs	0.79	0.40
Webcast	0.88	0.32
Conference call	0.84	0.36
Proxy statement	0.97	0.15
Tear sheet	0.54	0.50
Products/services	1.00	0.00
Company profile	1.00	0.00
Corporate governance	0.97	0.15
Company history/backgrounder	0.90	0.29
Company philosophy statement	1.00	0.00
Green rankings	0.38	0.49
Photos	0.93	0.25
CEO information	0.86	0.34
Reationship Initiation and enhancement		
Investor relations menu (stand-alone)	0.94	0.16
Updated press releases (last 7 days)	0.84	0.36
Invite to return	0.02	0.15
E-mail alerts	0.86	0.34
Real person contact for investor relation	0.50	0.50
Calendar of events	0.75	0.43
Dialogic Features		
Opportunity for feedback	0.22	0.42
Streaming video	0.61	0.49
Ability for real time video	0.34	0.47
RSS feeds	0.90	0.29
Social media	0.54	0.50
Survey	0.09	0.29
Blogs	0.13	0.34
Real-time chat feature	0.06	0.25

The four dialogic principles (*ease of interaction, usefulness of information, relationship initiation and enhancement*, and *dialogic features)* were further composed into a new variable: Relationship Index (*M* = 0.72, *SD* = .08, *alpha* = .57).

Table 3 presents the pair-wise correlations between the variables used in this study. The analysis showed that Number of Employees and Profitability are positively associated with Relationship Index. This finding provides preliminary evidence for the research hypothesis that large and profitable companies incorporate more dialogic features on their website communication.

Table 3
Correlations Among Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1 Relationship Index	1.000					
2 Green Firm Dummy	0.254 *	1.000				
3 Toxic Firm Dummy	-0.049	-0.190	1.000			
4 Gray Firm Dummy	-0.077	-0.796 ***	-0.199	1.000		
5 Log (# Employees)	0.322 **	-0.063	-0.309 **	0.365 **	1.000	
6 Profitability	0.291 *	0.479 ***	-0.104	-0.376 **	-0.030	1.000

Note. $* = p \leq 0.1$, $** p \leq .05$, $*** p \leq 0.01$.

Table 3 also demonstrates that Relationship Index is positively correlated with Green Company Dummy. This finding answers the RQ2 that there is a statistically significant positive relationship between green companies and dialogic communication on the websites. In other words, green companies are more likely to employ a dialogic approach in their website communication with investors. The analysis failed to find any significant relationship between Relationship Index and other environmental performance groupings.

However, as green firms are more profitable which may confound the positive association between Green Company Dummy and Relationship Index, a multivariate regression analysis was implemented in the next section in order to eliminate possible effects of any confounding variable. Multivariate regression analysis allows describing the relative degree of contribution of a series of variables in the multiple prediction of a dependent variable (Williams & Monge, 2001; Sprinthall, 2007). Table 4 reports the coefficient estimates of the regression of Relationship Index. *R*-square of the regression is 0.24, indicating that the regression reasonably explains the variation in the dependent variable (Relationship Index). *F* statistics of the regression model is 21.79 and is significant at the 1% level. Thus, it can be inferred that Green Firm Dummy has a positive and significant effect on Relationship Index.

Table 4
Coefficient Estimates of Variables

Variables	Coefficients	p values
Green Firm Dummy	0.07**	0.04
Toxic Firm Dummy	0.08	0.4
Gray Firm Dummy	0.04	0.27
Log(#Employees)	0.02*	0.07
Profitability	0.29	0.19
Constant	0.54***	0.00
n	46	
R-squared	0.24	
F	21.79	

Note. $* = p \leq 0.1$, $** p \leq .05$, $*** p \leq 0.01$.

This finding is consistent with the univariate evidence reported in Table 3 and lends support to the idea that green companies are more likely to facilitate dialogic communication on their websites than the neutral companies. The analysis failed to find any significant effect of Toxic and Gray Company Dummies on the dependent variable. The natural logarithm of number of employees increases Relationship Index, suggesting that large firms are more likely to use dialogic features for building relationship with their publics.

Discussion

Many companies have recently adopted environmental friendly policies in response to the norm-constrained investors' activism on corporate behavior. Corporate websites provide an efficient communication channel for corporations to address investors' expectations and concerns. However, website communication with investors has received scant attention in public relations and corporate communication literature. This study examined the relationship between companies' environmental responsibility performance and their websites communication with investors. Using data from the KLD Research & Analytics dataset, petro-chemical companies listed in the *S&P 500* Index were coded into four environmental responsibility performance classifications: green, toxic, gray, and neutral.

Overall, the results of the content analysis showed that, in their communication with investors, corporations employed dialogic principles on the websites reasonably well. Specifically, the pair wise correlation analysis revealed that there was a statistically significant association between the companies with more employees and larger profits and the dialogic principles practiced on their websites. Furthermore, the multiple regression analysis showed that there is a relationship between green companies and dialogic communication on the websites. In other words, green companies with environmental strengths are more likely to employ dialogic communication on their websites than the neutral companies without such strengths. Thus, the results of this study illustrate an indirect link between the increasing influence of social norms on corporate behavior and corporate communication. The implications of the findings for corporate communication and public relations are twofold: a) the use of website to communicate with investors, and b) the potential influence of corporate social responsibility performance on corporate communication.

Building Relationships with Investors via Corporate Websites

Recent studies in investor relations literature suggests that, in addition to its contributions to securities valuation, trading volume, and analysts coverage; investor relations could considerably contribute to the bottom line of a company by building long-term mutually beneficial relationships with investors (Hockerts & Moir, 2004; Laskin, 2009; 2011; Penning, 2011). Corporate communication can be an important means of building such relationships. The co-creational approach in organization-public relationships literature advocates for relationship-building communication that engages public (Botan & Taylor, 2004). The findings of this study suggest that corporate website communication has potential for building relationships with investors. These findings lend support to the past research (Callison, 2003; Estrock & Leitchy, 1999; Kim et al., 2011) that investors receive prominent attention on corporate websites. The amount of prominence that *S&P* companies dedicated to investors was manifested on their website communication. Almost all of the companies (94%) surveyed in the analysis had a stand-alone menu for investor relations on the home page. In addition to mandatory information required at federal level, majority of the websites voluntarily provided a variety of supplementary information for investors such as downloadable financial documents (97%), financial presentations (95%) and investor frequently asked questions (88%). Furthermore, the rich information content was provided through hierarchical structures for investors' convenience. For example, the majority of the websites offered a new feature called "Shareholder Briefcase," which allows investors to gather and manage the most related and up-to-date information under one item without searching through the website (e.g., Colgate-Palmolive Co.). These interactive features allow investors to pursue further informational needs in a convenient way and remain engaged in the website during the visit.

One of the most interesting observations of the website content analysis was a new feature called "Social Hub." The social hub feature was included under *Investors* or *Community* menus (e.g., Life Technologies). Basically, this item aims to engage visitors in a dialogic communication with the company through a variety of interactive tools. The social hubs usually included live conversations on *Twitter, Facebook, You Tube, Flicker* and *Scribd*. Although not frequent, "CEO Blogs" where the CEO of the company discusses timely issues and invites visitors to join in the discussion. Another interesting observation that is noteworthy is "Social Rewards" feature. Some corporate websites encourage their visitors to give feedback by offering Social Rewards program that gives redeemable points for visitors' participation in social media activity via *Twitter*, *Facebook*, *Foursquare*, and *You Tube*.

A review of the studies on corporate communication via website suggested that, despite the technological opportunities offered on the corporate websites, companies employ a monologic approach in their communication with journalists (e.g., Callison, 2003; Esrock & Leichty, 1999, 2000; McAllister-Spooner, 2009; Pettigrew & Reber, 2010). Conversely, the results of this study showed that the corporate websites in the sample integrated dialogic principles reasonably well in their communication with investors ($M = .72$, $SD = .08$). This sharp contrast could be explained by two reasons. First, investors are important for large corporations as they directly affect the bottom line. As such, companies dedicate abundant resources to effective communication with investors.

Second, as the base level of information disclosure for corporations is already high in the U.S. (Bushee & Miller, 2007), this area has limited strategic potential for building relationships with investors. However, additional opportunity arises for corporate communication professionals if they find creative and novel ways for providing quality and rich information to

investors. This constant search for being more innovative in addressing investors' informational needs may lead corporate communication professionals to strategically employ the most creative, interactive, and up-to-date features on the websites.

One important implication for corporate communication practitioners is that, being a multidimensional communication channels, websites are mirrors of companies' attitudes toward their stakeholder groups (e.g., employees, investors, customers). Therefore, corporate communication should dedicate balanced attention to each stakeholder on websites. Given that today all stakeholder groups are highly active and demanding, corporate communication should refrain from prioritizing one stakeholder group over others. Creative and interactive communication efforts should be equally employed to media and activists relations to develop long-term and all-encompassing relationships.

The research hypothesis of this study explored the relationship between company size and website communication. The results showed that companies with more employees and higher revenues provide more dialogic features on their website. This finding is consistent with Esrock and Leichty's (1998) study, which found that the implementation of interactive tools and the number of social responsibility items on a web page was positively correlated with the size of a company. Taylor et al. (2001) explained that implementing dialogic communication on websites requires additional staff and more resources. Indeed, the amount of resources that a company has (e.g., additional staff, budget for technologically advanced programs, innovations) is vital for implementing dialogic communication on its websites. However, companies can also integrate dialogic communication on their websites by seeking cost-effective ways to gain feedbacks from visitors (e.g., including surveys, real-person contact information).

Green Firms are More Dialogic

Based on the KLD social performance indicators for environmental responsibility, this study defined green companies as the companies that have passed the threshold for seven environmental strengths (Beneficial Products and Services; Pollution Prevention; Recycling; Clean Energy; Communications; Property, Plant, and Equipment; and Other Strength). The findings of pair wise correlations and a regression analysis showed that green companies integrated significantly more dialogic principles on their website communication than the neutral companies with neither environmental strengths nor concerns. In other words, green companies are more likely to be engaged in dialogic communication with their investors than the neutral companies without such concerns. This finding can be explained by mainly three factors.

Wartick and Cochran (1985) explained that corporate social performance reflects an underlying interaction among the principles of social responsibility, the process of social responsiveness, and the social outcomes. Corporate environmental performance reflects the integration of corporate environmental responsibility and corporate responsiveness to environmental concerns. Therefore, corporate environmental performance can be an evidence for the extent that companies become responsive to investors' expectations by optimizing their behaviors in relation to social norms. It would not be wrong to argue that green companies that optimize their behaviors according to the investors' expectations are likely to differ in their corporate communication from the companies without such concerns.

This study found that green companies, positive environmental actors, are more likely to incorporate dialogic features on their websites. Presumably, to be responsive to investor expectations, green companies would need to initiate an open dialogue with investors through which they can maintain mutual understanding on environmental issues. As an interactive

communication tool, websites offer an excellent opportunity for such companies to facilitate such dialogue. It is also plausible to argue that companies with social responsibility concerns will show greater efforts to provide a pleasant communication experience for their stakeholders than the companies without such concerns.

The concept of corporate environmental responsibility is a liquid term evolving through time and context. Therefore, establishing two-way dialogic communication can provide an opportunity for corporations to involve all stakeholders with the meaning making process about the boundaries of environmental responsibility. Corporate websites can be a means of engaging investors in an open dialogue on corporate issues as well as addressing investors' informational needs. Through dialogic communication, websites can have potential to build long-term meaningful relationship with investors.

Limitations and Future Research

The conceptual relationship between environmental responsibility performance and corporate communication indicated in this research bears a fruitful area of research for future studies. Using the environmental responsibility performance categories defined in this study, future research should focus on the comparison of toxic and green (and/or neutral) companies in terms of their corporate communication. Presumably, *toxic* firms, having environmental concerns such as hazardous waste, ozone depleting chemicals, and agricultural chemicals, are less likely to be concerned about investors' expectations. Having some degree of environmental concern, toxic companies may want to avoid an open dialogue with investors. Therefore, it can be speculated that toxic companies are more likely to adopt one-way communication form in their corporate communication as they are more concerned about disseminating information than establishing dialogic communication with investors. This speculation can be tested by future research.

An insightful topic of inquiry in this context is green companies' communication with other stakeholders such as activists and journalists. This study showed that green companies employ dialogic principles in their website communication with investors—the primary stakeholders of large corporations. Whether green companies employ the same dialogic principles in their communication with other stakeholder groups and the potential difference between green companies and the toxic companies remains unexplored.

One of the limitations of this study is its small sample size. To gauge the relationship between environmental responsibility and corporate website communication, this study only analyzed petro-chemical firms listed in the *S&P 500* Index. Future studies should analyze this relationship through greater number of sample across industries. Studies focusing on the potential differences and similarities among industries (manufacturing vs. transportation) or sectors (e.g., informational technologies vs. health care) may contribute to the current understanding of corporate communication in relation to corporate social responsibility.

Conclusion
"The social responsibility of a business is to increase its profits."
Milton Friedman (1970)

Should firms care about social norms and their potential influence on investors? There has been significant progress on the idea of corporate social responsibility since Friedman (1970) first argued that corporations are responsible solely to their shareholders, requiring managers to maximize profits. However, there is considerable empirical evidence that the investment decisions of a significant body of investors are constrained by social norms. Apparently, this

group is significant enough to make corporate social responsibility policies matter for maximizing profit. Firms are able to modify their environmental policy in response to norm-constrained investors' expectations. Socially responsible investing (SRI) is the intersection where the two perspectives of CSR (shareholder responsibility vs. stakeholder responsibility) can be reconciled. Given the growing financial power and activism of both individual and institutional investors in the past two decades, norm-constraint investors can reinforce the implementation of CSR in corporate organizations. This has profound implications for corporate communication and public relations.

The concept of corporate environmental responsibility is a liquid term evolving through time and context. Therefore, establishing two-way dialogic communication can provide an opportunity to involve all stakeholders with the meaning making process about the boundaries of environmental responsibility. Corporate websites can be a means of engaging investors in an open dialogue on corporate issues as well as addressing investors' informational needs. Through dialogic communication, websites can have potential to build long-term meaningful relationship with investors.

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Expectancy Violations Theory Meets the Global PR Cycle

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Abstract

Judee Burgoon (1993) and her colleagues (Burgoon, 1995; Burgoon & Poire, 1993) developed expectancy violations theory to help explain what happens in interpersonal communication situations when a person expects one message or behavior and experiences something else. Most of the research has been done on issues of deception; that is, when I am expecting you to behave honestly and you choose a message meant to deceive me. It is not a large leap to go from looking at deceptive interpersonal interactions to what happens when people believe the organizations in which they have placed their trust and loyalty distribute what are considered unethical, less than transparent, or deceptive messages as part of their public relations efforts. As public relations has become more of a 24/7 cycle in which people expect immediate responses to their concerns, PR practitioners have had to develop stronger response teams to meet those expectations. The purpose of this paper is to examine how two global organizations and one national organization (Apple, RIM and BlackBerry, and Netflix) have built or destroyed their relationships with consumers in the wake of potential crisis situations.

In the fall of 2011, Apple Computers experienced the death of their founder and iconic figure Steve Jobs. At almost the same time, RIM and BlackBerry experienced a worldwide data blackout for their mobile phones. Finally, in the summer of 2011 Netflix decided to change their brand and image by dividing themselves into two separate organizations. This paper examines the relationship between how each organization responded to their potential public relations crisis situation and how the various stakeholders also responded to the situation and the organizational response. In the Apple case, for the most part, people's expectations were met and they responded to both the organization and others in a more positive manner. On the flip side, the Netflix situation was not handled well by the PR departments and the consumer response was much more negative toward the organization. Finally, RIM and BlackBerry had virtually no response and that appeared to meet consumers' expectations created almost no effect on their organizational assessment.

You and your romantic partner are out for dinner when you decide to say "I love you" for the first time. After building up your courage and making the statement, the response you get is "Thank you." As your body completely deflates and you gather yourself to continue with dinner, it becomes apparent to you and most of the other diners that something unexpected has happened. When we say "I love you" we generally expect the other person to reciprocate with an "I love you" or similar sentiment. We have similar expectations for how we believe people should behave in an organizational setting, whether it is in the classroom or boardroom. Each of these contexts has been examined in previous research; however, what we have examined much less is whether people have similar expectations for an organization/its brand and how they respond when those brand expectations are not met by those responsible for communicating on the organization's behalf—primarily the public relations or external communication practitioners. Thus, the purpose of this paper is to examine what happens when three organizations (Apple, BlackBerry/RIM, and Netflix) encounter potential crisis situations in the latter half of 2011 and meet their publics' expectations to varying levels.

Review of Related Literature

To accomplish the goals set out for this multi-case study, we must first look at the literature/previous research in three distinct areas. First, we look at the expectancy violations theory. Second, we look at what impacts an organization's brand and consumer trust/loyalty in a crisis situation. Finally, we look at why it is important to examine individual cases to develop a broader understanding of consumer reaction to organizational responses.

Expectancy Violations Theory

Originally developed as a theory to explain what happens when one person's expectations of how much space should exist between two people in different types of interactions (Burgoon, 1978), the theory took a leap forward in the 1990s to address a variety of interpersonal communication interactions (Burgoon, 1993). Burgoon (1993, p. 31) defines expectancies as "an enduring pattern of anticipated behaviors." In a sense, expectancies are the scripts we develop in our heads about how an interaction should occur. If we go back to the opening example, we have developed a reciprocity script for what the other person says when we say, "I love you." It started early on when our parents would tell us they loved them and got very excited when we responded with "I love you" for the first time. Each time we responded in the appropriate way our parents continued to give us positive feedback and encouragement. Over time, those interactions develop into a script for showing affection and may become more complex. For example, someone may give you a hug or kiss to accompany the verbal message of "I love you." We eventually incorporate those additional behaviors into our script and now use the enhanced script as an evaluation tool to determine whether someone has met our expectations, violated them in a positive manner, or violated them in a negative manner.

Negative violations occur when our expectations are not met (Burgoon, 1978; 1993). In the opening example, a negative violation occurred when the romantic partner responded with "Thank you" because that was not in anyone's expectations script for how a person should respond to "I love you." Similarly, positive violations occur when someone exceeds our expectations for a given situation. In the opening example, a positive violation might be the reciprocal behavior of stating "I love you" with the accompanying nonverbal messages of a hug and a kiss to meet the person's expectations. The positive violation may occur with additional self-disclosure about how much the partner has wanted to utter those words and has just been

worried about finding the right time and place. That additional self-disclosure may bring the two romantic partners closer together and build a deeper level of trust as the dinner interaction continues.

While the theory originally developed in interpersonal communication and was tested extensively in that arena, it is now making its way into organizational communication and public relations. In public relations, the individual, public, or various publics serve as one interactant who develops a script for how the organization is expected to behave. Once again, an organization can meet, fail to meet, or exceed expectations.

Rationale and Research Question

While it could be argued that an analysis of expectations must focus on the individual-level of analysis such that people are handed a survey and asked to what extent a particular set of behaviors meet, fail to meet, or exceed their expectations. The argument forwarded in this paper is that we have a set of social norms that serve as expectations when it comes to organizational behavior. Thus, there is a generalized script that has been written and rewritten within society to serve as a "generalized other" for appropriate behavior (Mead, 1934/1956).

> **RQ**: In what ways do three organizations (Apple, BlackBerry/RIM, and Netflix) use their publicly available venues to meet their publics' expectations?

Method

To address the research questions, a multi-case study approach allowed the researcher to examine organizations at different points in their history, with different reputation ratings, and different potential crises. Netflix had decided in July, 2011 to split into two separate organizations, which would mean that the current subscriber base would now have to associate themselves with two different organizations and pay two subscription fees to maintain their same level of service. BlackBerry cell phones that use RIM technology experienced a world-wide outage for both voice and data in October, 2011. Finally, Apple had to handle the death of their iconic leader Steve Jobs in September, 2011.

Case Organizations

Netflix is based in North America with headquarters in California, USA. Because they stream video via the Internet, video-game consoles, tablets/computers, and Smartphones, their customer base makes them a global company. Founded in 1997, they currently have 23 million subscribers (Netflix, About Us, 2012). The company is publicly traded on the NASDAQ stock exchange. In June of 2011,

BlackBerry powered by RIM technology is based in North America with headquarters in Ontario, Canada. Because they manufacture and sell cell phones for a variety of cell-phone providers, their customer base makes them a global company. Launched in 1999, the company revolutionized the ways in which people could use their phones to stay connected to others and the world around them (BlackBerry, About Us, 2012). The company is publicly traded on the NASDAQ and Toronto stock exchanges.

Apple, a computer and personal electronic manufacturer, is based in North America with headquarters in California, USA. Their computers and software have been sold worldwide for over 35 years if we go back to when the company was called Apple Computers. The company is publicly traded on the NASDAQ stock exchange.

Procedures and Analysis

To complete this analysis, I worked from a set of assumptions about people's expectations based upon the literature as well as personal experiences and interactions with others who were talking about the incidents at the time. The first assumption is that the organization appears to have considered its publics and how they would respond. Even if the publics do not necessarily agree with a decision, the organization should pave the way so that the external audiences can understand how it got to this point. For example, a local school board asks for a budget increase to bring their technology needs into the current century. While many taxpayers may not agree with a property tax assessment to fund this additional budget, a smart school board and superintendent has laid out a strong argument using a variety of evidence types to help the public appreciate the technology needs of students and the local community they will be contributing to down the road.

The second assumption is that organizations value their relationships with their publics and seek to build and maintain strong relationships with those publics. They comprehend and appreciate the value of dialogue with members of their publics and have moved from engaging in one-way communication to dialogue or two-way communication. Organizations demonstrate this by having a presence on social media that encourage dialogue, developing and actively participating in an organizational blog, and/or a "talk to us" section on the organizational website.

In terms of the analysis, I went and looked at the organizational website, Facebook presence, and general trending information for each of the three potential crises. After looking at these data, they were compared to what members of the various external publics indicated they desired as a response from the organization. Finally, I sought to make sense of the organization's decisions in light of what expectations they may have been seeking to meet or exceed.

Findings and Discussion

This study set out to examine the ways in which three organizations responded to a potential crisis situation. Below is a description of the organizations, their potential crisis situation, their response, and the perceived response from the public. Following the description is an analysis of what impact the expectancy violations appear to have had on the organization as a whole.

BlackBerry/ RIM

On October 10, 2011, BlackBerry phones in the Middle East, Europe, and Asia could no longer send or receive email or instant messages. The outage then spread to the United States on October 12th. The inability to send and receive messages was a result of a server going down at the RIM headquarters. In the United States, BlackBerry phone sales had been decreasing leading up to this event. The primary United States market has always been those employed by the information technology section of companies because they have been considered the most secure means of transmitting information (Svensson, 2011). When the outage first occurred, Americans were not overly concerned about the situation because they were not affected. However, once the outage made its way to the United States and Canada, it was suddenly worthy of newspaper coverage by *USA Today*; it was not until the outage was over that broadcast organizations such as CNN (Pepitone, 2011), ABCNews (Potter, 2011) and FoxNews (BlackBerry Services, 2011) reported on the story.

During the course of the outage, the company posted two press releases. The first press release, on October 10th, dealt with a tag to share or exchange multimedia content with friends and family. The release was for Dubai, UAE, a place where there was no ability to email or message at the time. RIM indicates that they are preparing to release a new version of the software and that only those with particular network operators and specific phone models will be able to take advantage of the new feature. The second press release, on October 11th, announces the fact that Taiwan mobile is now pleased to offer two new versions of the BlackBerry cell phone with upgraded software and hardware. Within the release from Taiwan, they talk about aiming to enhance the browsing and multimedia experiences for their users along with improving localized customer support. While both of these releases present the company in a forward-thinking and future-oriented manner, it is what goes unsaid that may be more meaningful to their customers and potential customers.

Rather than choosing to issue a press release, RIM tweeted the following message on October 11th: "Message delays were caused by a core switch failure in RIM's infrastructure. Now being resolved. Sorry for inconvenience" (Research In Motion, 2011). How ironic that an organization whose customers are already frustrated with their inability to access the internet and exchange email messages would choose that as the channel for disseminating an "apology." While a full apology is unlikely in the 140 characters that Twitter allows, the fact that RIM chose a conference call the next day to indicate that the problem was fixed is also not likely to be perceived by those interested in the company as an appropriate means of informing them about the situation. On Thursday the 13th when service was being restored, the CEO posted an audio message on the corporate website indicating that "they had let many of you down" (Pepitone, 2011, par. 6).

On the surface, one would expect RIM to bend over backwards to apologize genuinely to a customer base that has been dwindling in the United States and Canada for at least three years. Currently, the largest markets for the BlackBerry phones are outside the United States and Canada. If we look at this situation from their perspective, they may be more loyal and willing to withstand the inconvenience created by the outage because their alternatives may be more limited. However, in the United States, those who are in charge of purchasing company cell phones and people most concerned about security remain as RIM's main customer base. This is in part because RIM is still the most secure Smartphone and the costs (both financial and time) associated with switching over an entire organization's cell phone system are too great for most organizations. Similarly, investors' expectations were also not met during the outage as the stock, already down 60% for the year (Pepitone, 2011) and over 80% for the previous three years (BlackBerry Services, 2011). An organization with a low reputation to begin with in the United States did not endear itself to its customer base of the publics that have been supportive of their security in the past.

Netflix

In July, 2011, Netflix announced it was changing its business model from an all-inclusive operation to two separate entities with new names and separate subscription services. Prior to the announcement, the Netflix Facebook page was much more of a fun place to learn about movie- and television-related trivia. On the day Netflix posted its announcement, the entire tenor of the page changed. Over 80,000 responses appeared from customers. What made this interesting was the ways in which "fans" interacted with each other. After the initial announcement, there were no additional comments from the organization until months later when they had another

announcement to make. Embedded in these comments were plenty of complaints about the decision and CEO. Some of the most interesting comments were those with a positive tone to them. Other consumers questioned whether those with positive comments were actually organizational plants to make it appear that at least some of the customers were happy about the situation. Another poster also wondered about the ways in which Netflix was treating its Facebook page, "So Netflix did you demand that all your employees go and like this status?" On Facebook, people have an opportunity to like (thumbs up), or dislike (thumbs down), each post that is made. In this case, there were actually 1,422 likes when it came to the announcement about changing their subscription plans.

While the Facebook page allowed subscribers to comment, the actual Netflix blog on the corporate site was simply a place where information was posted. While the value of using social media is generally considered to be a function of their ability to allow for dialogue and interaction, Netflix chose to use their online presence to revert to the one-way linear models of communication in which the public relations practitioners inject people with a message (Laswell, 1948). Today's social media users expect a response to their online postings and in this case Netflix chose not to use the medium to its fullest interactive potential. In some situations, people just want to make sure they have a place to vent or engage in self-promotion. However, in this situation, it was important to the subscribers to feel as if there position was heard and accorded a level of value by the organization. The fact that Netflix chose not to respond to tens of thousands of posts failed to meet the posters' expectations and ended up frustrating them even more than the original announcement did. There was no formal response on the organization's blog (the post after the announcement was titled "Additional Support for Android Devices"). Similar to RIM/BlackBerry, Netflix chose to take the investor-relations approach to show how they were working in a forward-thinking mode rather than dwelling on the past decision they had made.

At the time of the announcement, Netflix actually enjoyed a high level of support from its followers and ranked at the top of its industry when it came to reputation (Teoh, 2011). Just two weeks after the announcement, Netflix's reputation had not only plummeted, but it had actually fallen so far into the canyon that it was now tied with adult consumer perceptions for Blockbuster, the company with the worst reputation in the industry. Netflix served to make its competition much stronger with a simple announcement and lack of response to the subscribers' concerns. In this case, we have an organization that enjoyed high reputation scores prior to the announcement so there has to be an interaction effect between severity of the potential crisis/lack of response and corporate reputation.

Apple

Prior to the death of Steve Jobs in fall 2011, Apple had plenty of opportunities to practice how people would respond to information about his health. In 2008 when he took his initial medical leave, the company made the mistake of attempting to keep the information behind closed doors. When people found out about his medical leave, the stock dropped as people feared the company could not continue to function without its fearless leader. When Steve Jobs took another medical leave earlier in 2011, the organization was better prepared for it and ready to show they were still moving forward with the product innovations while he was away. It was very important that they insure people trusted the brand as much as they trusted the iconic leader. For the first time, Google overtook Apple on a UK reputation index (Muddyman, 2011) while Apple maintains its top spot over Google on the *Fortune* magazine rankings (World's Most Admired, 2011).

When Steve Jobs died, many people saw him as synonymous with the organization and were still trying to figure out what would happen to Apple now that he had stepped down as Apple's Chief Executive Officer (CEO). Just six weeks earlier, Jobs had stood before the world and stated, "I have always said if there ever came a day when I could no longer meet my duties and expectations as Apple's CEO, I would be the first to let you know. Unfortunately, that day has come" (Kane, 2011, image 1). On the day he died, the front page of the Apple website had a simple tribute to Steve Jobs much like the ones you would see on news stations for fallen soldiers. The website also gave the appearance that the online store was closed for business on that day.

Because so many people believed they knew Steve Jobs as if he were their friend, the Facebook page postings may be even more revealing than what the company did on their website. As one poster put it:

> I was Apple fan long long ago, before there were such things as Apple fans. I'm talking pre-Macintosh days (remember when they were called the Apple Macintosh)? I still have the Apple //e that I bought back in high school, and used right up through college.

> You lead your company through projects that revolutionized the computer world with the Apple II, did so again with the Apple Macintosh, and then had tremendous impact on the portable music, cell phone, and tablet markets.

> Rest in Peace, Steve.

For many, the ability to express their emotions and what it meant to them that Steve Jobs headed a period of electronic innovation was critical. Because Apple provided multiple venues in which people could express those emotions, most would argue that Apple not only met but exceeded their expectations.

Conclusion

This multi-case study set out to examine the extent to which three organizations met the expectations of their consumers/external publics in a potential crisis situation. From the analysis, we can see clearly what happens when an organization has a strong, positive reputation going into the potential crisis situation as well as what happens when an organization has a negative reputation going into the potential crisis. What is less clear is the point at which the severity of the breach of confidence or trust is so great as to diminish or wipe out completely the good will and loyalty that has been created by an organization.

RIM/BlackBerry is a perfect example of the relationship between reputation and brand loyalty. With an already sagging reputation in the United States at the time of the worldwide outage, individual users were ready to jump ship in a heartbeat to the iPhone that was getting ready to release a new version. For this public, the decision was a relatively easy one as they felt they had come to their last straw. On the other hand, you have a set of organizational publics that have invested heavily in RIM and are willing to accept a greater level of inconvenience to maintain their level of security. In this case, the security benefits far outweigh the inconvenience factor and this is not a public that RIM feels the need to placate when something as small as a 24-hour data outage is experienced.

Apple is a perfect example of what can happen when an organization, who has already built up a reserve of good will, exceeds expectations for its individual consumers. In this case,

Apple has already regained its reputation ranking by leapfrogging Google (Horn, 2012). At a time when the United States is seeking transparent organizations they can trust, an example such as this where their expectations are exceeded is rare and worthy of recognition. People engage in that recognition financially as well as through consumer public relations by talking positively about the organization and what it represents.

Implications

       Based upon these findings, I offer four recommendations for organizations as they prepare for and respond to potential crisis situations. First, organizations need to be cognizant of and prepared for potential crisis situations. Waiting to respond to a situation with no background research and/or asking for feedback from actual members of external publics. PR practitioners bring a particular lens to the campaigns and responses that they develop. Without a clear sense of the expectations of a target audience, those same practitioners miss out on an opportunity to develop the strongest response. These behind-the-scenes responses that hopefully may never have to see the light of day should be treated with the same level of research resources as an organization would invest in building or maintaining their brand. It takes a significant amount of time and effort to build trust and only a single mishap to destroy all of that work. Strong research provides the opportunity to craft a response that can minimize the negative aspects of not meeting a target public's expectations.

       Second, as previous research has indicated (Bolkan & Daly, 2009) people expect their complaints to be addressed. While organizations do not necessarily have to solve the problem to their liking, publics expect organizations to engage in effective relationship management practices. That is, complaints, such as those expressed in the Netflix situation, need to be acknowledged so that people feel they are valued by the organization. Even if the organization does not respond specifically to an individual complaint, it becomes critical to make sure it is responding to the general consensus of the complaints. This is crucial when social media such as Facebook, Twitter, or the organization's own blog/website serve as the forum for voicing those complaints. If 5,000 people take the time to complain about the same issue and we conservatively estimate that means 500,000 are upset about it, silence from the organization serves to sever loyalty and the relationship.

       Third, because unfulfilled expectations lead to lower patronage and increased switching intentions (Bailey & Bonifield, 2010) in organizations with neutral to low reputations, building and maintaining good will becomes an ongoing process. Regardless of whether your organization is non-profit or for-profit, having a strong reputation built on good will can help you turn a potential sinkhole into a bump in the road. People are generally willing to minimize the impact of a small transgression or episode that does not meet their expectations if they already have a positive view of the organization and people who run it. This means that they may slightly lower their impression in the short term or cut back on their donations/volunteerism, but will be back to supporting the organization in the long run as long as their expectations are met during future interactions.

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Public Relations and Community: A Reconstructed Theory Revisited (Once Again)

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Abstract

Nearly a quarter of a century has passed since Kruckeberg and Starck (1988) had argued that public relations is best defined and practiced as the active attempt to restore and maintain a sense of community that had been lost because of the development of modern means of communication/transportation; indeed, it's been over a decade since Starck and Kruckeberg (2001) revisited their thesis, proffering a "reconstructed theory" that reiterated their affirmation of the original thesis—only with more urgency because of rapid globalization. The Kruckeberg and Starck (1988) community-building theory has been examined in several book chapters and articles throughout the years (e.g., Kruckeberg, Starck, and Vujnovic, 2006; Kruckeberg and Starck, 2004; Kruckeberg, 1993). More recently, their community-building theory has been further developed and refined into an "organic model" of public relations (e.g., Vujnovic and Kruckeberg, 2010a, 2010b; Vujnovic, Kumar, and Kruckeberg, 2007; Kruckeberg, 2007). This "organic theory" provided the foundation for a normative model of public relations that the authors argued was applicable to all cultures globally, not only for corporations, but also for governments and nongovernmental organizations/civil society organizations (e.g., Kruckeberg and Vujnovic, 2007; Vujnovic and Kruckeberg, 2005; Kruckeberg and Vujnovic, 2005).

This theory and its accompanying normative model were developed in response to the unprecedented social/political/economic/cultural phenomena that have evolved rapidly in the early years of the 21st Century, which are taking global society in directions that are difficult to predict and which unquestionably will be difficult to control. Contemporary public relations practice remains cultural, i.e., each culture has unique public relations needs, but, in turn, the authors argue that each culture has something to offer to the global practice of public relations; public relations is historical, i.e., indigenous histories must be considered in public relations practice, which histories conversely can inform public relations theory and practice; and public relations is ideological, i.e., each ideology must be reconciled in the practice of public relations, but consideration of the gamut of ideologies can also enrich public relations theory and practice globally.

Thus, public relations scholars and practitioners must possess a longitudinal, i.e., historical, understanding of society, as well as a latitudinal understanding, i.e., a global perspective. Public relations theories and best practices must be predicated on this understanding, which is requisite in a 21st Century global, yet multicultural, society in which communication technology has become the most influential and powerful intervening variable that simultaneously permits and encourages a global society through the compression of time and

space, while paradoxically exacerbating social conflicts that are caused by the increasing multiculturalism that results from the forces of globalization. Kruckeberg and Starck (1988) had noted that the United States had become nationalized 100 years ago, if not as a community, at least as a society; at that time, this country also had become resegmentized, not according to pre-existing geographic communities, but rather to the quickly forming vocational/avocational communities to which time and space were not problematic; then began also an inversion that juxtaposed what was private with what was public.

Today, globalism has evolved economically and, to a lesser extent, politically; increasingly, a global society is evolving culturally and socially, albeit with lesser pretense and perhaps no immediate likelihood of becoming a true global community; rather, the world's citizens have in many ways become fragmented into an infinite number of "global tribes," many of them unquestionably dysfunctional (Kruckeberg & Tsetsura, 2008). These "tribes" are creating a dangerous global environment that makes the welfare of citizens worldwide as well as individual nation-states increasingly vulnerable, if not overtly threatened; finally, today's concept of what is private has become so diminished that people's psyches are having difficulty embracing, or even valuing, previous concepts of privacy in their most rudimentary and fundamental sense. A difficult-to-explain-and-predict chaos theory has ensued, replete with conflicting and confused ideologies that have evolved in which volatile "publics" can form immediately and unpredictably, resounding with global repercussions in a world that is inextricably linked in ways that would have been unfathomable even a few decades ago.

This paper examines these global phenomena that most recently have ranged from unprecedented economic chaos, political unrest, and cultural disintegration. The authors will recommend the consideration and application of an "organic theory" of public relations and its accompanying model of practice that recognizes the complexity of contemporary global society and that attempts to deal with this complexity, addressing how public relations theory and practice must contribute to the global welfare in the relationships and community-building of corporations, governments, and NGOs/CSOs—both among themselves and with one another. Such public relations practice must be from a worldview that appreciates: 1) the increasing interdependence of the world, certainly economically and politically but also culturally and socially; 2) the shifts in power and social relationships among the three major social actors of governments, NGOs/CSOs, and corporations throughout the world; and 3) the threat of a diminishing middle class of citizens in modern countries that have long held that tradition and that some scholars (e.g., Chua, 2003/2004) argue is essential to a healthy society.

Introduction

Although this paper's co-author was first unable to capture the citation because of traffic on I-77, he nevertheless heard a silver-tongued book author glibly describe to a skeptical NPR interviewer Feb. 29, 2012, how the world's economic problems could be resolved through the increasing accessibility and decreasing expense of smartphones (T. Ashbrook interview of Peter Diamandis, 2012, Feb. 29). Such technological egalitarianism would ostensibly enable remote villagers in lesser developed countries to access the internet in ways that would allow them to earn better livelihoods. The co-author shared the interviewer's skepticism, if for no other reasons than because of his frequent experience of following motorists who are driving erratically while engaged in conversation on their mobile phones and his need to dodge oblivious students walking zombie-like on campus sidewalks while accessing their 4G networks. The question is more than academic whether communication technology will a) help to assure sustainable and universally prosperous lives in an equally sustainable world, perhaps enabling indigenous peoples who are locked in traditional cultures to achieve 21st Century modernity and a greater level of prosperity, or b) whether communication technology is a beguiling opiate of bread-and-circuses for privileged self-entitled consumers playing "angry birds," i.e., a narcotic that presages the demise of a sustainable civilization worldwide.

Regardless, the world is changing in fundamental ways, largely because of communication technology. This intervening variable is creating globalism, while concurrently exacerbating its obverse, i.e., multiculturalism—together with the accompanying tensions that such multiculturalism creates. Economically, globalism allows corporations to take (natural) resources where they exist, to employ labor (human resources) where it is least expensive and to sell their products in markets that provide the greatest profit. Politically, nation-states are being increasingly threatened, not only by the drones and stuxnets of other nation-states, but also by their own citizens who can easily and virally engage like-minded people throughout the world in volatile eruptions of mass civil unrest. Culturally, values that are globally divergent—and oftentimes conflicting—have no other trajectory than to meet head-on, resulting either in conflict among those having disparate values or perhaps in creating an imperfect melding of these cultures. Such rapid change begs many questions of obvious import:

- Will society (both globally and locally, however the latter may be defined) become increasingly controlled by communication technology and the masters of this technology who own it and, by extension, control us? In the words in which a student in Western Siberia asked the co-author of this paper in 2009, "What happens if someone pulls the plug?" Are these masters of this technology—whether seen or unseen—benign or nefarious? To whom do these powerful, yet unelected and largely unaccountable if not anonymous, masters of the technological universe answer? Relatedly, are nation-states—only a few centuries old as a phenomenon—now obsolete in an increasingly borderless world? What are the implications when ratios of power are changing among nation-states, corporations, and NGOs/CSOs because of communication technology and what are the implications for those who have little choice but to live in modernity?

- If human rights, however defined, are both desirable and ostensibly universal, and if they are largely contingent on the freedoms of citizenry and on the accountability to citizens of the three major social actors of governments,

corporations, and NGOs/CSOs, can fundamental human rights be assured without traditional forms of democracy, i.e., some form of republican/representative democracy replete with checks and balances? Concepts of democracy exist on a continuum; communication technology may bring new forms of democracy, including a technologically feasible pure form of democracy that is reminiscent of the "demos" of the ancient Greek city-states, which could nevertheless exacerbate the dangers of the "tyranny of the majority." If, because of communication technology, the hierarchy of power is flattened, at what point do ostensibly democratic expressions such as the Arab Spring, London, and Occupy Wall Street transcend into mob-controlled anarchy?

- What does it mean to be human in a technological, multicultural, and global society, and in what ways is communication technology changing us as humans? Can and will a global culture ultimately exist? Through and because of communication technology, will perceptions of truth and reality be redefined? Valentini and Kruckeberg (2011, Spring) observe that we live in an ambiguous world in which truths are uncertain and are continually being challenged, while authority in many respects no longer exists.

These are weighty questions that perhaps few public relations practitioners spend their office time pondering. A white paper published in 2011 that identified the opinions of PRSA members presented these yawn-inducing key takeaways: The "essence" of public relations will remain the same; core skills will remain essential; emphasis areas (in skills and abilities) might change; specialization is growing; constant learning is key; distinct tactical, planning, and strategic roles will continue to evolve; and "growing the profession" and supporting specialization will increase in importance (*The Public Relations Professional in 2015*, 2011, September). A crowd-sourced official definition of public relations that the Public Relations Society of America unveiled March 2, 2012—representing 46.4 percent, i.e., 671, of the 1,447 "public" votes that were ultimately cast—resulted in this pedestrian definition: "Public relations is a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics" ("What is Public Relations?").

Presently, the Commission on Public Relations Education is drafting its 2012 report on its recommendations for master's level education in public relations, which will be released at the 2012 International Conference of PRSA and which will identify content areas for public relations practice at the strategic level based on research about existing public relations master's-level education and the perceptions of practitioners and leading employers of practitioners about what such education's content should be.

Inadequacies/ Obsolescence of Public Relations Practice

One must question whether the practice of public relations as it is presently conceptualized and operationalized—and the proficiencies of its practitioners—will be up to the challenges that governments, corporations, and NGOs/CSOs—as well as the world's citizens—will face in the 21st Century. Several inadequacies can be readily identified, not only in practitioners' knowledge and arguably in their skills and abilities, but also in public relations' theoretical paradigms and worldview.

These inadequacies are long-standing and have never been sufficiently challenged and discussed. Valentini, Kruckeberg, & Starck ("Public Relations and Community: A Persistent Covenant," n.d.) noted that one of the deficiencies of 20th Century public relations theories was their failure to peel back layers of inquiry:

> They begin with base assumptions about the three main social actors for which public relations has been practiced: 1) corporations, 2) nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)/civil society organizations (CSOs), and 3) governments. Then there is society itself which has been perceived certainly by Western scholars and practitioners as being relatively clear-cut with assumed values and mores. Seldom explored in the literature have been questions about a theory of society itself, certainly at a global level, save for base assumptions about the superiority of democracy and capitalism over other forms of governments and economic systems.

Also neglected, say the authors, has been a robust discussion of the concepts from which public relations paradigms have been built. Noting that a 21st Century technological, global, and multicultural society may well require new paradigms, Valentini, Kruckeberg, and Starck (n.d.) argue that today's public relations scholars must respond to a different world and must address fundamental questions such as what it means to be human in today's society that is being formed and controlled by communication technology, in which truth and reality are being redefined, and in which hierarchies of power have been re-arranged and flattened. They emphasize that such questions are more than academic. They question:

> … whether public relations can be performed by traditionally prepared practitioners using existing bodies of knowledge, skills, and abilities. Or, perhaps this important work will be performed by those who possess other scholarly/professional worldviews and bodies of knowledge predicated on different paradigms. Regardless, relationships—those specifically identifiable and those more peripheral—will be a key construct in the work of public relations professionals.

In "digimodern societies," note the authors, new forms of democracy may be adopted through communication technology; furthermore, in today's global economic environment, capitalism and perhaps the definition of wealth will certainly face unprecedented challenges as people ponder the relative sovereignty of nation-states and transnational corporations as well as the impact they have on citizens' lives? Kruckeberg and Tsetsura (2008) add that such phenomena raise fundamental questions about earlier social-scientific perspectives.

One might reasonably doubt whether public relations practitioners suffer insomnia in their consideration of a theory of society, or whether their employing organizations would relish paying them to consider such lofty questions during office time; however, there are additional, perhaps less abstract, philosophical issues for scholars and practitioners to ponder, e.g., must the concepts of organizations and their stakeholders be re-examined and perhaps redefined, even to a point of questioning what is an "organization" today and what legitimizes organizations in global society? Relatedly, where does power and influence come from today, and has this power shifted irrevocably?

Organization/public relationships have been the focus of public relations scholarship and practice, but do the assumptions from which they are predicated remain valid, i.e., does OPR as a unit of analysis remain viable, or has this frame of reference become obsolete in the 21st Century; thus, should organization/public relationships remain the primary focus of public relations practice? Organizations in a formalized and structural sense obviously exist, and they undoubtedly will continue to exist; furthermore, such organizations are the ones that pay public

relations practitioners and from whom they reasonably expect quantifiable, i.e., measurable, value-added results. However, organizations' stakeholders and publics—the latter who sometimes have been defined simply as external and internal, or perhaps with somewhat more sophistication have been categorized into a dozen or so generic publics, have become far more complex, dynamic, and interactive—not only in their relationships with organizations, but among themselves. Vujnovic and Kruckeberg (2010a) concluded:

> The historic conceptualization of stakeholders and diverse publics in the public relations literature is unsustainable. With globalization and the compression of time and space and abundant and inexpensive information, it is impossible to predict how publics will form, organize, and respond to organizational activities. Rather, organizations should enter existing global networking organizations and corporations…. This embrace should be considered a tool not just for expanding marketing strategies globally but also to engage in more participatory, democratic interaction through the promotion of conversation. Such conversation can be identified as consummatory—that is, self-fulfilling—communication that offers an immediate enhancement of life (i.e., which can be enjoyed for its own sake) as opposed to instrumental, or practical, communication that historically has been the mainstay of public relations communication. (p. 221)

Vujnovic (2004) called for the practitioner's detached role and relationship with his or her organization, i.e., an ombudsman role that in one sense ideally exemplifies the Grunig and Hunt (1984) two-way symmetrical model, but in another sense diminishes the importance of the practitioner's inclusion in the "dominant coalition." Vujnovic and Kruckeberg (2010b) observe:

> Public relations practitioners historically have not been fully aware—or particularly appreciative—of public relations' larger role in society, or of the greater potential of that enlarged role. The traditional understanding of public relations practice originates from a functionalist and organization-centric perspective in which the practice is seen as a managerial, strategic, and highly structuralized function that is easily quantifiable in its processes, albeit not so easily in the more elusive measurements of "effectiveness"—however this effectiveness may be conceptualized and operationalized. Such perspective has made the articulation of public relations' goals more acceptable to organizations' dominant coalitions that comprise those seeking outcome-oriented business models and to whom only numbers and dollar signs are most often the measures of success. (p. 671)

They conclude that the primary public relations goal of an organization should be to encourage and to promote an understanding of its organizational goals through an interaction with citizens, whose sense of active contribution should be recognized by the organization through implementation and innovation resulting from citizens' contributions, including the organization's acts of social responsibility.

Vujnovic and Kruckeberg (2010b) argue that, although this narrow view of public relations' functions has been pervasive, less dominant paradigms have focused on a more-encompassing role of public relations in society. They warn that the penalty for failure to understand public relations as a practice that is significantly different from that of the dominant paradigm is being exacerbated by globalization. Kruckeberg and Tsetsura (2011) add that public relations must no longer be about persuading publics to align with organizational goals, but about supporting communities. Vujnovic and Kruckeberg (2010a, 210b) observe that social media have become the point of intersection between global and local and will hopefully encourage organizations to bridge participatory gaps by building communities even while keeping their traditional role of maintaining good communication strategies.

From Community-Building to an Organic Theory

Kruckeberg and Starck's (1988) call for the restoration and maintenance of a sense of community as a primary mission of public relations is more possible than ever before because of today's communication technology—becoming even more appropriate given today's communication milieu that has resulted in a complexity that Kruckeberg and Vujnovic (2010, Spring) conclude has resulted in the death of the concept of publics (plural). Vujnovic (2005) said organizations should view society, not as a web of strategic publics that are identified as being of most concern for these organizations, i.e., as strategic publics, but as a larger social system in which organizations can co-exist and seek harmony—the fundamental thesis of Kruckeberg and Starck (1988).

Kruckeberg and Vujnovic (2006, Summer) called for an "organic theory" that recognizes the complexity of global society as well as the threats to society at this macro level, but which is conceptualized differently from earlier models. Kruckeberg (2007) contrasts such a model to the predominant Western model:

> Western models of public relations center the organization and its interests at the hub from which the "spokes" of an organization's communication and relationships radiate outward to satellites of stakeholders. In an "organic model," the organization is not centered so self-importantly. Rather, this model recognizes that each organization is only one part of the social system. And the "general public" is a primary beneficiary of this "organic model" that recognizes an organization's responsibility to all members of society! (p. 22)

This distinction is philosophical, but is far more than cosmetic. This theory and its accompanying normative model were developed in response to the unprecedented social/political/economic/cultural phenomena that have evolved rapidly in the early years of the 21st Century, which are taking global society in directions that are difficult to predict and which unquestionably will be difficult to control. Contemporary public relations practice remains cultural, i.e., each culture has unique public relations needs, but, in turn, the authors argue that each culture has something to offer to the global practice of public relations, including its worldview to be examined and considered; public relations is historical, i.e., indigenous histories must be considered in public relations practice, which histories conversely can inform public relations theory and practice; and public relations is ideological, i.e., each ideology must be reconciled in the practice of public relations, but consideration of the gamut of ideologies can also enrich public relations theory and practice globally.

Thus, public relations scholars and practitioners must possess a longitudinal, i.e., historical, understanding of society, as well as a latitudinal understanding, i.e., a global perspective. Public relations theories and best practices must be predicated on this understanding, which is requisite in a 21st Century global, yet multicultural, society in which communication technology has become the most influential and powerful intervening variable that simultaneously permits and encourages a global society through the compression of time and space, while paradoxically exacerbating social conflicts that are caused by the increasing multiculturalism that results from the forces of globalization. Kruckeberg and Starck (1988) had noted that the United States had become nationalized 100 years ago, if not as a community, at least as a society; at that time, this country also had become resegmentized, not according to pre-existing geographic communities, but rather into quickly forming and sometimes highly formalized vocational/avocational communities to which time and space were not problematic; then began also an inversion that juxtaposed what was private with what was public.

Today, globalism has evolved economically and, to a lesser extent, politically; increasingly, a global society is evolving culturally and socially, albeit with lesser pretense and perhaps no immediate likelihood of becoming a true global community; rather, the world's citizens have in many ways become fragmented into an infinite number of global tribes, many of them unquestionably dysfunctional (Kruckeberg & Tsetsura, 2008). These tribes are creating a dangerous global environment that makes the welfare of citizens worldwide as well as individual nation-states increasingly vulnerable, if not overtly threatened; finally, today's concept of what is private has become so diminished that people's psyches are having difficulty embracing, or even valuing, previous concepts of privacy in their most rudimentary and fundamental sense. A difficult-to-explain-and-predict chaos theory has ensued, replete with conflicting and confused ideologies that have evolved in which volatile "publics" can form immediately and unpredictably, resounding with global repercussions in a world that is inextricably linked in ways that would have been unfathomable even a few decades ago.

This paper has examined these global phenomena that most recently have ranged from unprecedented economic chaos, political unrest, and cultural disintegration. The authors have recommended the consideration and application of an "organic theory" of public relations and its accompanying model of practice that recognizes the complexity of contemporary global society and that attempts to deal with this complexity, addressing how public relations theory and practice must contribute to the global welfare in the relationships and community-building of corporations, governments, and NGOs/CSOs—both among themselves and with one another. Such public relations practice must be from a worldview that appreciates: 1) the increasing interdependence of the world, certainly economically and politically but also culturally and socially; 2) the shifts in power and social relationships among the three major social actors of governments, NGOs/CSOs, and corporations throughout the world; and 3) the threat of a diminishing middle class of citizens in modern countries that have long held that tradition and that some scholars (e.g., Chua, 2003/2004) argue is essential to a healthy society.

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Desperately Seeking Susan—and Santana, Sohna, or Seiichi: Are Universities Adequately Preparing PR Graduates to Practice Globally?

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Abstract

This study peruses available literature to compile qualifications that may be best suited for practitioners in the global world of public relations, and compares those qualifications with recommendations from the 2006 Report of the Commission on Public Relations Education as well as the recent PRSA white paper on the Public Relations Practitioner of the Future. This study will then collect data from a dozen universities on the courses and content they are using to prepare their students to work in the field, assessing those data against the normative framework for global practice suggested in this literature review.

Introduction

The public relations industry has assumed a global face in the past decade or so. A variety of indicators reveal that professionals in the field are increasingly extending their work into the global arena: articles on global public relations programs and activities in various industry publications; increased scholarly research on practices across cultural and national boundaries; Global Alliance for Public Relations initiatives to build greater networks of national professional associations for the purpose of identifying universal standards and practices; establishment of the Center for Global Public Relations at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte in 2009; and numerous other activities. The reach and influence of the Internet also tempts us to proclaim that once anything is uploaded it instantly is global—and therefore anything that is done in the name of public relations surely must be global.

With the widespread discussion around the concept of globalization, it is easy to swim into its incessant tides with little thought as to its mandates, ramifications, and impositions, or even to its long-term sustainability. In reality, whether globalization will persist through time is still very much open to debate. Authors like Friedman (2006) insist that globalization will march inexorably on until it has swept up the entire world, while Micklethwait and Wooldridge (2000), Stiglitz (2002), and other authors have claimed that a whole variety of factors could reduce if not eliminate many of the current forces of globalization. If this occurs, public relations and other industries whose activities are contingent on these societal forces could be made to revert back into an emphasis on mostly domestic stakeholder programs. However, given today's globalized nature and reach of communication, travel, and commerce, it seems unlikely that globalization will be diminished anytime soon; therefore, it seems increasingly important for public relations professionals and scholars to address this worldwide environment in which they operate.

In the past decade scholars have encouraged the public relations industry to seriously address the complexities of globalization. Verčič (2009), for example, suggested that conducting public relations in the global environment opens up significant new challenges for traditional practitioners. He wrote that "public relations in the world stage is the forerunner of the best in public relations. It demands more work in a more complex environment" (p. 804). Molleda (2009) further explained: "Many types of organizations virtually and physically interact and communicate with publics and/or audiences outside their own country of origin to build a dynamic set of relationships. Trade, direct foreign investment, political coalitions, worthy global causes, information flow, and social networking, among other phenomena, are increasing the complexity of these relationships dramatically." Freitag (2002) added, "The result is a vastly redesigned and dynamic playing field with a host of component forces reshaping the traditional public relations strategies and tactics that have characterized practice in the United States and that U.S. practitioners have tended, ethnocentrically, to export and superimpose globally as universal absolutes. This is an approach not likely to meet with success given inherent cultural differences that affect human communication" (p. 208).

The global arena holds a certain fascination for public relations professionals, who too often practice beyond their own geographic comfort zones with little understanding of these aforementioned complexities. Gail Thornton, a veteran global practitioner, noted that many in the field "aspire to global work for the perceived perks—unlimited travel, new experiences and a change from routine tasks. But such work can also be challenging and intimidating," she said. "Typically, many communicators … don't have a comfort level working day-to-day across different cultures and many time zones simultaneously" (cited in Wakefield & Walton, 2010, pp.

31-32). As a result of this lack of preparation, too often they fail in establishing or maintaining significant, long-term communication programs in this expanded environment.

So, if global public relations—or at least practicing public relations in countries other than your own—represents the vanguard of industry activity and confronts much more dynamic challenges, it would seem that the industry should be devoting significant attention to theories and best practices to guide practitioners in this global arena. And yet, if what has just been put forward here is accurate, too many practitioners are far from prepared to function within these complex cross-border environments. An obvious question in this regard should be, where does this preparation take place? And at least one obvious answer, presumably, should be in university public relations programs. As Freitag (2002) argued, "Increased attention ought to be placed on internationalizing both undergraduate and graduate preparation for practitioners…. With increasing globalization of businesses and organizations, a convincing argument can be made regarding the need for adequate preparation if practitioners are to contribute to ongoing improvements in public relations excellence" (p. 224).

This paper, therefore, assesses how current development programs for public relations practitioners address the increased intricacies of the global arena. The paper certainly is not the first to look at the need for global preparation. Freitag (2002), Fleisher (2003), and Cambie and Oi (2009), to name a few, have all proposed needed skills for practicing across national boundaries. What this paper intends to do, however, is to take these calls for certain skills to another level. It first will discuss the skills set forth by these authors, and then it will compare these recommendations to what is written in two industry documents that are currently guiding development of public relations practitioners at universities across the United States and perhaps in other nations, as well. The paper will then make suggestions about where to go from here in enhancing development programs to account for global public relations complexities.

Recommended Competencies for Practicing Across Borders

Freitag (2002) seems to be one of the first to lay out specific competencies for practicing public relations in today's global society. He set forth skill sets in an ascending ladder, with each skill in his model building upon the previous one. In this ladder he proposed: (1) initial course work or training in culture, political and economic aspects, and foreign languages; (2) seeking an international assignment; (3) gaining actual experience in the international assignment; (4) perceived success and satisfaction in that assignment; (5) increased cultural competence arising from that assignment; and (6) additional international assignment seeking behavior.

These recommendations toward international experience certainly were a good start; they follow a path that has typically been trodden by students as they prepared for careers in public relations over the years—these recommendations just move that path into the international realm. The typical path has been to first gain classroom learning in the competencies needed for the practice; the students then test their learning of those competencies in internships that are commonly required in top public relations programs. Those who perform well in those internships often do so because they are satisfied with their work, which quality performance in turn generally renders them even more satisfied and allows them to learn even more needed skills; and then those who perform well quite often gain a greater desire to make public relations their profession of the foreseeable future, enhanced by getting offered a job straight from their internship or, at the least, leading to another good position in the field.

Freitag (2002) pointed out that the foundation of his model is university coursework pointed specifically to the global realm. His model, he said, "predicts that practitioners with no

international experience will be more likely to express the desire to gain that experience if they have acquired the appropriate preparatory background" (p. 223). Molleda (2009) concurred that in his first decade of university teaching, he noticed that "students who successfully complete a course on global public relations are more likely to express their desire to work abroad or represent a foreign interest at home while working for domestic or global communication firms or businesses and organizations. Moreover, those students who achieved an international-type of job made a smooth transition from their academic settings to the industry."

Freitag's (2002) model, while highly useful, falls short of being a comprehensive guide for global practice in that it does not specify exactly what skills are needed, beyond the critical foreign language competency, to set the proper groundwork for this international experience to come. However, other authors have attempted to bridge that deficiency. Craig Fleisher (2003), a strategic management professor in Canada who often emphasizes public affairs research, listed possible competencies needed for international public affairs work. More recently, two London-based communication consultants, Silvia Cambie and Yang-May Ooi (2009), also produced a listing of skills they believe are necessary for the global state of public relations.

Fleisher (2003) rightly asserted that public relations education needs to be recast so that *all* students learn the principles necessary for global practice. "Public affairs officers who get too comfortable in their home nation niches often find it difficult to change their previously learned habits and to respond to the new challenges posed by global forces," he said. He, too, then described the fate of ill-prepared practice in other nations: "The application of principles learned in one's home country to a different nation state does not necessarily result in similar outcomes, and sometimes can have disastrous consequences. In light of this situation, it is essential that today and tomorrow's public affairs managers receive a healthy dose of education, experience and training in matters pertaining to global or international [public relations] practice" (p. 77).

Fleisher (2003) noted that these necessary international principles came not from any primary research he had conducted but from his own experiences and opinions. The principles were laid out over several pages and focused somewhat on the political nature of public affairs—but in summary, they included:

(1) *Intercultural competence* and familiarity with the effect of cultural variations. Global practitioners must particularly understand their own cultural roots before they can really begin to decipher other cultures.

(2) *Language skills.* While English is a more-or-less global language, the inability to speak at least a few languages can still be a disadvantage for global public relations officers. Despite advances in translation software, dialogue with specific stakeholders still is infused with local nuances that only a multilingual speaker can pick up.

(3) *Understanding of ethics in an international context.* As Fleisher (2003) said, "the question of 'when in Rome should we do as the Romans do' remains important…. In light of a number of highly visible ethical transgressions by corporations, it is clearer than ever before that [public relations] managers need to be leaders in establishing, communicating and maintaining the ethical guidelines and consciences of their corporations both at home and abroad" (p. 79-80).

(4) *Nation-specific applications of public relations*—how best practices in community relations, investor relations and other stakeholder relations occur in different nations.

(5) *Managing international consultants and alliances*—while this is a highly practical aspect of the practice, it is nevertheless critical. There are times when every public relations officer must have specialized help from local experts or associations. This is particularly the case when first entering a nation or new market, and, as just mentioned, local expertise can help the

organization build best practices in the various functions of public relations. But how does one learn to best identify and work with such local expertise?

In addition to these recommendations, Fleisher (2003) discussed the importance of various other societal factors—some of which resemble those proposed in the generic/specific theory of public relations conceived largely at the University of Maryland (Verčič, L. Grunig, & J. Grunig, 1996; Wakefield, 2000). Whether Fleisher followed those variables to some extent or produced his own was not clarified; nevertheless, the specific societal factors that he believed affect the practice from nation to nation were listed in the article as follows:

(a) *Variations in political ideologies* and *level of economic development* from one nation to another ; (b) *Public policy institutions*—forms of government, legal systems, public policy processes and recent policy developments; many nations have well-developed bodies of law, while other nations have undeveloped or ambiguous legal systems; (c) *Nature of social networks and activism*—given today's communication technologies, most nations are impacted by all kinds of activist groups pushing for changes to public policy, and many of these groups operate both locally and globally; (d) *Nature of social change*—nations accommodate social changes at different paces (some slow, some more quickly), using different mechanisms (ranging from formal legal systems to militaristic means or even anarchy); (e) *Business-government relationships*—some national governments cooperate with and are influenced by the business community, while other governments keep business affairs separate; (f) *Nature of the media and public communication*—many countries allow for a free media, while others tightly restrain public communication; (h) *Philosophies toward nature*—much business activity greatly affects the ecological environment in a nation; some nations actively protect their natural resources, others see these resources as part of their economic growth.

Recently, the third set of authors, Cambie and Ooi (2009), also discussed the expanding global communications climate and implied necessary skills for public relations practitioners functioning in this environment. In their book, *International Communications Strategy*, the authors claimed that when it comes to capabilities for the global public relations environment, "We are looking at a radically different profile. Our feeling is that some of the skills that have been so important in the past, like producing annual reports or organizing press conferences, will fade into the background. While others [sic.], like the ability to decipher environments … will come to the forefront" (p. 13).

Cambie and Ooi (2009) then outlined some of the critical skills that they see as necessary for practicing across borders—most of which revolve around cultural understanding and the practical considerations of how to identify and interact with international stakeholders:

(1) *Cultural proficiency and facilitating meaning:* "Sensibility will be key, and in particular cultural sensibility," they said (p. 13). "A communicator will need to gain exposure to other cultures, learn other languages and develop a curiosity for other ways of thinking ... a set of skills that will enable us to interpret complexity" (p. 14). Such capabilities will enable public relations officers to "help staff find meaning in a rapidly changing world" (p. 14). Along with this cultural proficiency role comes that of a cultural facilitator. "Corporations will need communicators who can educate them about the cultural background of a certain [stakeholder group] and the best way to address its needs," the authors added (p. 13).

(2) *Understanding of how to share information:* Global communicators will be asked to "harness the knowledge of the different nationalities…. This will require a shift in thinking, a new openness and acceptance of ideas alien to the mainstream culture we have been used to" (p. 14). Theories and best practices are now generated all over the world—many with no connection

to past U.S. theories, which for so long dominated scholarship and practice around the world. Practitioners need to know these widely generated theories and what they mean to the practice.

(3) *Knowing communication styles:* "People in different cultures have different communication patterns," the authors pointed out (p. 15). Knowing these different patterns often requires "an ability to appreciate historical backgrounds and honour experiences that might contradict your way of looking at life" (p. 15). By accomplishing this understanding, a public relations officer should be better equipped to interact with cross-cultural publics.

(4) *"Monitoring trends and widening horizons:* Communicators will be asked to see beyond their normal thought patterns. "Trends influence corporate strategies and the sustainability of a company's business model," the authors explained (p. 14). "It is important to study and understand [the] impact … of trends like alternative energy, virtual education or online publishing … on communication before they become mainstream" (p. 15). Widening horizons and monitoring trends often coincide, they suggested. The globalized environment "will be much more nuanced than anything we have experienced before. We will need to … develop strong antennas able to recognize emerging patterns and interpret information intuitively" (pp. 15-16).

A Comparison: Industry Recommendations

So, with authors offering suggestions about the kind of skills needed for global public relations practice, it seems that many of the recommended capabilities revolve around understanding of cultures and their inherent nuances. Such positioning should not be surprising, as for several years cultural understanding has been contemplated as one of the foundations of effective public relations. For example, Starck and Kruckeberg (2001) proposed, "The sine qua non of this … global community is intercultural communication. One of our major goals should be to promote intercultural literacy among present and future practitioners" (p. 58). Sriramesh (2007) wrote that in our "rapidly globalizing world, our [public relations] field will ignore culture at its own peril" (p. 507). This author too, among others, has noted the importance of intercultural understanding (Wakefield, 2010; 2011). But culture is a slippery concept in the first place (Negandhi, 1983; Sriramesh, 2007), and even when it is discussed in treatises related to public relations development, it begs some basic questions. For example:

- Because practitioners face cultural variety even within nations nowadays, should we assume that this is no different from the cultural variety faced when practicing across national boundaries? If no difference exists, there is no apparent need for discussion of global public relations development. *But what if there are actual significant differences? Does it then become imperative for a globalizing public relations industry to incorporate those differences into development of current and future practitioners?*

- If our globalized environment has rendered all public relations as now global, as suggested by Sriramesh (2007), Verčič (2009) and other scholars, can we assume that the long-standing theories and principles of public relations will suffice for global operations? *But what if global PR practice is so different and more complex that those long-standing theories are no longer sufficient? Do United States academics, particularly, need to start incorporating theories from outside the country into their public relations curriculum so that their students can better understand a global world of practice? Or do we need entirely new theories?*

The basic premise of these questions and others which could be raised should become clear, and it relates back to the title of this paper: Are universities in the United States or even around the world adequately preparing our future practitioners to practice across cultural and national boundaries? Are "same-old" curricula and academic programs sufficient in preparing students for a world of communication that is significantly different from what it was just a relatively short time ago? And are principles for teaching how to practice mostly in the United States not sufficient for those needed for practicing in a more complex, globalized context?

As pointed out earlier, veterans in public relations have already indicated what types of learning is needed for the global world. What this paper will do from this point on is to compare these basic recommendations with what is being proposed by industry associations and accreditation bodies for teaching our public relations students of today and the near future. The intent is not to be critical; this author knows and has great respect for the individuals who sit on these boards and have spent considerable time and energy looking at these issues of student learning. The goal here, instead, is to extend the discussion on what learning is really needed for our current world. Are current teaching programs meeting those needs?

Report of the 2006 Commission on Public Relations Education

The Commission on Public Relations Education is an ongoing commission comprised of educators and practitioners from a dozen professional societies in public relations and related communications associations. About every ten years, the commission presents recommendations on needed public relations curricula to the Public Relations Society of America and the other associations. Its recommendations have been adopted by universities throughout the U.S. and increasingly in other nations (Commission on PR Education, 2006).

The Commission's most recent report, entitled *The Professional Bond*, was published in November 2006. It was a reexamination which attempted to reflect the changes in society and in public relations since the previous report in 1999. Most of the report reads like a philosophical treatise on the state of education, but it did discuss at great length the current global context of public relations, stating, "Public relations has become increasingly international and intercultural in the last few decades…. No academic field on a campus, except perhaps international studies, is more inherently international than public relations. PR curricula should reflect this fact" (p. 15). The Commission highlighted issues such as diversity, transparency, legal and ethical differences from nation to nation, the increasing role of women in most parts of the world, the placement of public relations in varying university departments around the world, and other important factors. The group also philosophized over several issues that could be construed as needs and possibilities related to the environment of globalization:

> (1) *Exploration of theories and principles from around the world*. The report stated:
> Now as never before, the public relations field is influenced by—and has influence
> on—evolving global connectedness (p. 36)…. Many students of public relations in
> countries outside the United States receive more training in strategic management
> than do some students in the United States. The best programs outside the United
> States stress classes in the liberal arts and the social sciences, with an emphasis on
> psychology, political science, marketing and management. Public relations schools
> of thought outside of the United States often emphasize a "relational approach" to
> public relations, as opposed to a "persuasive approach…. And—in a reversal of
> influence patterns—some of these Asian philosophies and theoretical frameworks

are making their way to the United States and affecting public relations theory and practice (p. 37).

Such comments strongly indicate that the Commission supports a global sharing of theories, cultural philosophies, and best practices among universities throughout the world.

(2) *A need for exchanges between universities of various nations.* The report discussed the growing importance of global exchange: "International exchange programs for faculty and students are contributing materially to the understanding and development of global public relations. They are projecting their regional and global perspectives 'one classroom at a time,' thereby having a significant impact on their participants and the profession" (p. 38). The report then mentioned two other exchange processes: first, the importance of educators teaching in nations other than their own, passing on important principles to the students there and then taking new principles from that nation back to their home university; and second, educators who participate in international conferences and associations, passing on knowledge to each other.

(3) *Attention to diversity.* Sometimes diversity is seen around the world as more important to United States scholars than to those in other nations. However, the report did include essential comments about diversity in a global sense, as well. It stated:

> Increasing multiculturalism and the diversification of the public relations field worldwide are creating new opportunities in the classroom and in the global public relations practice, as well as creating a greater need for practitioners, students and educators to be sensitive to diversity issues such as race, sex, age, ethnic origins and religious preferences…. Cultural identity affects how an individual recognizes problems, perceives his or her level of involvement in a situation, and how information is searched for and processed. Gender, physical traits and internalized sex roles remain significant cultural traits, with both limitations and strengths for different individuals. These differences affect the professional development of public relations practitioners (p. 39).

(4) *Ethical standards.* Like with the diversity discussion, the concept of ethical standards in the field also contained a global perspective. The report took a strong universalist stance:

> Ethical conduct transcends geographical and geopolitical boundaries, and a common standard for ethical conduct should apply across different countries and regions. Thus, international ethical standards should be closely examined and followed. Of course, cultural variables must be considered when public relations professionals practice abroad.
>
> However, practitioners should be cautious about determining that questionable practices are "culturally bound." Rather, public relations professionals should carefully examine whether these practices are indeed commonly adopted within a culture and are considered to be ethical by the majority of local professionals. Also, a practice is not necessarily ethical just because it is widely adopted in one or more countries (p. 21).

After discussion of the above principles, the Commission devoted a section to undergraduate education. This contained a listing of important knowledge points for students, as well as skills that will be needed in the job market. Fourteen knowledge points and 22 essential skills were identified. Of course it could be argued that every point on these lists could be seen as global skills; however, only a few can reasonably be argued as specific to working across national borders. These included four of the fourteen knowledge points: societal trends, global and multi-cultural issues, the case for diversity, and various world social, political, economic and historical

frameworks. Ethical and legal frameworks and strategic relationship building also could be construed as global in nature if taught through that broad perspective. Of the 22 skills listed, only two were specific to operating across borders: fluency in a foreign language and applying cross-cultural sensitivity. All of the others, except perhaps technological and visual literacy, have been more or less salient for decades, even in purely domestic contexts.

The Commission also examined graduate-level education for public relations. Although this paper will not delve into a major discussion on this—other than to say there was one paragraph on global public relations—comments from a few sources about the graduate review are instructive. First, the Commission itself admitted that current graduate programs reveal "a hodge-podge appearance of adding public relations courses to existing journalism and communication programs" (p. 51). Likewise, Commission members told the Public Relations Society of America Foundation that "while the number of public relations graduate programs in the United States nearly tripled since 2000, inconsistent curricula and degree requirements may be lowering the perception of the value of this education and is creating confusion for students, educators and employers" (Rymer, 2011). In offering a similar assessment, Commission member Tom Martin (2011) told the Arthur Page Society that one of the areas that could be emphasized to improve the current states of the graduate programs is globalization.

Despite widespread publication of the 2006 report, the extent of progress that has been made toward preparing students for a global world of communications can be questioned (and most likely certain members of the Commission on PR Education would be the first to admit that). The report stated, "An emphasis on globalization, intercultural studies and international programs can now be found in the strategic plans of most universities" (p. 15). It is assumed that the Commission is using mostly anecdotal evidence and the typical sharing of experiences among academics to make such a statement. The report also acknowledged that "expertise in global communication is now increasingly available through professional conferences, workshops, Web-based seminars, blogs and Web sites" (pp. 36-37).

PRSA White Paper: The PR Professional in 2015

In 2009, the Public Relations Society of America began to survey its Leadership Assembly members to obtain their thinking on what the typical professional in the field would be doing a few years from now. The survey team presented the results of the study at the 2011 PRSA conference in Orlando through a white paper entitled *The PR Professional in 2015* (PR Professional, 2011). In this report, the specific effects of globalization received scant attention (less than one page out of 19 total pages), but the data did recognize at least some of the suggestions issued above by Freitag (2002), Fleisher (2003), and Cambie and Ooi (2009).

The committee organized the results into about 20 major competencies to be addressed by the profession for development of its professionals. Of these categories, only one directly referred to the global arena. It stated that professionals should "understand cultures and belief systems" and "be prepared to communicate with stakeholders in their primary languages" (p. 10). Almost all of the respondents indicated that language skills would be equally as or more important in 2015 than today. The report also encouraged practitioners to "learn to be adaptive to stakeholders from different cultures" (p. 10) and to "learn to segment both physical and virtual communities that may cross borders and cultures" (p. 10).

While all 20 of these areas of importance are critical to developing qualified practitioners, it tends to beg the question: If these skills are all so important, and particularly those in the global section—foreign languages and cultural understanding, for example—where are they

learned? Are educators most responsible for helping future professionals understand these criteria? If so, is this being done? Perhaps more importantly, because these suggestions mostly ignore global implications on the practice, does the absence of those implications in the report absolve public relations educators of any responsibility to add global skills into their curricula?

The author's observations on the white paper again are not meant to criticize those respected veteran scholars and professionals who produced it. The team simply conducted the study and reported the results. What may be much more telling are the responses from members of the PRSA Leadership Assembly, people who generally are among the main exemplars in the field. What is portended by their almost complete failure to recognize even the basic facts of today's globalized environment? Or have the principles of globalized practice simply become so incorporated into the traditional, every-day aspects of public relations that they do not need to be singled out by our PRSA leaders? These are questions that certainly deserve additional scrutiny.

Table 1
Comparison of Scholarly Suggestions to Commission Reports on Global Development

*Combined Scholarly Identification * of Issues Affecting Global Practice*	*Industry Commission Identification # of Issues Affecting Global Practice*
• Great need for cultural facilitators and interpreters of meaning and complexities; PR can meet those needs	• *Not mentioned*
• Theories/best practices generated all over the world; must know them and how to apply them	• *Need to explore further and share the best of theories and principles from every part of the world*
• Variations in specific factors matter: *1. political ideologies & level of economic development* between nations; *2. political frameworks*: forms of government, legal systems, public processes; *3. Nature of social networks and activism; 4. Nature of social change—* from dynamic to resistance to changes; *5. Business-government relations*—from cooperation to "hands-off"; *6. Nature of media and public communication—free to restrained*; *7. Philosophies toward nature*	• *Good discussion of political and economic impacts on public relations practice worldwide* • *Limited discussion on social media and the power of local and global activism* • *Some discussion on nature of media* • *Very little discussion on environmental impacts* • *No discussion on government/business relationships*
• Greater need to understand balance between local ethics and global ethical standards	• *Entire section on ethics, with discussion about need to balance the universal and the relative*
• Need better knowledge of nation-specific applications of public relations—best practices in community relations, investor relations and other stakeholder relations in different nations	• *Mention that exchanges of this information is occurring, but limited discussion*
Scholarly Recommendations of Development Needed for Practice in Global Environment	*Industry Recommendations of Development Needed for Practice in the Global Realm*
• *Intercultural proficiency—*includes curiosity for other ways of thinking than your own • *Foreign language competencies* • *Understanding of how to share knowledge between cultures—*openness to ideas alien to our own culture • *Knowing communication styles—* "Different cultures have different communication patterns" • *Widening horizons and monitoring world trends* • *Understanding of ethics in an international context.* • *Managing international consultants and alliances* for assistance in local contexts	• *Both PRSA white paper and Commission report list need for intercultural and language proficiencies* • *Again, mention that exchanges of this information is occurring between students and professors* • *No real mention of differing communication styles* • *Considerable discussion on monitoring of trends* • *Some discussion of ethics in international context* • *No discussion of a need for this practical knowledge*
Universities should also offer: • Initial course work or training in culture, political and economic aspects, and foreign languages • International assignments for students • Opportunities for success in those assignments • Increased cultural competence arising from that assignment; and (6) additional international assignment seeking behavior.	• *Some discussion of global-specific coursework, but probably not enough* • *Considerable discussion of the possibilities for student exchanges and the need for internships*

* Refers to the combined recommendations of Freitag (2002), Fleisher (2003), and Cambie & Ooi (2009)
# Refers mostly to recommendations/discussions of Commission on PR Education or PRSA white paper

Observations and Conclusions

The purpose of this paper was to analyze how university public relations programs are preparing students to work in the globalized environment. Interestingly, when this paper was presented, the title specifically questioned preparation levels in United States universities. The assumption of this author in writing it that way was that universities in other nations probably had a better awareness of and response to the globalized environment, while U.S. universities were still reflecting what is often seen as its typical ethnocentric view of the world (Freitag, 2002; Commission on PR Education, 2006). However, during the round-table discussions of the conference, it quickly became clear that most, if not all, other nations struggle with the same concerns about whether preparation levels are adequate for today's globalized environment.

The paper first examined those four authors who have made recommendations for facing the increasingly globalized public relations environment. It then recounted the 2006 report of the Commission on Public Relations Education, which included considerable philosophical discussion and several recommendations, to determine how much the report recognized the increasing impacts of globalization. In addition, the paper assessed a White Paper, presented to the PRSA Leadership Assembly in Orlando in 2011, that outlined the results of a survey conducted among the PRSA leadership about what the public relations profession might look like in the year 2015. A comparison of what the four authors recommended versus what the Commission and the White Paper recommended is summarized in Table 1 on the previous page.

The author of this paper went into this examination with a somewhat biased view. Based on my own assessment of needs from my personal global experiences (more than 15 years of such practice across more than 25 different national boundaries), I had assumed that the state of preparation for the increasingly globalized nature of public relations is woefully inadequate. The comparison table on the previous page, however, shows that this may not be the case. It can be concluded that scholars and some of the leadership of the public relations industry are at least talking about the needs that the field faces as it moves into that environment. At least the field is talking about the need for practitioners to gain an understanding of different cultures and to acquire language skills and to learn how to be more open-minded and adaptable to new and vastly different experiences than those with which they are already comfortable. The leadership in the field is also looking at greater needs for internships, exchanges, and other experiences that will help students put into practice what they are learning in the classroom and to gain greater familiarity in these international or intercultural environments.

This discussion, however, leads to one real question which is still left to be answered: Is the field putting into practice what its leadership and scholars are discussing? Where, for example, is the industry expecting that students will learn foreign languages? The need is widely accepted, but how many education programs actually require this learning? What about cultural understanding and intercultural communication? Are these requirements relegated to elective courses, and, if so, how many students are actually taking these courses? Given that internships are not easy to come by outside of the United States, how many students are truly picking up international apprenticeships of some kind? Perhaps these questions and more need to receive more than lip service if the field really wants to begin to prepare its practitioners and future practitioners to practice in the global environment.

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Analyzing BP's Twitter Response to the Deep Water Horizon Accident Using Coombs SCCT

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Abstract

On April 20, 2010, British Petroleum (BP) experienced one of the most tragic industrial accidents in history when 11 employees were killed and dozens more injured as the result of an explosion that tore through an offshore drilling rig in the Gulf of Mexico. In the months that followed, BP grappled with the clean-up efforts as millions of gallons of oil spewed into the Gulf of Mexico on the eve of the region's peak tourism season. BP also faced immense reputational damage and needed effective crisis communication to restore this damage with its stakeholders. This study uses content analysis to assess the organization's communication efforts on the social media platform, Twitter, within the framework of the Strategic Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) model.

Introduction

On April 20, 2010, British Petroleum (BP) experienced one of the most tragic industrial accidents in recent history when the Deep Water Horizon, an offshore oilrig owned by BP, exploded in the Gulf of Mexico. The explosion killed 11 employees and injured dozens more. The crisis continued over the next several months as the damaged well spewed an estimated 840,000 to 1.68 million gallons of oil per day into the Gulf of Mexico (Fox News, 2010). Repeated efforts to stop the leak failed, as did preventative measures to keep the oil from reaching the shorelines of Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas, just as the region entered its peak tourism season.

Since the introduction of social networking sites, organizations have sought innovative ways to incorporate their use into their strategic communication planning. Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter have gained international popularity, and these platforms provide organizations with unique relationship building opportunities with key publics. Christ (2005) contended that social networking sites would require practitioners to reevaluate how they facilitate communication and thus their strategies for developing and maintaining relationships with target publics. This shift is most apparent during times of organizational crisis. During crises, social media platforms can provide a controlled means to effectively and efficiently communicate with a large number of stakeholders in a timely manner. This research explores the pivotal role one social networking platform – Twitter – played in BP's handling of the Deep Water Horizon disaster.

Twitter, a nano-blogging platform, was launched in 2006 and provides public relations practitioners with the ability to instantly publish organizational information to more than 100 million users (Oreskovic, 2010). Twitter allows users to send short (140-character) messages, called "tweets." Adding an estimated 135,000 new users each day, Twitter estimates that users are posting 230 million tweets per day, representing a 110 percent growth for 2011 (Bosker, 2011). Tweets are received by an individual's or organization's followers, and tweets can also be accessed by anyone using key word searches on Twitter's homepage. The search feature allows crosstalk between users who may not follow one another. In this regard, the content of a tweet is public, interactive, and it enables individuals to share content around similar interests.

BP had an active Twitter account prior to the accident, but the company was not regularly using the account to communicate with stakeholders. On January 14, 2010, the "BP America" Twitter account was launched, with only 12 tweets having been sent out using the account prior to the "BP Oil Crisis." Before the April 20 explosion, BP used Twitter sparingly and strictly as a one-way communication tool to disseminate corporate information. No efforts were made to engage with followers prior to the Deep Water Horizon explosion, but Twitter became a major public relations resource within a few weeks of the accident. Twitter provided unique and powerful communication capabilities, and BP soon began providing regular updates to its followers, including responses to comments and thanks to individual users for their feedback (both positive and negative). Video, pictures, and links to non-BP controlled information also became regular features in the company's 140-character messages. BP launched a secondary Twitter account April 29, 2010, specifically dedicated to its crisis response in the Gulf.

The primary goal of this research is to test Coombs' Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) model within the framework of this environmental and public relations crisis by identifying the crisis situation cluster and crisis response strategies used by BP. This research will utilize content analysis of BP's Twitter messages (tweets) to identify the crisis

communication strategies and style of BP after the Deep Water Horizon explosion by analyzing its corporate messages via its @Oil_Spill_2010 Twitter account.[1]
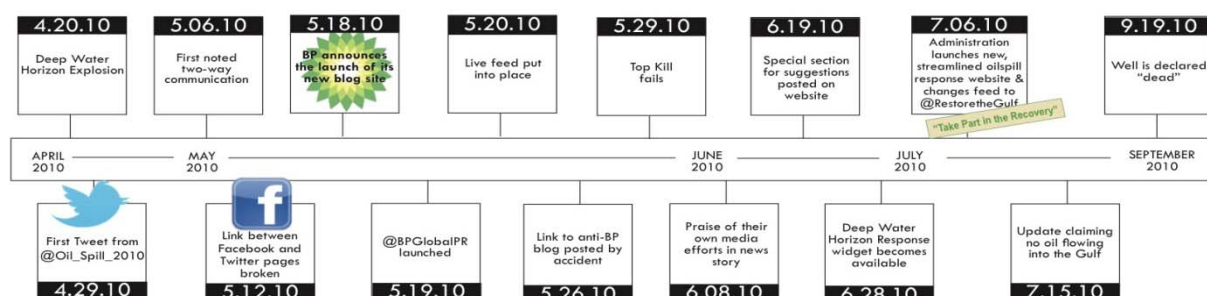
Literature Review

Crisis Communication

A crisis has been sufficiently defined in the crisis management literature. Fearn-Banks (1996) describes a crisis is "a major occurrence with a potentially negative outcome affecting an organization, company, or industry, as well as its publics, products, services or good name" (p. 1). When facing a crisis, the organization's operations are disrupted, and if the situation is not handled in a timely and effective manner, a crisis can threaten the organization's very existence (Barton, 2001; Coombs, 2002; Seeger, 2002). Crisis management efforts should be understood as the organization's efforts to avoid potential crisis situations, and its efforts to effectively manage crises that do occur (Pearson & Clair, 1998). Fearn-Banks (2001) describes crisis communication as "the verbal, visual, and/or written interaction between the organization and its publics (often through the news media) prior to, during, and after the negative occurrence" (p. 480).

Because of the relative newness of social media platforms, research in this area has only started to explore the use of social media as crisis management tools. Wigley and Fontenot (2009) utilized a content analysis to explore the impact of citizen-generated content during the Virginia Tech shootings. They found that the Web sites of cable and broadcast news networks relied more heavily on citizen generated content in the early stages of the crisis and were also more likely to use non-official technology sources than official sources such as Web-based news releases and official organizational statements.

Crisis Response Strategies

Over the last two decades, crisis response strategies were studied comprehensively in both communications research (e.g., Allen & Caillouet, 1994; Benoit, 1995) and management research (e.g., Bradford & Garrett, 1995; Marcus & Goodman, 1991; Siomkos & Shrivastava, 1993), and scholars agree that an organization's reputation will be significantly impacted by its actions (or inactions) and its responses during a crisis (Barton, 2001; Benoit, 1995; Coombs, 1999; Coombs, 2006). Coombs (2006) posits that these crisis response strategies are the means

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[1] While BP eventually utilized multiple social media platforms for its response to the Deep Water Horizon crisis, this study focuses solely on its use of Twitter and only on the @Oil_Spill_2010 account. A request has been made to the Library of Congress for access to the full library of tweets from @BP_America.

through which an organization repairs its reputation, reduces adverse effects, and prevents negative behavioral intentions.

One approach to categorizing crisis response strategies is a defensive-accommodative continuum (Coombs, 1998). On the defensive end of the continuum, there are response strategies associated with the idea to protect organization's image. On the other end of this continuum (accommodative end), there are strategies that address the concerns of the victims and stakeholders. Coombs' strategies can be ordered as follows, from the most defensive to the most accommodative: attack the accuser, denial, excuse, justification, ingratiation, corrective action, and full apology and mortification (Coombs, 1998).

Benoit (1997) suggested three image restoration approaches as crisis communications strategies: denial, evasion of responsibility, and reducing the offensiveness. Denial strategies are used to simply deny the responsibility of the company in a crisis or shifting the blame; evasion of responsibility strategies are used to lessen/minimize organization's involvement in crisis; reducing the offensiveness strategies are used to repair the organization's image by contributing to a lessened perceived offensiveness of the event (Benoit, 1997). A major drawback of this model is that it does not offer insight on when and how to use these strategies. It does not provide clear direction for public relations practitioners on how to choose correctly a strategy in a certain crisis.

Coombs (2006) discussed intensifiers, which magnify a company's reputational damage, regardless of the strategies employed by the company. Coombs (2006) identified both crisis history and relationship history as major intensifiers. Crisis history relates to the presence of a similar crisis in the past, whereas relationship history refers to the quality of communication between an organization and its publics. Coombs (2006) and Coombs and Holladay (2001, 2004) stated that intensifiers had a direct effect on an organization's reputation during a crisis.

Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT)

The drawbacks of other crisis communication models and detailed research into the theoretical framework of crisis communication strategies led to the development of the Situational Crisis Communication Theory. Now one of the most widely tested theories of crisis communication, the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT), was developed and refined by Coombs (2006). SCCT is comprised of three core elements: (1) the crisis situation (including crisis responsibility); (2) crisis response strategies; and (3) a system for matching the crisis situation and crisis response strategies (Coombs, 2006).

Coombs (2004) posits that the first core element, crisis responsibility, or "the degree to which stakeholders attribute responsibility for a crisis to an organization," is a pivotal part of SCCT (p. 268). There are three crisis response clusters in the SCCT model: the victim cluster, the accidental cluster, and the preventable cluster. In the victim cluster a company is a victim of the crisis, including natural disasters, rumors, workplace violence, and product tampering; in the accidental cluster the company did not have crisis intentions in its actions, including technical breakdown accidents, recalls, challenges and mega-damage; in the preventable cluster a company intentionally places people at risk, takes inappropriate actions, or violates laws/regulations, including human breakdown accidents and recalls, organizational misdeeds with or without injuries, and management misconduct (Coombs, 2006).

The second core element of SCCT identifies the crisis response strategies as deny, diminish, and deal categories. Crisis response strategies are used to repair the reputation, to reduce negative affect and to prevent negative behavioral intentions. More accommodative

response strategies, including those that show greater concern for victims, result in the perception of an organization taking greater responsibility for the crisis (Coombs & Holladay, 2004). The deny response option includes multiple strategies: attack the accuser (organization confronts the person or group claiming a fault of the organization), denial (organization denies a crisis), and scapegoat (crisis manager blames the supplier of the crisis) (Coombs, 2006). The diminish response option includes both excuse strategies, in which the organization denies any intent to harm and claims inability to control the events, and justification strategies, in which the organization minimizes perceived damage (Coombs, 2006). The deal response category strategies include: ingratiation, such as when managers praise stakeholders and/or remind publics of the past good work of the organization; concern, such as when managers express concern for the victims; compassion, including when managers offer money and other gifts to victims; regret responses, which express that the organization feels bad about the crisis; and apology responses, in which the organization takes full responsibility for the crisis (Coombs, 2006).

The third core element of SCCT is a system for matching the crisis situation and response strategies. The goal of the theory is to match a company's response strategy to the nature of the crisis situation, as warranted by the crisis responsibility and reputational damage and dictated by the crisis situation (Coombs, 2006). Thus, response strategies are to be selected according to the perceived acceptance of responsibility for a crisis by an organization (Coombs, 2006).

The SCCT model has been applied in various research studies. Fussell, Collins, and Zoch (2009) tested the theory looking at nonprofit organizational actions during crises. Researchers reviewed the strategies that the American Red Cross employed in dealing with major organizational crises between 1997 and 2007. After reviewing 1,585 news articles, they found that American Red Cross used the theoretically suggested response strategies to match the level of organizational responsibility (Fussell, Collins, & Zoch, 2009).

Lee and Lariscy (2008) tested SCCT use in a food health crisis. An experiment was conducted to test the effectiveness of response strategies in a crisis that fell under the category of the accident cluster. According to the SCCT model, diminish response strategies would be most appropriate. However, contrary to the theory and previous research, the denial response strategies were more successful (Lee & Lariscy, 2008).

Besova (2008) tested the SCCT model while analyzing outgoing corporate messages disseminated by JetBlue after the Valentine's Day storm in 2007. Press releases, broadcast messages and Internet messages were content analyzed to identify the crisis response strategiesthat were chosen. The most widely used strategies were from the deal response option, as suggested by the SCCT (Besova, 2008).

While the SCCT model has been used to examine a number of different crises, there is no research applying the SCCT model to explore the use of social media during environmental crises. The role of social media in managing public relations has recently emerged and exploded, yet we are only beginning to learn about how social media are used, in particular during an organizational crisis. This research seeks to take an important first step in testing the SCCT model within the framework of social media platforms.

Method

The following research questions were used to guide the analysis of BP's Twitter response to the Deep Water Horizon explosion:

RQ1: What response strategies did BP utilize following the April 2010 Deep Water Horizon explosion?

RQ2a: What was BP's dominant, or most frequently used, crisis communication strategy from the SCCT?

RQ2b: What was BP's most frequently used directed speaker?

RQ3a: How did message strategies vary among speakers?

RQ3b: How did message strategies vary over time?

RQ4: How did BP follow the SCCT model in response strategy selection?

To answer the research questions, a content analysis was selected as an appropriate method. Budd, Thorp, & Donohew (1967) describe content analysis as a systematic technique for analyzing message content and message handling whereby the analyst is not necessarily concerned with the message, but with the larger questions of the processes of effects and communication. For this case study, content analysis allows for an examination of all corporate crisis communication messages via Twitter to the public through the lens of the SCCT model.

A coding sheet was developed based on Coombs' (2006) SCCT crisis response strategies clusters to guide the content analysis. Each communication message (via Twitter post and linked site) was counted as the unit of analysis. The crisis began April 29, 2010, with the well explosion, and ended September 19, 2010, when the "death" of the well was announced. All available publically released tweets sent from BP's @Oil_Spill_2010 (later changed to @Restore_the_Gulf) Twitter account during the crisis were coded for a total of 1,142 tweets. Tweets, which are limited to 140 characters, can be linked to much more extensive and detailed content. Many of the @Oil_Spill_2010 tweets coded included a hyperlink to another webpage, an online video, a news article, press release or government report. The content of each tweet and the content on sites linked to the tweet, if present, were coded to capture the complete picture of BP's use of Twitter in its organizational crisis response.

BP's tweets during the crisis regularly linked to content from four source categories: news media outlets, social media sites (Facebook, blogs, YouTube, etc.), corporate affiliated/managed websites, and government operated websites. Tweets were coded to indicate the source of linked content, as well as the message category for the content. The researchers identified six categories of messages coming from the Twitter directed site sources: press release, press conference, interview, news story, CEO message, and company stories. For each source and content category, all available outgoing messages were coded (text and video). The speaker on each linked site source was also coded using the following categories: federal government agency, state agency, activist/volunteer, media, those directly affiliated with BP or in charge of the BP Twitter account, the President of the United States, and other (indiscernible speaker).

Coders analyzed each message using the three response clusters and the original ten crisis communication strategies outlined in Coombs model: (a) Deny Response Cluster (Attack Strategies, Denial Strategies and Scapegoat Strategies); (b) Diminish Response Cluster (Excuse Strategies and Justification Strategies); and (3) Deal Response Cluster (Ingratiation Strategies, Concern Strategies, Compassion Strategies, Regret Strategies and Apology Strategies). During coding, a decision was made to divide the original "Justification Strategy" from Coombs model into two separate categories within an expanded Diminish Cluster. After inter-coder tests revealed a clear division of two individual categories within the original Justification Strategy, a "Minimization Strategy" was added and defined as: An organization minimizing perceived damage of crisis. The Diminish Cluster retained the category of justification, defined as: the

rationalizing of an organization's actions. The researchers of this study feel the addition adds greater depth of analysis to the current study.

Figure 2
Strategic Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT)

Response Strategy	*Characteristic(s)*
Denial Cluster	
Attack	Organization confronts the person or group claiming fault of the organization
Denial	Organization denies a crisis exists
Scapegoat	Organization blames the supplier of the crisis on another organization or entity
Diminish Cluster	
Excuse	Organization denies intent to harm and claims inability to control the events
Justification	Organization focuses on rationalizing its actions
Minimization	Organization minimizes perceived damage
Deal Cluster	
Ingratiation	Organization praises stakeholders and/or reminds them of past good work of the organization
Concern	Organization expresses concern for the victims
Compassion	Organization offers money and other gifts to victims
Regret	Organization feels bad about the crisis
Apology	Organization takes full responsibility for the crisis

For each tweet, coders recorded the number or crisis response strategies within the message (rather than a simple 'present' or 'absent' analysis). Thus each message was analyzed for the type of response, as well as the frequency of the use of that response within the message. The number of recorded responses was summed for each individual cluster, creating three scales (Deny, Diminish, and Deal).

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data and answer the posed research questions. Analyses of variance and regression analyses were conducted to present a model of the most significant strategies in BP crisis communication approach to the Gulf Oil Spill.

Results

Research Question 1: What response strategies did BP utilize following the April 2010 Deep Water Horizon explosion?

British Petroleum transmitted a total of 1,142 textual or video linked tweets via Twitter in dealing with the Deep Horizon/BP Oil Spill from April 29, 2010, to September 19, 2010. Tweets were initially sent from BP's Twitter account, but eventually a "Unified Command" emerged, which combined BP's efforts with those of US government agencies (such as the EPA and Coast Guard) and representatives and agencies from gulf coast states. There were a total of 133 Twitter

posts that linked to solely photographic content, with no directly discernable message strategy. Those tweets with solely photographic linked content were not analyzed in this study. A total of 179 (15.67%) tweets were direct two-way communication with other Twitter users. A total of 284 (24.86%) tweets list British Petroleum as the responsible party through Unified Command,

Within the 1,142 tweets with textual or video linked content there were 1,596 crisis response message strategies coded. The message strategies included Ingratiation (n = 433, 27.13%), Concern (n = 331, 20.74%), Minimization (n = 273, 17.11%), Justification (n = 209, 13.10%), Compassion (n = 129, 8.08%), Excuse (n = 82, 5.14%), Denial (n = 74, 4.64%), Attack (n = 36, 2.26%), Scapegoat (n = 17, 1.07%), Regret (n = 8, .50%), and Apology (n = 4, .25%).

Research Question 2a: What was BP's dominant, or most frequently used, crisis communication strategy from the SCCT?

The majority of the message strategies in BP/Unified Command's tweets came from the Deal Cluster (n = 905, 56.70%), followed by the Diminish Cluster (n = 564, 35.34%), and the Deny Cluster (n = 127, 7.96%).

Table 1
BP's Use of Twitter Within the SCCT Framework

N = 1,142 tweets		Message Strategies	Percentage (%)
Diminish Cluster	Justification	209	13.10
	Minimization	273	17.11
	Excuse	82	5.14
Deal Cluster	Ingratiation	433	27.13
	Concern	331	20.74
	Compassion	129	8.08
	Regret	8	.50
	Apology	4	.25
Deny Cluster	Scapegoat	17	1.07
	Attack	36	2.26
	Denial	74	4.64
	Total	**1,596**	

Research Question 2b: What was BP's most frequently used directed speaker?

Representatives from the Federal Government were used most frequently in the tweets from the BP/Unified command Twitter account (n = 576, 50.44%), followed by those directly affiliated with BP or in charge of the BP Twitter account (n = 530, 46.41%), media (n = 15, 1.31%), state officials (n = 12, 1.05%), other unidentifiable speakers (n = 4, .35%), the President (n = 3, .26%), and activists/volunteers (n = 2, .18%).

Research Question 3a: How did message strategies vary among speakers?
Cluster Differences

An analysis of variance was used to examine mean differences between speakers in their use of message strategy clusters; significance was set at the .05 level. Clusters were examined, rather than individual message strategies alone, because the aggregation of strategies within one message allows for better comparison of those groups of speakers with lower numbers. Still, it is notable that some of the distinctions may be attributable to lower numbers. However, it is important to analyze because BP and Unified Command chose to represent their message strategy during the crisis with these speakers.

For the Deny Cluster, the ANOVA revealed significant differences between groups (F = 10.26, df = 6, p < .05). The President (m = 1.3, std = .57), and activists/volunteers (m = 1, std = 1.4) had the highest average mean scores. A Bonferroni Post Hoc analysis of the ANOVA revealed the President's mean to be significantly higher than every other category of speaker, with the exception of the activists/volunteers. The activists/volunteers had a significantly higher mean than every category of speaker besides that of the President and State Officials.

State officials had the third highest mean score for Deny Cluster strategies (m = .25, std = .62), followed by media (m = .20, std = .56), Federal government (m = .13, std = .38), and those directly affiliated with BP or in charge of the BP Twitter account (m =.07, std = .28). Those falling in the category of "other" did not use Deny Cluster Strategies.

For the Diminish Cluster the ANOVA revealed significant differences between groups (F = 10.26, df = 6, p < .05). Those directly affiliated with BP or in charge of the BP Twitter account had the lowest mean score (m = .24, std = .52). A Bonferroni Post Hoc analysis of the ANOVA revealed these scores to be significantly lower than those of the Federal government (m = .70, std = .88), the media (m = .86, std = 1.12), and Other (m = 1.5, std = .57).

No other significant differences were discovered between any of the other groups based on the statistical analyses: State Officials (m =.25, std = .62), Activists (m = 1.5, std =.70), President (m = 1, std =1). Of note, though the mean scores for some of the listed groups were very high by comparison to other groups, the small number of cases demanded much higher mean scores to be considered significant.

For the Deal Cluster, the ANOVA revealed significant differences between groups (F = 45.46, df = 6, p < .05). The President (m = 3.66, std = .58), and activists/volunteers (m = 2.5, std = 2.1) had the highest average mean scores. A Bonferroni Post Hoc analysis of the ANOVA revealed the President's mean to be significantly higher than every other category of speaker, with the exception of the activists/volunteers. The activists/volunteers had a significantly higher mean than those directly affiliated with BP or in charge of the BP Twitter account (m = .36, std = .57).

The Deal Cluster again showed the two groups with the largest number of cases (Federal Government and those directly affiliated with BP or in charge of the BP Twitter account) had

significant differences between one another. Federal Government (m = 1.13, std = .99) had far fewer uses of Deal Cluster strategies than did BP or those in charge of the BP Twitter account (m = .36, std = .57). No other significant differences were discovered between any of the other groups based on the statistical analyses: State Officials (m = 1, std = .73), Media (m = 1, std = .84), or Other (m = .75, std = .50).

Research Question 3b: How did message strategies vary over time?

For the analyses designed to identify changes over time, a timeline of the crisis was divided into 10 periods (P1-P10), with P1-P9 being 15 days each, and P10 lasting 7 days. In the first 15 days of the crisis, 180 tweets were posted. In the second 15 days, 464 tweets were posted, followed by 125 tweets in the third, 59 in the fourth, 76 in the fifth, 95 in the sixth, 43 in the seventh, 45 in the eighth, 45 in the ninth, and ten tweets were posted in the final period. From the highest 15-day period of (P2) to the last full 15-day period of P9, there was over a 90% decrease in the number of tweets posted. The average number of tweets per day jumped from 12 per day in P1, to over 30 per day in P2, as the crisis was beginning and the demand for a response from BP was at its zenith. As the situation stabilized and the possibility for a quick solution evaporated, the average number of tweets per day steadily declined, and eventually dropped to an average of three tweets per day by P9. Overall, after an initial explosion of tweets through the first three periods, the data indicate a steady and precipitous trend of reduction.

Linear regression analyses were conducted. The dependent variable was the number of message strategies within each posted tweet, from each response cluster, and the independent variable was time measured in 15-day increments.

For the Deny Cluster, the regression showed time to be a significant predictor of number of messages within each posted tweet: R^2 = .006, F = 6.55, b = .076, $p < .05$. The same was true for the Diminish Cluster, R^2 = .006, F = 7.20, b = .079, $p < .05$, and the Deal Cluster, R^2 = .059, F = 71.25, b = .24, $p < .05$. Thus, for all types of message strategies, as time went on, an increasing amount of strategies were used within each tweet. Thus while the number of tweets declined over time, the number of message strategies employed within each tweet increased.

Analyses of variance were conducted using each 15-day interval as an independent grouping variable and the mean number of message strategies by response cluster as a dependent variable. For the Denial Cluster, no significant differences were found between any of the groups (F = 1.79, df = 9, p = .06). The overall mean number of denial cluster strategies was M = .11, std = .35. The largest deviations from that mean came in P9 (m = .26, std = .53) and P6 (m = .07, std = .26). Thus, use of Denial Cluster strategies was relatively consistent throughout.

For the Diminish Cluster, significant differences were found between the groups (F = 3.32, df = 9, p < .05). A Post Hoc analysis revealed that the only 15-day intervals with significant mean differences in the mean number of Diminish Cluster message strategies used were: the fourth (m = .79, std = .86) and the second (m = .39, std = .72). Thus, use of Diminish Cluster strategies was relatively consistent throughout.

For the Deal Cluster, significant differences were found between the groups (F = 13.80, df = 9, p < .05). A Post Hoc analysis revealed large difference between multiple 15-day intervals. The second 15-day interval (m = .54, std = .76) had a significantly lower mean number of Deal Cluster message strategies than all other 15-day intervals, with the exception of the first interval (m = .66, std = .74) and the sixth interval (m = .76, std = 1.01). Similarly, the first 15-day interval had a significantly lower mean number of Deal Cluster message strategies than the fourth interval (m = 1.15, std = 1.09), the fifth (m = 1.19, std = 1.00), seventh (m = 1.55, std =

1.01), and eighth (m = 1.26, std = 1.01). These results highlight a trend of increased usage of Deal Cluster message strategies as the crisis wore on. The average mean score for Deal Strategy message strategies from the first 15-day interval (m = .66, std = .74) to the second (m = .54, std = .76), third (m = .91, std = 1.01), fourth (m = 1.15, std = 1.09), fifth (m = 1.19, std = 1.00), sixth (m = .76, std = 1.01), seventh (m = 1.55, std = 1.01), eighth (m = 1.26, std = 1.01), ninth (m = 1.06, std = .91) to the final seven day period (m = 1.4, std = .84) showed a generally consistent upward climb, with the exception of the sixth interval.

Table 2
BP's Tweets Over Time

Period # / Days	Number of Tweets
P1 = 1 – 15	180
P2 = 16 – 30	464
P3 = 31 – 45	125
P4 = 46 – 60	59
P5 = 61 – 75	76
P6 = 76 – 90	95
P7= 91 – 105	43
P8 = 106 – 120	45
P9 = 121 – 135	45
P10 = 136 – 142	10
Total of Tweets	**1,142**

Descriptive mean scores for the number of two-way communications in the 15-day intervals reveal an upward trend across the first three periods, a steady decline across the next 3 periods, and a termination of all two-way communications from P7 until the end of the crisis. The first 15-day interval had a low mean (m = .03, std = .19), which increased in the second interval (m = .25, std = .43), held steady in the third (m = .25, std = .44), then began a decline in the fourth (m = .18, std = .39), the fifth (m = .05, std = .22), a slight rise in the sixth (m = .09, std = .29), followed by a termination of all two-way communications from the seventh interval through to the end of the crisis (m = 0, std = 0.00).

Research Question 4: How did BP follow the SCCT model in response strategy selection?
The decision of cluster usage is dependent upon the type of crisis at hand. In the case of the Deep Water Horizon/BP oil spill it was unclear (especially early in the crisis) whether a mechanical failure (an accidental crisis with low attribution of responsibility) or human negligence (a preventable crisis with high attribution of responsibility) caused the accident. A

preventable cluster is comprised of types of crises that suggest strong attributions of crisis responsibility to the company and severe reputational threat. The SCCT model suggests crises in the preventable cluster should use response strategies from diminish and deal clusters. Because Deal Cluster (n = 905, 56.70%), followed by the Diminish Cluster (n = 564, 35.34%) represented over 92% of the total message strategies used, it is clear BP chose to treat the crisis as a perceived preventable one.

Discussion

The message strategies used by BP during the Deep Water Horizon oil crisis were consistent throughout the time period analyzed for this study. Ingratiation, Concern, Minimization, and Justification were the dominant strategies evident in the organization's Twitter response. Had the researchers not chosen to include the Minimization category, Justification would have been coded as the dominant strategy. By including this category, however, the data makes clear that BP's efforts to minimize the impact and the scope of the disaster were used in concert with attempts to highlight BP's energetic response to the crisis and BP's efforts in the clean-up process (coded as Ingratiation in 27.13% of Tweets, n = 1,596). As suggested by the SCCT model, when an organization is at fault, or stakeholders perceive it to be at fault, the organizational response utilizes the Deal Cluster to communicate its efforts to make the situation right as well as to protect the organization's reputation.

Also significant in the findings in the study was the steady decline in the number of tweets per day throughout the period analyzed, while the number of strategies used within the tweets actually increased. BP's initial tweets indicate its early Twitter strategy was largely reactive, and even haphazard, as the organization tried various communication channels to distribute information quickly to its key stakeholders. Based on the number of tweets in the initial weeks after the explosion, the organization appears to be focused on flooding the "Twitterverse" with information related to the disaster. However, three weeks after the explosion, BP severed the link between its Facebook and Twitter accounts, marking a significant shift in both message strategy and its use of available communication channels.

Nearly one month after the explosion, the most significant adjustment in the BP's message strategy with Twitter accompanied the launch of its new blog. According to tweets sent by BP, the company wanted to encourage stakeholders to use the new blog as the platform for lodging complaints about the disaster, rather than having Twitter followers tweeting directly to BP's Twitter handle. This signaled a significant drop in two-communication between BP and its Twitter followers. In July, the US government took control of the Twitter account and the name changed to @RestoretheGulf. There was no further two-way communication recorded in tweets after this point. It is unclear from available tweets and other sources why this shift in control occurred. Further, it is unclear from the blog whether individuals made the shift from Twitter to the blog to register their complaints, rather than continuing to utilize the Twitter account.

Because of this shift in control of the account, it was not surprising that 50.44% of the tweets were coded as utilizing the Federal Government as the primary speaker followed by 46.41% from BP or its representatives. What is striking from the results of the speaker analysis is the exclusion of information shared from the account that featured President Obama or activists as the primary speakers. President Obama was highly critical of BP's response, as were environmental activist. Thus, the total number of Tweets coded with these parties as the primary speakers comprised less that 1% of the Tweets coded.

While much of BP'S use of Twitter was seemingly reactive and chaotic, showing dramatic changes throughout, the sheer gravity of the crisis facing the company combined with the relatively recent emergence of social media as an integral component in crisis management likely contributed to such chaos. BP also faced a number of intensifiers, including comparisons to the Exxon *Valdez* spill, more environmentally sensitive publics (due to political prominence of the global warming debate), and the recent failures of the U.S. government in disaster response in the same region during Hurricane Katrina. These intensifiers revealed themselves through differing channels and at different points throughout the crisis. There is some probability that these intensifiers influenced shifts in strategy, communication with Twitter followers, message source selection, and more. Finally, one might speculate that senior officials and those with experience in the industry anticipated the longevity of the crisis. It was no accident that the work on the relief wells began almost immediately after the spill began. Early in the crisis, BP estimated that it could be six months before the spill might be controlled. In that event, BP's crisis management strategy in the Deep Water Horizon accident can be understood as weathering an immediate storm with the sending of massive amounts of information and a barrage of message strategies using Twitter, in what was likely to become an enduring crisis. The ever-shifting directions BP took over time can be understood as attempts to placate the general public for as long as possible and to prevent the appearance of corporate complacency.

Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations exist within this study. First and foremost, the directed links for some tweets were to an original website specifically for the crisis that has since been converted to a post-crisis website. Though all of the tweets were preserved, some data were unrecoverable. Thus contextual factors from the original post (such as imbedded advertisements, product mention, recruitment tools, pop-ups, etc…) were altogether lost. The managed websites for BP and Unified Command also changed hands throughout the crisis and underwent multiple renovations. While those changes are reflected in the data, BP and the US government did not explain those decisions regarding the account.

With the proliferation of social media in our society, organizational responses during crises are certain to become more and more dependent on these social networking platforms. BP's corporate Twitter account (@BP_America) would also offer significant insight into its response to the Deep Water Horizon crisis, and future research could reveal similarities or differences between the message strategies used in the two accounts. Future research should also compare BP's use of Twitter during this environmental disaster with other organizations' responses during crises of similar magnitude in scale, duration, and consequence. Additionally, future research should seek to compare these findings with analyses of news coverage of the event and public opinion surveys of current perceptions of the company. Those studies would help us understand how news coverage, the crisis response strategy, the duration of a crisis, and attribution intensifiers from a specific industry work together in shaping public acceptance of, and reputation restoration for, a company during and after a crisis.

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Out of the Frying Pan, Into the Fire: The High Cost of Covering Up Low Deeds

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Abstract

In this paper, the authors analyze a number of situations in which organizations and individuals did—or did not—choose a prompt and proactive response in the face of scandals. The authors examine whether early confession and public engagement changes outcomes for such companies, versus the outcomes for entities embroiled in similar scandals who sought to cover up those scandals. The authors examine several variables: promptness and sincerity of the response; intensity of public response to and public "memory" of the scandal or problem; media coverage of the problem, both in term of intensity and duration; long-term reputations; and long-term profitability.

Introduction[1]

Two political figures are embroiled in a scandal of alleged extramarital affairs. The first politician comes clean and confesses; the other seeks to cover up the misdeeds until he is "outed" by the media or colleagues. After an initial flurry of news articles about the scandal, coverage of the first politician dies down. The second political figure, however, continues to be prominently mentioned in the media and eventually suffers a measurable drop in reputation in opinion polls.

In both of these scenarios, as well as countless others, a public entity has become the subject of a scandal created by alleged misdeeds. Sometimes this entity is an individual—a politician, celebrity or sports figure—or sometimes it is a company. In each case, the party or parties involved have suffered reputational damage as a result of the alleged misdeeds. In many such instances, however, the misdeed itself is only the first mistake. The failure to fully and quickly acknowledge and apologize for it is the second mistake, and this can be even more devastating. Negative media attention may be more sustained. Public opinion can plummet. Key stakeholders may withdraw support, and endorsement opportunities may evaporate. This results in a situation in which individuals and organizations embroiled in scandal are tossed "out of the frying pan, into the fire."

In developing this paper, the authors analyzed a number of pairings in which individuals or companies were allegedly involved in problems, mistakes or scandals that were situationally similar, but with one distinct difference: one of the parties in each of the pairings confessed early and openly to the mistake, and the other did not. The authors examined several aspects of the responses offered by each subject in the pairings: the promptness and sincerity of the response; the intensity of public response to and public "memory" of the scandal or problem; media coverage of the problem, in terms of both intensity and duration; long-term reputation; and long-term financial impact on the individual or company. The authors also evaluated the consequences of full and early confession of wrongdoing or mistakes, versus delaying full confession until "found out." The consequences included spanned three categories:

1) *Media coverage*: How long did the media coverage last? How intense and sustained was it? Was the "slant" of the stories positive, negative or neutral?

2) *Public opinion and reputation*: Beyond the media, what was the reaction of key stakeholders? Did voters continue to support a candidate accused of improper behavior? Did the results of public opinion polls plummet? Did a company receive opposition to operational plans in the form of regulatory interference or activist protests?

3) *Financial fallout*: If the accused party is a politician, did he or she lose campaign donations? If a sports figure, did she or he lose endorsements? If the subject was a company, did it lose sales or stock value?

The High Cost of Low Deeds: Theoretical Framework

Last year, Walton, Wakefield and Hubbard (2011) outlined what happens when public figures or spokespeople lose their poise in stressful mediated moments. In some ways, this paper mirrors that one in that the situations investigated are underscored by similar precursors and outcomes. For example, both papers involve highly public situations and both address the fallout

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from crises or problems. Likewise, some of the theoretical foundations to the situations noted in both papers are similar. A few theories seem particularly salient:

Secondary Orality

Ong (1982) explained that from the beginning of human time, the world has always been dominated by *oral culture*, in which societies interact face-to-face in spontaneous ways. However, around the beginning of the Industrial Revolution of the 20th century, the United States particularly changed to a *print culture*, where control of the message and the ability to document and store memory predominated. When electronic media (radio and television) came about in the succeeding half-century, that print culture control was augmented by what Ong referred to as *secondary orality,* which fosters the control introduced through print culture but increases the intensity of that control. This secondary orality ushered in a tension between the desires of large, mainstream organizations to control messages and reputation and the society's right to know what was happening in these influential organizations. This underlying tension between organizational desires and those of their various stakeholders significantly increases the stakes of communication and, often, leads to crisis situations when organizational leaders sense that their control is slipping away and they subsequently react poorly.

Media Priming Theory

Iyengar's (1991, 2004) discussions on priming offer additional explanations into why crises inflict society. In 1991, he explained that television news contributes to the seeming societal need to vilify public figures who commit misdeeds. He argued that the media frame "blame," or single out who is responsible for a particular problem. By focusing on a person who says or does something that may be widely unacceptable, instead of focusing on the underlying situation, media can avoid difficult but needed debate on specific issues in society. By doing this, media place the emphasis of social problems onto who is responsible rather than on potential solutions. Iyengar (2004) particularly observed this phenomenon in political elections. He noted the idea of "horseracism," where media have increasingly focused on the personalities of the race and who is ahead and why, rather than delving into the issue of importance to the election.

Crisis Credibility

A major factor in dealing with a crisis is the credibility an organization or public figure maintains coming into it as well as that which is gained or lost by the way the crisis is handled. Carrell (1986) noted that credibility in a crisis is assessed by publics who are either directly or indirectly affected by it; he also suggested that "… a crisis incites emotional behavior by everyone related to it" (cited in Newsom, Turk, & Kruckeberg, 2007, p. 330). Because of the emotion which innately underlies crises, it is doubly critical that an organization or public figure react in a way that is genuine and compassionate in order to weather the storm and maintain or build credibility among stakeholders.

Full and Early Confession—What the Media Say

Popular opinion and the media also appear to validate the idea that failure to confess carries even worse consequences than fully confessing a mistake or wrongdoing up front. In fact, in a number of news reports concerning recent scandals, the journalists expressed this belief as part of the central messaging of the piece. This sentiment of "the cover up is worse than the

crime" was found in news reports about scandals occurring in all three of the categories examined in this paper: political figures, celebrities/sports figures and companies. Here are some examples:

Media Reports—Political Figures:

- As U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder prepared to testify concerning an allegedly bungled gun investigation into Mexican cartels and the related death of a U.S. Border Patrol agent, political blogger Michael Haltman posed this question in his blog, *The Political Commentator*:

  "Has Attorney General Eric Holder been playing fast and loose with the facts surrounding his knowledge of Operation '*Fast and Furious*?' In an article on '*Fast and Furious*' yesterday I invoked the phrase 'What did they know and when did they know it?' that was made famous during the Nixon Watergate scandal. I didn't use the phrase that 'the cover-up is always worse than the crime' but that may come into play at some point in time also if it is proven that Eric Holder had lied under oath to Congress concerning his knowledge of Operation F&F" (Haltman, 2011).

- In an Arlington *Sun Gazette* blog post entitled "Lesson of the Day: The Coverup Is Usually Worse Than the Crime," reporter Scott McCaffrey (2012) wrote of a county board that had allegedly been less than forthcoming about the departure of the county manager: "Had the county government just been honest, things wouldn't have gotten so ugly. But when the county government lied—and there's no more accurate way to state what happened—about the circumstances regarding the departure, and then held to the lie even when caught in it, they really looked bad. But, as I noted at the time paraphrasing 'Love Story': 'Being an Arlington elected official means never having to say you're sorry.'"

Media Reports—Celebrities/Sports Figures

- Commenting on the recent action against the New Orleans Saints by NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell, John Mark Beilue (2012) wrote in the Amarillo *Globe-News* that "I can vouch in my own small way that the cover-up is always worse than the crime. New Orleans Saints coach Sean Payton and general manager Mickey Loomis knew that Wednesday after NFL commissioner Roger Goodell brought the hammer down on them in the wake of Bountygate. Because of their complicity, and what he felt like was continual stonewalling and lying by the Saints, his punishment was harsh, much more so than was expected. Payton is suspended for the entire 2012 season without pay, and Loomis for eight games. Defensive coordinator Gregg Williams, who had a pattern of organizing cash payments for injuring opposing players with three different teams, has been suspended indefinitely, and is lucky he didn't get lethal injection."

- Following the cover-up scandal surrounding Arkansas Coach Bobby Petrino and his alleged failure to fully disclose the details of a motorcycle crash in which he was involved, including the fact that at the time he was with a 25-year-old woman with whom he was reportedly having an affair, Joe Fortenbaugh (2012) wrote in the *National Football Post*:

  "And there's the real problem because Petrino didn't just make a mistake. He tried to cover it up by lying to his boss (Arkansas athletic director Jeff Long) ... Have we learned nothing from the scandals that took place at Penn State and Ohio State University over

the last two years? The cover-up is always worse than the crime. In an era when anybody with a camera phone or a blog can expose your dirty little secrets, there are only two things to do when a situation—like Petrino's motorcycle crash—arises that can blow the lid off the secret life you've been living."

Media Reports—Organizations
- In the wake of the phone hacking accusations regarding News International, a subsidiary of the Rupert Murdoch-owned News Corporation, a piece on PBS's *FRONTLINE* noted that:
    "*FRONTLINE*'s Lowell Bergman appeared on *The Takeaway* this morning to reflect on the news that James Murdoch, son of media titan Rupert, stepped down from his role as CEO of News International, the British press arm of News Corporation. The younger Murdoch has slowly been transitioning to the company's New York offices … This move doesn't mean James is going to disappear into the Manhattan streets. Investigations into his role covering up crimes at News International are ongoing. 'Revelations that keep coming out of this Leveson Inquiry … continue to show that the cover-up, as usual, is worse than the crime,' notes Bergman" (Gavett, Stauffer & Mintz, 2012).

- And, in one encouraging example, an official of an organization reportedly chose not to cover up a problem, earning praise for doing so. Damian Mendieta (2012) reported in the February 14 edition of *The Occidental Weekly*, the campus newspaper of Occidental College:
    "President Pamela Gann of Claremont McKenna College (CMC) announced in an internal email on Jan. 30 that the college had been falsifying its SAT scores for the past six years, according to *USA Today*. Further investigation, initiated by Gann, discovered that Vice President and Dean of Admissions Richard C. Vos was responsible for misreporting the school's scores to organizations such as the *Princeton Review* and *U.S. News and World Report* … President Gann launched the initial investigation into the incident after she was told of possible inaccuracy in student SAT score reports, the *New York Times* reported. 'I think it shows tremendous integrity for the president to stand up and say this is what we did and own up to it,' President of the *Princeton Review* of Southern California Paul Kanarek said. 'Because as you know the cover up is always worse than the crime, and she did not make that mistake.'"

Analysis of Pairings

In developing this paper, the authors analyzed a number of pairings in which individuals or companies were allegedly involved in problems or scandals similar in nature, but with one distinct difference: one of the parties in each of pairings confessed early and completely to the alleged wrongdoing—and the other did not. The authors then examined the aftermath of the scandal, and its effects on the individuals or companies, in terms of the three categories of effects mentioned earlier: media coverage, public opinion and reputation, and financial fallout.

Political Figures—Example #1

In 2011, two politicians were accused of similar scandals that led to their removal from Congress. Each politician held a similar position in Congress, both were married, and each was accused of sending inappropriate material to women through the Internet.

According to news reports, New York Representative Chris Lee met a woman over Craigslist using a false identity and sent suggestive photographs and requested a meeting. After the woman learned his true identity, she reportedly contacted Gawker, a gossip website, and gave them the photos and emails. Gawker published the e-mail exchange between the two and eventually released the photos. Once the e-mails and photos had been released, Lee offered an apology to his family, staff and constituents and then, surprisingly, resigned from his position. Noted website Politico, "His resignation was stunning for how quickly it happened. There was hardly enough time for the story to become a full-blown scandal—the picture was posted after lunch, and Lee had resigned before the nightly news" (Sherman & Bresnahan, 2011).

Lee appeared to understand that he had made a mistake and that he would suffer more in the long run if he tried to retain his position. He decided it would be better to immediately resign and get it over with as quickly as possible, rather than allowing a larger scandal to develop—one which would be published throughout the media and last for a long period of time. It apparently worked; because of Lee's immediate resignation, the scandal was intensely publicized for about a week and then all but disappeared.

Contrast this with New York Representative Anthony Wiener, who allegedly had inappropriate online exchanges with at least six women and reportedly sent inappropriate photos of himself to a female college student via Twitter. Once one of the suggestive photographs was released, Wiener publicly denied that he had sent the photos and claimed that he was a victim of an Internet hacker. However, a conservative blogger obtained all of the photographs sent from the politician's Twitter feed and "… began to unveil the photos one by one, from midmorning until early afternoon, [and the politician's] staff seemed paralyzed, failing to answer questions or challenge the authenticity of the images" (Barbaro, 2011).

That night during a news conference, Wiener admitted to sending the photos and apologized for his actions. For nearly half an hour, he described a part of his life that he had hidden from his closest confidants and family members, but he still maintained that he had not broken any laws and that he would not resign. For more than a week, party leaders publicly counseled Wiener to resign because he was embarrassing the party and the scandal was becoming a problem for his colleagues. The news media covered the issue closely, and the scandal was a major topic for every news outlet for a week. Just when the media began to slow down on its coverage of the scandal, Wiener finally resigned his position. This caused another wave of intense media coverage by all news sites that lasted for another full week and did not fully disappear until the House seat had been won by a member of the other party, months after Wiener's resignation.

As noted, these two politicians were involved in similar crises. However, one of them made an early confession of inappropriate behavior but the other did not—and suffered because of his decisions. When a politician is accused of scandalous actions, the first thing the politician must do is to determine whether he or she can overcome the issue and keep the position. When a scandal occurs, it is almost certain that the politician's favorability rating among the public will drop, he or she will lose campaign funds and support, and fellow congressional colleagues may turn against the politician. The media play a large role in this process, and if the politician does not handle the situation properly, the media can even more severely alter the politician's public

image. An analysis of the aftermath of the scandal for each of these politicians in terms of the three categories explored in this paper reveals the following consequences.

1) *Media coverage*: Lee was prepared when the photographs surfaced. He had already determined that he would not be able to survive the attacks from the media and political leaders, and he resigned immediately. He was publicly humiliated in mainstream media for about a week but then walked away from the scandal fairly unscathed. He is now rarely discussed in the media and most people have forgotten the scandal.

   Wiener, on the other hand, was discussed in the media for several months due to the resurrection of the story at different times (during the denial, public apology, resignation and election of a successor). This situation underscores one of the consistent findings of this paper—that one reason media coverage is more sustained for delayed confessions is that the period of time between the problem's appearance and the confession allows for many more public developments in the story, all of which tend to garner additional media coverage.

2) *Public opinion and reputation*. Unlike Lee, Wiener and his staff were not prepared once the images were revealed and did not appear to fully comprehend the reputational damage that would result from Weiner's actions. Wiener initially appeared to believe that he could keep his position and recover from the damage caused by the scandal. Wiener also did not appear to fully comprehend how his constituents, fellow politicians and media would react to the situation. This lack of comprehension about consequences likely contributed to his decision not to resign. He was, consequently, thrust into the public spotlight and stayed there for much longer than might have been the case had he confessed early on. Even though both politicians lost their jobs, Lee was able to maintain an acceptable public image and subsequently stay out of the media, whereas Wiener has been unable to escape criticism about his conduct and judgment.

3) *Financial fallout*: The financial fallout for these two politicians was similar in that they both resigned from their positions and lost their ensuing income.

Political Figures—Example #2

   In May 2011, Arnold Schwarzenegger, former governor of California, confirmed that he had fathered a child with a member of his household staff ten years previously, before beginning his term as governor (Chaney, 2011). Schwarzenegger and his wife, Maria Shriver, to whom he had previously confessed the affair, were by then separated. After an initial flurry of news articles about the scandal, coverage died down and resurged only briefly when Shriver filed for divorce.

   Contrast this fallout to that surrounding John Edwards, a former North Carolina senator and Presidential hopeful who was accused of an extramarital affair in 2007. Edwards admitted the affair but in 2008 denied fathering his mistress's child, and admitted to the paternity only in 2010. Both Edwards and his wife publicly confirmed that he, like Schwarzenegger, had confessed the affair to her earlier; however, he had not at that time admitted to fathering the child. That admission finally came a week before Edwards' former aide Andrew Young, who had originally claimed he was the baby's father, was scheduled to appear on "Good Morning America" to launch a tell-all book (Ferran, Ross, Shubailat & Francescani, 2010).

In contrast to the media coverage of the scandal surrounding Schwarzenegger, coverage of Edwards did not die down as quickly. Rather, it continued to resurge at various points when the story was resurrected—the denial, the partial confession, and the ultimate confession of paternity, and during the periods when the senator's wife Elizabeth Edwards filed for divorce and, in 2011, was dying of cancer.

1) *Media coverage*: On a Google search for Schwarzenegger's name, information about the affair appears no higher than in ninth position, trailing entries about his gubernatorial experience and film career. However, at the time of the writing of this paper, a Google search of Edwards' name revealed mention of the scandal at the fourth position.

2) *Public opinion and reputation*: In addition, Edwards is viewed positively by only 15 percent of voters in his home state, according to the firm Public Policy Polling, as reported in Huffington Post, which noted, "That total makes [him] the 'most unpopular person we've polled anywhere at any time,' conclude the survey's authors" (Stein, 2012).

3) *Financial fallout*: At the time of the writing of this paper, Schwarzenegger has resumed his film career. Edwards is facing potential indictment for alleged campaign finance infractions, including claims that he allegedly used donations to conceal his affair (Hoober, 2011).

Celebrity Sports Figure Public Relations Mishaps

Superstar athlete and entertainment celebrities are seen by many as not only entertainment value but also as role models for themselves and their children. As a result, such celebrities are closely watched, and when mistakes are purportedly made, they are scrutinized. Public opinion and high financial value keep them in the spotlight. Most people see these individuals as invincible. Their high salaries and large, almost cult-like fan followings make them seem immune to the daily problems of the average person. However, as the litany of celebrity scandals shows, celebrities are not impervious to mistakes. Because of the watchful eyes of millions, how they handle the situation can determine whether or not their reputation is preserved.

The following comparisons look at superstars who were accused of making mistakes and their attempts to remedy the situation. Again, the cases analyzed for this paper reveal there is a marked difference in the fortunes of those who promptly confessed to the alleged misdeeds versus those who hesitated or denied the offense.

Sports Figures—Example #1

In July 2003, Kobe Bryant became the subject of sexual assault allegations. Immediately after DNA proof came out that linked the athlete to the victim, the athlete held a press conference and admitted that he had been guilty of adultery, but not rape, as the relationship had been consensual (Silverman, 2003). After an initial wave of criticism from fans and the news media, Bryant has returned to the height of his stardom. During the sequence of events in 2003, he was cooperative with the media while continuing to focus on his sport. His stellar game play commanded headlines, even while the scandal was being reported. After the court case was dismissed, the media almost completely dropped the story, returning to reporting on his sports achievements.

Contrast this with similar allegations leveled towards golf superstar Tiger Woods. In November 2009, the *National Enquirer* reported that Woods had been having an affair. The situation worsened when Woods was involved in an automobile accident two days later, and *US Weekly* released a voicemail allegedly left by him for a mistress. The timing of the accident and Woods' refusal to meet with police to answer questions triggered great speculation. The delay in making a public explanation ceded control of his story to news outlets and celebrity gossip. When his statement came two days later, Woods avoided questions and called the rumors "… false, unfounded and malicious," maintaining that he intended to keep the situation private (ESPN.com, 2009). Not until December 2009, on his website, did Woods admit to adultery for the first time and stated that he would be taking an indefinite leave from his sport. Unlike Bryant, he attempted to keep the situation private and remain secluded from the media. He eventually went public with the scandal via a televised speech in February 2010. His speech was heavily scripted, and the statement came too late to assuage public opinion. In the words of one observer, the television speech "… just reinforces the perception that everything he does is controlled and calculated" (Darby, 2010).

In the aftermath of their respective scandals, Bryant and Woods experienced different outcomes, based at least in part on how they had managed the situation:

1) *Media coverage*: Following dismissal of the charges against Bryant, the media almost completely dropped the story, returning to reporting on his achievements. By contrast, Woods' alleged infidelity and "subsequent fall from grace" was voted by the Associated Press as the #1 sports story of the year (Houston, 2011). Bryant, due to his early use of open communication and initial acceptance of at least some responsibility, clearly came out better in the end. Woods, on the other hand, seemed to make it his goal to avoid the media at all costs. This caused a flurry of speculation by the media since they didn't have "the truth." This made Woods the subject of more negative and speculative stories than would have occurred had he quickly addressed the media. The subsequent level of athletic performance of the two athletes was another important factor in their long-term reputations. Woods clearly hasn't returned to his former championship level of play, while Bryant continues to break records and has won two NBA championships since 2003. When athletes who are the subject of scandal continue to win, this gives media outlets the chance to focus on their athletic feats rather than on their off-court problems.

2) *Public opinion and reputation*. Bryant's standing with fans is as solid as ever, with Associated Press reporter Tim Dahlberg (2010) noting, "… his jersey is a top seller not only at home but in Europe and China." By contrast, a late 2009 survey by the research firm Crimson Hexagon revealed that Wood's reputation had "taken a nosedive" in the blogosphere (Carlson, 2009).

3) *Financial fallout*: According to Dahlberg (2010), "[Bryant's] image has recovered enough that he earns millions of dollars a year in endorsement deals … He signed a contract extension in April worth nearly $90 million over three years to become the highest paid player in the NBA, and *Forbes* magazine estimated that his total annual earnings come close to $50 million when endorsements are figured in." Woods, on the other hand, lost an estimated $22 million in endorsements in the year following the scandal, much of which

sports analysts and other observers attributed to the reputational hit of the scandal coupled with the interruption in his winning record created by his cutbacks in play while he dealt with the crisis (Houston, 2011).

Sports Figures—Example #2

      In February 2003, *Sports Illustrated* reported that Alex Rodriguez was on a list of 104 players who tested positive for banned substances, the year when Major League Baseball conducted tests to see if mandatory, random drug-testing was needed in the sport. Only 48 hours after the report came out, Rodriguez set up a press conference in which he took the route of full disclosure. While he did not appear as apologetic as some reporters would have liked, he didn't hide from the press, even though he may have been forced to come clean. Rodriguez continued to let his play on the field and superstar numbers dominate the media.

      Noted a member of the press corps writing for *Bleacher Report*: "Rodriguez has handled this situation in a way that no other athlete in Major League Baseball has before. To this point, players have either gone down the deny, deny, deny path, or they've taken [another] route and apologized for nothing in particular … Rodriguez admitted that he took the drugs. Even in his statement at yesterday's press conference, he told us what he was taking and where it came from" (Brown, 2009).

      Contrast this to Barry Bonds, another baseball player accused of steroid use. In 2003 he became a key figure in a scandal when his trainer was charged with supplying anabolic steroids to athletes. This led to speculation that Bonds had used performance-enhancing drugs. Bonds publicly declared his innocence, attributing his changed physique and increased power to a strict routine of bodybuilding, diet and acceptable supplements. Multiple sources, from ballplayers to media outlets and even the vice president of a major pharmaceutical company, subsequently claimed that he had used steroids. These accounts have been vehemently denied by Bonds. However, in 2007, he was again in the headlines when he was indicted on four counts of perjury and one count of obstruction of justice in a previous court case. Despite his achievements in baseball, the indictment, coupled with the belief of many that he had not been entirely forthcoming, further tarnished his reputation.

1) *Media coverage*: An important factor is that past reputation can also play a major role in how media depict a celebrity during a scandal. Like Kobe Bryant, Rodriguez was able to leverage his strong level of play in gaining media coverage that focused on his performance rather than on the scandal. He also was seen as a 'good guy' in sports. That fact, coupled with his quick response time, led many observers to believe he was sincere in the steps he was taking with the media and his fans to redeem himself.

      Bonds, though, was already seen by many as hard to love because of his on- and off-the-field behavior prior to the allegations. This perception underscores another finding of the research—that celebrities who already have negative reputations may find it even harder to recover from the negative backlash of a scandal. Although Bonds denied all of the initial accusations, he allegedly committed additional wrongdoing during the event, which led to a prolonged investigation, more negative media and a public even more suspicious of his initial denials of wrongdoing.

2) *Public opinion and reputation*. Rodriguez's full disclosure paid off. During the height of the story, he reached #3 on *Forbes* "Most Disliked in Sports" list, but by 2010, he had entered

the top 100 celebrity list and remained there in 2011. Bonds continued to battle widespread public opinion that he had not been forthcoming about steroid usage. Noted a *Los Angeles Times* article: "Prosecutors counter that Bonds has suffered little from his misconduct and shown no remorse ... 'The defendant has not clearly demonstrated acceptance of responsibility for his offense,' prosecutors said in written arguments. 'In fact, far from accepting responsibility, it appears that the defendant continues to maintain his innocence'" (Dolan, 2011).

3) *Financial fallout*: Rodriguez was estimated by some sources to lose as much as $2 million in endorsements (Goldman, 2010). However, his superstar status superseded negative media impressions and he was eventually offered the biggest contract in his organization's history. The same media estimated Bonds would lose 10 million dollars per year in potential endorsements (Sessa, 2007).

Public Relations Mishaps of Corporations

Just like politicians and sports or entertainment personalities, corporations also can be subject to the pressurized crises of their own alleged misdeeds. At the end of the day, corporations are really no more than a collection of individuals with emotions and reactions, just like those that emit from individual politicians or celebrities. Therefore, like those public figures, corporations also can exacerbate crises if the individual leaders representing the organizations handle their given situations poorly. The research unearthed a variety of such corporate crises, but this paper will focus on four situations.

Corporation—Example #1

A musician traveling on a United Airlines flight alleged that baggage-handling crews had been throwing baggage on the tarmac outside the airplane, including what he thought was his own expensive guitar. Upon arriving at his destination, the musician discovered that his guitar had been broken. After nine months of unsuccessfully seeking compensation from United for the damage, the musician decided to compose and record a music video about his experience and post it on YouTube. Within three days, the video had received more than half a million hits ("Singer's Revenge on United a Hit Song," 2009). In its response, United acknowledged the situation only in interviews and social media—and even then the response came across as highly cryptic and insensitive to the musician. The airline did not address the issue through a press release, a posting on its website, or on its YouTube channel.

In contrast, a popular filmmaker was asked to leave a Southwest Airlines flight after staff determined that he would require two seats due to safety concerns posed by his size. The filmmaker, who had 1.6 million followers on Twitter, lashed out against Southwest in a series of Tweets. That same evening, Southwest called the filmmaker, expressing the hope of remedying his experience ("Kevin Smith Too Fat to Fly Southwest," 2010). In addition to responding to the filmmaker directly with at least eight Twitter replies, Southwest also addressed the public concern through Twitter updates to all of its 1 million followers. The following day, Southwest released a blog post apologizing to the filmmaker. A day afterwards, the company posted another blog post that further clarified the situation and served as another apology to the filmmaker (Cashmore, 2010). The filmmaker noted in a subsequent video of his own that the second post from the airline was much more heartfelt and felt like a more sincere apology.

1) *Media coverage***:** In the case of Southwest, much of the traditional and social media coverage tended to side with the company over the filmmaker, defending the airline's policy and its refusal to allow the filmmaker to stay on the flight. However, little to no media coverage positive to United Airlines was found.

2) *Public opinion and reputation***:** Southwest's quick response time in acknowledging its missteps was crucial in its recovery from the situation. At the same time, United's inability to respond quickly or genuinely led to a more profound effect from the viral video that had been released. In addition to response time being a crucial factor in the outcome, the channels through which the two airlines responded were also important. United, on the one hand, failed to acknowledge the situation through broad social media channels, whereas Southwest responded through the channel in which the complaints first came (Twitter), and through other channels as well.

3) *Financial fallout***:** According to Yahoo! Finance, United saw a 2.4% drop in stock price within the week of the broken guitar video being uploaded (see http://yhoo.it/fryingpanA for a snapshot of United's stock price for the relevant period). On the other hand, throughout the duration of the incident and response, Southwest's stock price actually increased (see http://yhoo.it/fryingpanB for a snapshot of Southwest's stock price for the relevant time).
   Other external factors may also have come into play in this example. Regardless, Southwest is generally ranked higher than United for customer service and quality (Mayerowitz, 2010). These already-formed perceptions could have affected how the media and public viewed the respective situations. Also, United's crisis occurred over half a year before Southwest's crisis. This additional time frame may have given Southwest a better understanding of how to properly utilize social media in times of crisis, as doing this has become a more standardized practice of businesses.

Corporation—Example #2
   In July 2011, Netflix posted a corporate blog regarding pricing changes to its subscription model. The company tried to position the changes as being beneficial to the customer, when in fact the changes would cost customers more if they wanted to maintain the same services. Many customers, believing that the company's comments had not been transparent about the true impact, opted to switch to a different service while, according to some sources, as many as 800,000 dropped the service completely (Bustos, 2012).
   After the backlash from customers, the Netflix CEO posted a blog on September 1 in an attempt to regain the trust of customers. In the blog post, the CEO tried to explain that Netflix needed to move forward toward a digital model in order to adapt to business changes. In this blog post, however, the CEO also announced that Netflix would be splitting one of its services into a separate company. A few weeks later, on October 10, Netflix announced via a press release that it would no longer pursue plans to split services with a separate company. In the press release, the CEO acknowledged that the company had made a mistake in attempting to move too fast with its changes.
   A few months after the Netflix crisis hit, in September of 2011, financial services company Bank of America announced that it planned to begin charging a $5 monthly fee to debit card users. The move reportedly came "…as the cards increasingly replace cash and as banks look for ways to offset the loss of revenue from a new rule that will limit how much they can

collect from merchants" (CBS Money Watch, 2011). The announcement was met with backlash by Bank of America consumers, who, like the Netflix customers, felt that the true impact on customers had not been fully communicated. Because of the customer reaction to Bank of America, other companies that had been testing monthly debit card fees decided to abandon their plans for the additional service fees.

As a result of customer backlash and competitors' decisions not to pursue a debit card fee, Bank of America announced on November 1 that it would not be continuing its plans for a monthly debit card fee. The company also used this opportunity to apologize. The Bank of America COO stated, "We have listened to our customers very closely over the last few weeks and recognize their concern with our proposed debit usage fee … Our customers' voices are most important to us. As a result, we are not currently charging the fee and will not be moving forward with any additional plans to do so" (Kristof, 2011).

In the case of Netflix and Bank of America, the time frame between the announcement and the decision to change the announcement was roughly equivalent. One factor that appeared to work against Netflix, however, is that the company had already announced a price hike in July of the same year. The subsequent announcement may have paved the way for customer concerns and suspicions about higher fees. This underscores, again, one of the findings of this paper—that if stakeholders are predisposed to distrust a company, the consequences of crises may be much greater for that company. When controversies occur, such publics may conclude more quickly that the company is not being transparent or forthcoming, and they may be more inclined to abandon their relationship with the company.

1) *Media coverage*: In a Google search performed at the time of the writing of this paper, references to Bank of America's rate increase did not occur until the bottom of page 3. The first reference to the Netflix issue, however, appeared in fourth place on page 1.

2) *Public opinion and reputation*: Initially, customer opinion of Netflix plummeted, with the *New York Daily News* noting that "The video subscription service's latest blooper reel, released Monday, included an even larger customer exodus than the company had foreseen after announcing an unpopular price increase in July. What's worse, the report contained a forecast calling for more defections during the next few months" ("Netflix Revealed Larger Loss of Customers than Expected in Third-Quarter Financial Report," 2011). While large numbers of customers signed petitions urging Bank of America to revoke its fees, customer loss was minimized as the bank, unlike Netflix, announced its plans to drop the fees before they went into effect.

3) *Financial fallout*: Netflix suffered a major loss due to this incident and temporarily lost more than half of its value in stock price. However, as of February 2012, the company had regained 600,000 of the 800,000 lost subscribers ("A Look at Netflix," 2012). Strangely, stock prices for Bank of America actually rose after the announcement of adding a fee and lowered after the follow-up announcement of dropping their planned fee, though the two may not be primarily related. During the quarter of the announcement and subsequent apology, Bank of America posted a $2 billion net income. And yet, in subsequent months, the company, along with many other banks, lost an undetermined (by the researchers) amount of customers to credit unions and other financial institutions.

Conclusion, Limitations, and Future Research

To this point, the paper has examined several cases where a high profile public figure or major corporation has been accused of a misdeed of some type. The paper examined the reactions of the public figure or organization in each case, as well as sometimes the environment that preceded the case and the fallout from the given reaction. The purpose of the study was to determine whether attempts to cover up a situation would actually exacerbate the problem by, in essence, creating a second more visible and prolonged crisis. For the most part, our assumption about this was correct—the crisis does indeed get worse when cover-ups are attempted.

In analyzing the effect of an issue or scandal—and subsequent attempts to cover it up—a number of environmental factors come into play—previous public perception of the individual or organization, perceived severity of the infraction and the nature of the wrongdoing. Because a high-profile person or company is rarely engaged in only one endeavor or course of action at a time, care must also be taken not to inaccurately link a single problem (or the failure to fully acknowledge the situation) to all subsequent woes. For example, a company that commits and then ignores a major customer service blunder may indeed suffer a drop in stock value, but if this event took place during the recession of 2008–2012, the company was likely also experiencing other reasons for weak financial results.

The instantaneous effect of social media is also a factor in determining the effect of failure to confess. Social media speed up everything—including reducing the time span for public tolerance. In a traditional media environment, individuals and organizations could work within longer news cycles—if a company issue broke first thing Monday morning, for example, the organization had until the 6:00 evening newscast—or at least until the noon newscast—to formulate a response. Today, unless that response is offered immediately, a viral Internet conversation may emerge and move so quickly that the company may never have a voice in the conversation. It is possible, then, that in some cases individuals and organizations are perceived as avoiding a response to a crisis or problem when, in fact, they have simply not been able to get that response out in front of the media. The authors believe that additional research is needed into how social media impact the level of speed and transparency in the public confession of wrongdoing.

Observations and Recommendations

As authors of this study, we gathered examples that could serve as a potential framework to better understand the effects of delaying or avoiding admission of error. As we analyzed these examples, we observed common patterns that seemed to run through the various examples. And, although the situations varied somewhat, we also observed several common truths about high-profile problems—and the acknowledgement of those situations—that appear to apply across the board:

1) *Prior reputation matters.* Transparency in confession is best supported by transparency throughout the relationship between an individual or company and their publics. We noted repeatedly—particularly with prominent individuals—that those who were held in high regard by the public at the time of the issue or scandal were more quickly forgiven—even if their admission of error and redress of wrongs was not immediate. This reaffirms the concept of "crisis credibility" described by Carrell (1986) in the literature review (cited in Newsom, Turk, & Kruckeberg, 2007).

2) *In the wake of a problem or crisis, even the most highly-regarded person or company will received some public censure.* In today's social context of transparency and high accountability, censure will certainly come, and apologies and corrections will be expected, as per Iyengar's (1991) media priming theory in the literature review.

3) *Problems beget problems.* One reason media coverage is more sustained for delayed confessions is that the period of time between the problem's appearance and the confession allows for many more public developments in the story, all of which tend to garner additional media coverage.

4) *When navigating through a high-profile issue, the ability to continue focusing on core competencies or abilities is critical.* In these analyses, the authors noted time and again that the scandal-ridden sports star who continued to play well, or the company that continued to provide good customer service on other fronts, weathered the accusations of poor behavior better. The authors postulate that this occurs for two reasons—one, that good performance is noted and applauded by the public and results in more favorable public sentiment, and second, that when a person or company is doing other newsworthy things, media coverage of the problem or alleged wrongdoing is somewhat balanced out by corresponding media reports of good games, good products, good financial performance or good deeds.

5) *Those who learn from the mistakes of others tend to manage their own mistakes better.* In several of the pairings, there was a relatively short time gap between the issue encountered by the first entity in the pairing and the issue encountered by the second entity. It seemed evident from the analysis that in many of these cases, the entities /individuals may have learned from the mistakes of others, taking those mistakes—and their consequences—into consideration in formulating their own responses to problems or scandals.

Limitations of the Study

As with most studies, this investigation had some limitations in execution. First, the units of analysis under study, the high profile cases we examined, came solely from available media coverage. These sources, of course, can be biased, inaccurate or incomplete. Nevertheless, we believed that these sources were still legitimate because media coverage is well documented for setting agendas (McCombs & Shaw, 1972) and framing public opinion (Iyengar, 1991), and that, really, is what we were investigating here—the public fallout from incidents based on news coverage or social media discussion. Therefore, we believed that bias or inaccuracy in any of the reports was just a natural part of the process, and acceptable for our investigation.

Another possible limitation was the involvement of human judgment in setting the criteria by which these situations should be investigated. Having each been previously involved in corporate public relations for many years, we believed that the types of crises investigated here certainly were influenced by media or social media coverage, both in terms of what people were able to notice with each situation and how they responded to it. Each incident naturally generated public opinion and affected reputation, and this, in each case, led to some level of financial fallout. However, it is certainly possible that other factors could also be at work in each case, factors which were not accounted for in our study. Some variables worth future exploration have been identified through the course of our examination: the extent of good will a public figure or organization carries into a crisis; the sincerity or transparency a public figure or

organization displays during the crisis; how quickly the person or organization acknowledges possible wrong-doing; and the type or extent of apology given, and under what circumstances or through which media, just to name a few possible variables which could be studied.

Final Words

Politicians, high-profile athletes and celebrities, and organizational leaders are just like the rest of us—all imperfect human beings with egos, insecurities and emotions. Unlike the rest of us, however, these types of individuals live in an atmosphere of daily public scrutiny. When the inevitable occurs and one of these individuals is accused of a misdeed by today's ever-present traditional and social media, it creates a crisis for that individual or the organization he or she represents. The critical issue at that point becomes how the subject responds to the situation. The results of this study suggest that if the response is quick, transparent and sincere, the high-profile individual or organization will likely be able to recover previous stature, or at least close to it; however, if the response is delayed and comes across as negative or defensive, then the crisis will likely be inflamed and linger much longer, with increasingly negative consequences as a result.

Above all, the lesson illuminated by this study is that the cost of covering up or failing to admit mistakes is indeed high, and that people and entities involved in such situations make the best ethical and business choices, avoid stakeholder conflict and minimize long-term reputational damage when they come clean, thereby avoiding jumping out of the frying pan and into the fire.

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Advertising Value Equivalence – PR's Illegitimate Offspring

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Abstract

Public relations measurement and evaluation have long been major practice subjects. From the late 1970s onwards they have been identified as an important issue for research and practice implementation (McElreath, 1980, 1989; Synnott & McKie, 1997, Watson & Noble 2007; Watson 2008). The evolution of public relations measurement starts much earlier, with some suggesting that media monitoring practices can be identified from the late 18th century onwards (Lamme & Miller, 2010).

Although the academic approach to measurement and evaluation has mostly favoured social science methodologies (Broom & Dozier 1990, Michaelson & Stacks 2011), there has been persistent and widespread practice use of Advertising Value Equivalence (AVE) to express the value of public relations activity for decades. Recent data (Daniels & Gaunt, 2009) found that AVE was used by 35% of a large international sample of practitioners.

Early significant US practitioners, including Lee and Page, instituted media monitoring of programme outputs and AT&T developed sophisticated opinion researching to guide and monitor its communication activity (Cutlip 1994). Literature in the 1930s and 1940s indicate that these practices were extant, especially basic monitoring of media coverage (Batchelor, 1938).

However, there are indications that AVE was in use from the 1940s onward. Plackard and Blackmon (1947) refer to it in the US and provide an example of its calculation. In the UK, the first warning against AVE came in a 1949 edition of the IPR Journal (J. L'Etang, personal communication, January 10, 2011). Both sources thus indicate it was an established practice by mid-century, although it did not surface in professional or quasi-academic literature till the late 1960s. AVE was further operationalized by the emergence of computer based analysis, such as offered by PR Data, in the mid-1960s (Tirone, 1977). From that decade onwards, its use became widespread, as indicated by industry coverage of awards and case studies and by award case studies.

Latterly, AVE has been directly challenged by the Barcelona Declaration's Principle 5 which stated that "AVEs are Not the Value of Public Relations" (AMEC, 2010). It added that AVEs "do not measure the value of public relations and do not inform future activity; they measure the cost of media space and are rejected as a concept to value public relations." Time will tell whether AVE is replaced by other, valid metrics.

This paper investigates the evolution of AVE, which has long been damned as illegitimate, and postulates whether it arose from clippings agencies, advertising planning practices or from other influences on public relations.

Introduction

AVE is a disputed method of calculating the value of public relations activity in the form of editorial publicity. "AVEs are calculated by multiplying the column centimetres of editorial print coverage and seconds of broadcast publicity by the respective media advertising rates. In most applications, the total amount of coverage is 'valued' as if it was advertising, irrespective of its tone and content" (Macnamara, 2008, p. 1). Although widely used by practitioners, it has never been considered to be a valued research method in academic literature (Watson & Noble, 2007). Some commentators are highly critical of it. McKeown (1995) describes it as "an early attempt to assign spurious monetary values to media relations activities" (p. 149) whilst Philips (2001) refers to it as "voodoo", "make-believe" and "inventive nonsense" (p. 227). However, it is widely used by practitioners, mostly in product-oriented publicity activity. This author recently judged regional public relations awards in the UK (December 2011) and found that the vast majority of entries were setting objectives and measuring results in terms of AVE.

Public relations measurement and evaluation have long been important practice topics. From the late 1970s onwards they have been identified as an important issue for research and practice implementation (McElreath, 1980, 1989; White & Blamphin, 1994; Synnott & McKie, 1997; Watson & Noble 2007; Watson 2008). The evolution of public relations measurement starts much earlier, with some suggesting that media monitoring practices can be identified from the late 18th century onwards (Lamme & Miller, 2010). Although the academic approach to measurement and evaluation has mostly favoured social science methodologies (Broom & Dozier, 1990, Michaelson & Stacks, 2011), there has been persistent and widespread use of Advertising Value Equivalence (AVE) by practitioners to express the value of public relations activity for decades.

In July 2010, the public relations industry began the process of barring future use of Advertising Value Equivalence (AVE) as a methodology for the measurement of public relations effectiveness with the adoption of the Barcelona Principles for PR Measurement (AMEC, 2010). In the following year, the International Association for the Measurement and Evaluation of Communication (AMEC) used the term "outlawed" (AMEC, 2011). In this set of seven principles supported by 92% of delegates at the Second European Summit on Measurement held in Barcelona in June 2010, principle 5 was that: "AVEs are not the value of public relations". The statement supporting this principle said:

> Advertising Value Equivalents (AVEs) do not measure the value of public relations and do not inform future activity; they measure the cost of media space and are rejected as a concept to value public relations (AMEC, 2010).

This is the public relations equivalent of the Christian baptismal promise to 'reject Satan and all his works.' There has been an air of moral outrage about the longevity of AVEs despite their debunking by academic researchers and serious practitioners. Shortly after the event, Robert W. Grupp writing a commentary about the Barcelona Principles for the Institute for Public Relations (IPR) commented that "The legitimate intent here is not to debate the validity of AVEs (which simply measure the cost of media space) but to move beyond this measure once and for all" (Grupp, 2010). During the second half of 2010, other organizations in the public relations sector moved quickly to support the Barcelona Principles, especially in regard to AVE. The Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) supported the initiative (PRSA, 2010). In the United Kingdom, the Chartered Institute for Public Relations (CIPR), which represents individual members, and the Public Relations Consultants Association (PRCA), the trade body

for PR consultancies and in-house communication departments, both decided on new policy to cease recognizing AVE as a valid measurement technique.

In November 2010, CIPR's CEO Jane Wilson gave strong organizational support:

> AVEs cannot be a part of serious business communication because they have no relevance to the value, financial or otherwise, of an organisation. They don't reflect what has actually been achieved. With any successful communications campaign there has to be a tangible result if it is to be deemed successful. Whether it's a product or a perception, something has to have shifted (CIPR 2010).

> CIPR undertook to lead policy on measurement and evaluation. It identified entries to its annual awards programme as the route to enforce its policy by stating that "AVEs will no longer be deemed an acceptable form of measurement and evaluation (M&E), and judges will be briefed to this effect when shortlisting each category's entries" (CIPR 2010). PRCA's chair Sally Costerton announced that evaluation would be at the heart of best practices. In a news release, PRCA said.

> Endorsing the AMEC-PRSA new evaluation framework, Costerton revealed that the PRCA will embed evaluation within its own Awards, and within Consultancy Management Standard - the global mark of PR professionalism, created by the PRCA, and adopted in more than a dozen countries around the world (PRCA, 2010).

> In addition to these national public relations organizations, the Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management, which is the umbrella body for national public relations professional bodies, belatedly announced the Barcelona Principles as a new "global measurement standard" in April 2011 (Global Alliance, 2011).

> Yet, only a year before the decision to outlaw the use of AVE, research had shown that it was a widely used metric. In Berlin in July 2009, the First European Summit on Measurement had been told that an international study of more than 500 public relations practitioners found that AVEs were the third most popular measurement method for judgment of communication effectiveness, after clippings counts and internal reviews, and the first amongst methods of judging the value of public relations activity. AVE had risen from fifth place to third in the five years since the previous study. Some 35% of respondents were 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with it as a measurement tool and are very loyal to it (Daniels & Gaunt, 2009).

> This aim of this paper is to explore the origins of the AVE by considering the development of public relations measurement and evaluation methods and theory, and discussing possible influences and routes by which it became so obviously popular amongst practitioners. It will become apparent that it has never been given credibility by academics and serious practitioners (Macnamara, 2008; Paine, 2003) and was not proposed by the pioneers of public relations in any major countries. Indeed, for over 60 years there have been warnings against its use. But it has thrived and grown to be one of the mostly used judgments of effectiveness. AVE really is an illegitimate offspring of public relations, without a family heritage and few credentials, but aligned closely to that slightly wild world of publicity and consumer public relations where communication management and Excellence theory are unknown concepts. Watson has referred to it as "a pernicious weed" (Geddes, 2011). However, a long tradition of media monitoring and of the use of clipping counts as a proxy methods of public relations effectiveness may give some clues as to its illicit origins.

Early Monitoring Practices

Lamme and Russell (2010) argue that from George Washington onwards, US presidents monitored newspapers in order to gain intelligence on what was being said about them and the views of fellow citizens. In the 19th century, industries and groups from railroads to temperance societies and evangelists also tracked media coverage and public opinion. In the US and UK, news cuttings agencies were established in the latter part of the century. From some, there is lineage to today's international computer-based evaluation companies.

As the 20th century started, publicity agencies began to be formed in the United States. Cutlip (1994) dates the first as the Publicity Bureau in Boston in 1900. One of its major clients from 1903 onwards was American Telephone & Telegraph Company (AT&T) based in the same city. AT&T and its agency "early saw the need for systematically gauging public opinion … collected and studied newspaper clippings from the nation's press" (Cutlip, 1994, p. 18). It found that 90% were antagonistic. By modifying company behaviour and disseminating "real information through the press", AT&T gradually reduced the negative coverage to "sixty percent and lower" (ibid, p. 18). In its work for railroad interests, the Publicity Bureau systematically monitored and influenced press coverage. Titled 'The Barometer', it created a card index of the attitudes of editors, gained from visits, and media usage of publicity material. This allowed the agency to judge "whether a paper is "Good" or "Bad" from the standpoint of the railroads" (ibid, p. 21).

The pioneer of US public relations practice, Ivy L. Lee, who formed two of the earliest public relations advisory firms, took the view that he was engaged in an art (Hiebert, 1966) whereas another pioneer, Edward L. Bernays, saw public relations as an applied social science (Ewen, 1996; Tye, 1998). Bernays presented public relations as an applied social science to be planned through opinion research and precisely evaluated. There is, however, little discussion of measurement and evaluation of campaign effectiveness in his books and papers. The first book, *Crystallizing Public Opinion*, (Bernays, 1923) set the foundations for a systematic approach to public relations (Pavlik, 1987). Advertising and the publicity side of public relations both expanded rapidly in the 1920s promoted by pioneers such as Lee and Bernays and through books on publicity and public relations. Bernays' books and Lee's privately published *Publicity Some of the Things It Is and Is Not* (Lee, 1925) were well known along with R.H. Wilder and K.L. Buell's *Publicity* (Wilder & Buell, 1923) and several other books.

Opinion Research

Although cuttings agencies monitored press coverage for clients, there was little discussion of the measurement and evaluation of publicity or public relations activity. It was the former magazine editor, Arthur W. Page, who introduced systematic opinion research into corporate public relations and organisational communication at AT&T. Although AT&T had been using opinion polling shortly before Page joined it, he championed the use of surveys which were to be an important factor in developing a customer-facing culture at the telecommunications giant. "He deserves credit for recognizing the need for feedback and encouraging development of systems to gauge the moods of AT&T's publics. Integration of formal feedback systems into the public relations function is one of his contributions to public relations practise" (Griese 2001, p. 122).

AT&T continued to monitor media, although the examples are much less prevalent than the use of opinion surveys. Griese (2001) identified two studies of the use by newspapers of "clipsheets" (broadsheets with several AT&T news items which editors would select and send to

typesetters) in 1932 and 1933. These were measured by the number of items published and the total of column inches of coverage. "Whilst the column inches of publicity a corporation gets are not a reliable indicator of the amount of good will being built, these studies show AT&T's practice of systematically evaluating public relations devices" (Griese 2001, p. 153).

Page created a "public relations laboratory where PR successes and failures were gathered, studied and the lessons learnt passed on to his colleagues at AT&T" (Broom and Dozier, 1990, p. xi). This approach continued after his retirement in 1947 until the telephone monopoly was broken up in the late 1970s. It is notable, however, that AT&T was not measuring the results of communication activity (Tedlow, 1979). Page used the term 'public relations' in an organisationally holistic manner with a strong emphasis on the corporation understanding "the overall relations with the public it served" (Griese, 2001, p. 195). In 1938 he explained it further: "The task which business has, and which it has always had, of fitting itself to the pattern of public desires, has lately come to be called public relations" (ibid, p. 195).

Influence of Advertising

Tedlow's discussion of the nascent relationship of advertising and public relations may indicate formative influences on evolution of AVEs. He argues there was a tension between the advertiser who bought media space and press agents/publicists. The advertiser could "be absolutely certain that the message appeared therein. When he hired a publicity man to concoct a stunt, he could not be sure whether or how the papers would carry it" (Tedlow, 1979, p. 171). Later he discusses the media owners' dislike of press agents, whom they called "space grabbers" (p. 177). They were not only recruiting their journalists to better-paid jobs but were also able to get coverage in their pages at the third of the cost of advertising space. "One estimate was that if a press agent could deliver equal linage to an advertisement at one-third the cost of paid space, advertising would end and with it newspaper revenue and reader confidence" (p. 177). In the first 30 years of the last century in the US, there is an obvious connection in the minds of advertisers, media owners, press agents and publicists that there is a relationship that expresses value equivalence between media coverage and advertising, whether it is in the fears of the media owners or its promotion by press agents and publicists panning for business from clients. It is not a large step for informal methods of calculating values from press clippings provided by myriad city-based and regional services to be introduced without reference to social scientists or experts in statistical validity. In the absence of specific archival information indicating a start date or action that created AVEs, this is a thesis that can be considered.

Media Analysis by Government

By the late 1930s, a wide range of measurement and evaluation methods were being used in the United States, notably by various levels of government. Batchelor (1938) provided two examples of the monitoring and interpretation of media publicity.

> The Roosevelt Administration gives close attention not merely to the technique of publicity dissemination but also to the manner of its reception. In other words, it watches carefully all changes in the political attitudes of a community. The sum of these numerous local impressions constitutes, of course, a barometer of national opinion that possesses great value. (p. 212) [The method of data collection is not identified by Batchelor].

He also discussed Toledo Associates, which was a "cooperative publicity effort, sponsored by local business interests" set up to promote the city of Toledo, Ohio during the Great Depression.

> Toledo's experiment in cooperative industrial publicity became an unqualified success. Ninety-one per cent of more than 72,000 clippings, representing newspaper circulations totalling more than one and half millions, were regarded as favourable to the city's interests (p. 214).

So it can be seen that at high levels of national and city government, measurement and evaluation were taking place using methods that are still in place today.

Evaluation Practices to 1950

As can be seen, public relations practitioners and organisations had monitored press coverage of their own and others activities from early times. In 1942, Harlow wrote that public relations practitioners and their employers "should not be impressed by sheaves of press clippings" (p. 43) as a volume indicator of what was going on. Many books on public relations across the initial 40-50 year period discussed measurement of the volume of coverage, its length in column inches and whether it was positive or negative. Plackard and Blackmon gave this (dubious) advice in 1947: "The publicist must learn the art of "pepping up" publicity results. Publicity clippings as such are not sufficiently interesting to show to a client. However, they can be dressed up or dramatized in unusual ways" (p. 299). Examples given included "trick photography" by blowing cuttings up and then placing them on large sheets of folded card; graphic presentation of cuttings beneath newspaper mastheads; and displays on large boards, especially in hall corridors, all in order to emphasise the volume.

First Sight of AVE?

Advertising Value Equivalence made what may be its initial appearances in text in 1947 in the US and 1949 in the UK. The nature of the references makes it clear that it was an extant practice. There may be earlier references but they are not recorded in bibliographies such as organised by Cutlip (1965) or in the numerous texts on public relations that burgeoned in the post-World War 2 period. This paper does not claim the example to follow is the very first reference but it indicates that the use of AVE may have arisen from publicity practices carried out alongside advertising and have been promoted by clippings agencies seeking to add value to clients. Plackard and Blackmon (1947) introduced the concept of AVEs in their book, *Blueprint for Public Relations*, rather tentatively. After discussing valuable results from the "intangible realm – definitely present but not readily measured – namely good will, making friends, instilling confidence", etc (p. 4), they presented the notion of valuing media coverage:

> Only in a general way can these benefits be valued in dollars and cents. Newspaper publicity on a certain national institution may reach 100,000 inches. If all the publicity is good, an equal amount of space may be said to be worth $100,000. However, if the publicity is badly done, it could be more harmful than no publicity. (ibid, p. 4)

But later in the book, their cautious tone changed and Plackard and Blackmon provided a concrete example from a named clippings agency of the dollar valuation of media coverage, using the advertising value equivalence method:

> From the results of his publicity thus obtained in the form of newspaper cuttings, he can much more effectively measure its value.

The following table is based on newspaper clippings supplied a company by the Allen Press Clippings Service. Although, like other services, Allen cannot guarantee 100 per cent return on material presented, the coverage is complete enough to present a satisfactory picture of the amount of space devoted to Company X throughout the country.

Translated into dollars and cents value to Company X at a column-inch rate of $1.06 (an average for large and small daily papers throughout the nation), the 169,629 column inches of material published in 1 year would be worth approximately $179,806.74 if purchased as display advertising. Even eliminating 50 per cent of this amount to allow for unfavourable mentions (of which there were very few) and stories not wholly devoted to Company X, the projection would result in a value of almost $90,000 being ascribed to the editorial space (p. 295)

It is notable that this exemplar uses a single national average metric for the calculation of AVE, which was a considerable task in the late 1940s when data collection was much more difficult than it is today. More recent practices, aided by computerised databases, will calculate the media coverage according the rate cards or cost data for the specific media. Another point to note is that no multiplier is added to the calculation.

After this reference was found, the author undertook an online search to identify whether the Allen Press Clipping Service existed some 64 years after the book was published. An firm with the very similar name of Allen's Press Clipping Bureau was identified in San Francisco and an email enquiring about the Plackard and Blackmon reference was sent to it. John N. McComb, the third generation owner of the business, replied that the firm had not prepared reports or calculations like those in the book. "I have not seen the example given. To my knowledge Allen's did not supply Ad Equivalence Reports in the 40's, 50' or even the 60's. I have worked here since 1958." (Personal correspondence, February 2011). Mr McComb, before replying contacted a fellow veteran, Irving Paley, who had owned the American Press Clipping Bureau and the International Press Clipping Bureau in New York City. Mr Paley who had worked in the clippings businesses from 1947 "had not heard of Ad Equivalence Reports at that time …[McComb] It may have been that an individual client asked [Allen's] for such a report and spelled out specifically what it was … Certainly the formula used portrayed very little except a guestimation of value. However the idea did catch on" (ibid).

Although a specific example AVE was found in text, it was not possible to validate its accuracy by reference to the clipping organisation named. As, however, John N. McComb noted, "the idea did catch on".

AVEs in the UK

In the UK, the expansion of public relations was a post-World War 2 phenomenon. The first press agency, Editorial Services, had been set up by Basil Clarke in London in 1924 (L'Etang 2004) but the establishment and real growth of public relations came as a result of journalists and propaganda experts coming out of government and the armed forces in 1945 with knowledge of news management and propaganda methods. The Institute of Public Relations (IPR) was set up in 1948, mainly by governmental communicators in information officer posts, as the first step to professionalise their area of activity (ibid). From its outset, issues of evaluating public relations were discussed in the IPR's *Journal*: mostly as methods of collation of cuttings and transcripts, and how to do it cheaply (J. L'Etang, personal communication, January 10, 2011). Unlike the US with its interest in social sciences and university education, there was a

strong anti-intellectual streak in the IPR. This was expressed by its 1950 President Alan Hess who inveighed against "a tendency for too much intellectualisation and too much market research mumbo-jumbo" (L'Etang, 2004, p. 75). So the discussion of public relations practices was often a 'belt-and-braces' consideration of practical issues. In 1949, shortly after IPR started to publish its *Journal* to the membership, the topic of valuing media coverage by advertising costs arose in the form of advice against its use by a founding member, F. Murray Milne:

> F. Murray Milne (Wholesale Textile Association) emphasised that there should be no rivalry between public relations and advertising. It was a grave mistake for the PRO to try and evaluate his work at so many column inches calculated at advertising rates (IPR Journal, 1949, p. 4).

Later in the same edition, Milne again advised against the method:

> Press cuttings are never measured in column inches and assessed at advertising rates. This practice has done more to undermine public relations than any other (IPR Journal, March 1949, p. 7).

A reasonable conclusion from Milne's advice to fellow practitioners is that a form of AVE was already in use in the UK's fledgling public relations sector and that it was already causing concern to industry leaders. L'Etang (2004) notes that the IPR "publicly disapproved of this method [AVE] for more than half a century. Originally their disapproval was rooted in the desire to separate the public relations occupation from that of press agentry" (p. 114). The author's interviews with Tim Traverse-Healy, one of the few surviving founders of the UK and international public relations sector in the immediate post-World War 2 period, did not identify this form of measurement as a matter that was of interest to the British and European founders of the International Public Relations Association which came into being in 1955, after five years of negotiations. Their agenda was on higher issues such as ethics and recognition of professional standards.

In 1954, the IPR returned to the subject in a discussion of measurement of editorial publicity. The unnamed author comments:

> Totting up column inches in terms of advertising still goes on. As Alan Hess [a former IPR President] has pointed out, matter of advertising nature should never be submitted for editorial use and, if it is, goes straight on the spike. Cheese cannot be compared with chalk. What matters in editorial publicity is whether the release is being read by the right people and whether they are reacting favourably (IPR Journal, October 1954).

Hidden Expansion

By the 1950s, it can be argued that AVE was known to practitioners and probably to academics who were in touch with organisations, agencies and alumni. However, it remained an underground practice. It is not mentioned, even with a warning, in leading texts of the time, such as the first edition of Cutlip and Center's *Effective Public Relations* (1952) or in Edward L. Bernays' texts of the period – *Public Relations* (1952) and *Engineering of Consent* (1955). Cutlip and Center discuss media analysis methods mainly by reference to audience measurement and message reception rather than clipping counts. Cutlip's public relations bibliography (2nd edition, 1965) has a sub-section on Program Research and Evaluation covering 159 articles which started in 1939 and continued to the mid-1960s. There are 15 articles on mass media measurement and two on the effectiveness of clipping services. None referred to AVEs.

In Germany, the public relations pioneer Albert Oeckl discusses public relations research methods in his 1964 book, *Handbuch der Public Relations* (Handbook of Public Relation)

including quantitative approaches such as coding of media coverage but not of valuation in the AVE style. In the UK, the IPR's first text book, *A Guide to the Practice of Public Relations,* barely discusses evaluation in a chapter on media relations noting only that "the volume of press enquiries may indicate that the field is one of widespread public interest and concern" (IPR, 1958, p. 62) and recommending that analysis of press enquiries be undertaken regularly (IPR, 1958). In 1969, Frank Jefkins, a most prolific UK author of public relations books, also inveighed against the use of AVE in his trenchant style:

> Nor is there any sense in trying to assess an advertisement rate-card value on editorial coverage, saying these inches would have cost so much if the space had been paid for, for the elementary reason that no-one would use the same space, the same quantity of space, or perhaps even the same media for advertising purposes. There is no logical basis for financial evaluation, although it is true that a count of inches does indicate that there was a substantial coverage of the story, and circulation figures – and readership figures, too – could be totalled to show the possible number of subscribers or readers who had an opportunity to read the report or see the pictures (Jefkins, 1969, p. 227)

Another British author, John Crisford, also attacked the valuation of "free space" as being "just plain silly", like Jefkins indicating that it was being used widely, if not in common practice:

> Should cuttings be counted? The practice of totting up column inches in the editorial columns, working out the advertising rates for a similar amount of space, and then claiming that the press office has produced so many pounds worth of "free space" is just plain silly. Statistics should, however, be kept – not to compare like with unlike, but to compare like with like" (Crisford, 1973, p. 59).

AVEs Emerge

By the mid-1960s, there was anecdotal evidence that AVEs were being widely used by public relations operations in major organisations. John W. Felton, former CEO of the Institute for Public Relations, recalls their application in his own working experience at a major corporation:

> Way back in 1966, when I was in the product publicity unit of US Steel in Pittsburgh, PA, our boss Tex Wurzbach, counted product clips we generated and equated the space we "earned free" to the amount that the same space would have cost if we had purchased it as ads. He justified our budgets for photos, travel, etc by using the amount of space we got "free" might have cost if ads had been placed. That's not quite the same as multiplying by some number such as six but it is part of the same concept of AVEs …We generated a huge amount of clips so you can imagine how big the ad costs might have been if we had paid for that much space in major publications. He always got big budgets for us to spend! (J. Felton, personal correspondence, December 2010).

Other practitioners also recall industry use of AVEs in the 1970s and 1980s as being "in place" when they started work in agencies and organisations (L. Williams, personal correspondence, December 20, 2010; D. Michaelson, personal correspondence, December 20, 2010; S. Overcamp, December 21, 2010). Media measurement companies which had been formed from clippings agencies were also using AVEs by the mid-1970s. "Media values were pretty much in place when we got involved with BurrellesLuce in the 70s, but generally they were produced by agencies … and generally with a multiplier" (J. Waggoner, personal communication, February 9, 2011).

Service Sector Develops

US industry veteran Mark Weiner has commented (M. Weiner, personal communication, February 16, 2011) that PR industry growth in North American and Europe in the 1960s and 1970s was a key reason for the introduction of measurement services. Consumer public relations developed rapidly in the 1950s and 1960s during the post war economic boom, aided by the widespread access to television which had also fostered advertising's expansion. The major US public relations groups (Barnet & Reef, Burson-Marsteller, and Hill & Knowlton) needed world-wide monitoring and management systems that gave systematic data back to client HQs. These developments led to the emergence of the service industries, especially in the measurement of PR activity. A pioneer was PR Data, formed from an internal General Electric operation by Jack Schoonover. It was the first to use computer based analysis – using punch-cards and simple programmes (Tirone, 1977). It was soon followed by other providers, mainly press cuttings agencies which became evaluators. Weiner says that the calculation of AVEs was amongst the services offered by PR Data, although not the primary service. By improving the speed and accuracy of calculation, these businesses enabled the wider use of AVE which became a mainstream topic, aided by practitioner commentators. From the late 1960s onwards, the advertising value was often enhanced by multipliers. Ruff (1968) was one of the first to claim that non-advertising publicity could provide greater value than advertising. He undertook a comparative study of product inquiries in which promotional messages for a new product were distributed by publicity in key media and through print advertisements. "Ruff calculated publicity outperformed advertising for that … product by a seven to one ratio, but noted that for some publications the ratio was only 2.5 to one, and for others, the reverse was the case and advertising outperformed by publicity by a 2.5 to one ratio" (Macnamara, 2008, p. 2). These claims of public relations multipliers linked to AVEs were endorsed in public relations and marketing communications trade press and journals (Strenski, 1980; Bumsted, 1983).

1980s – Academic Input

Following on from the initial conferences and academic journal discussion late in the previous decade, US journals came alive in the 1980s with papers on research-based measurement and evaluation methods from leading academics such as Glenn Broom (Broom & Dozier, 1983), David Dozier (Dozier, 1984, 1985), and James E. Grunig (Grunig & Hickson, 1976; Grunig 1979, 1983). From the consultancy side, Lloyd Kirban of Burson Marsteller (Kirban, 1983) and Walter Lindenmann of Ketchum (Lindenmann, 1979, 1980) were prolific and drove the subject higher on the practitioner agenda. In the UK, Jon White (1990) undertook the first study of practitioner attitudes amongst member consultancies of the Public Relations Consultants Association (PRCA) and offered recommendations on 'best practice'. All these authors emphasised the need for public relations to be researched, planned and evaluated using robust social science techniques. It was particularly fostered by Broom and Dozier's influential *Research Methods in Public Relations* (Broom & Dozier, 1990).

AVEs Thrive, Despite Education Campaigns

By the early 1990s, public relations measurement and evaluation was a leading research and professional practice topic (McElreath, 1989; White & Blamphin, 2004; Synnott & McKie, 1997). There were major practitioner education initiatives in several developed countries, many linked closely to the Excellence Theory expression of public relations as communication management. However, AVEs became even more popular. "Very often high-level managers –

and especially financial controllers – like this measure since it gives them results in the language they speak: dollars. As a result PR managers are often forced to use this criterion" (Leinemann & Baikaltseva, 2004, p. 59).

The late 1990s also saw the launch of extensive national campaigns to promote best practice in measurement and evaluation. The public relations consultancy bodies, PRCA and ICCO, its international offshoot, published booklets and were followed by other industry associations separately or cooperatively. The major UK initiative was PRE-fix, a partnership between PRCA and IPR (UK) with PR Week, the weekly trade magazine. It ran for three years and was accompanied by seminars, research, online resources and best practice case studies. AMEC, then the Association of Media Evaluation Companies, was formed as a UK trade body. It is now the International Association for Measurement and Evaluation of Communications with members in nearly 40 countries, which indicates the expansion of the measurement and media analysis service industry. In the US, the IPRRE (later Institute for Public Relations) formed the Commission on Public Relations Measurement and Evaluation in 1999, which plays a major role in undertaking practice based research and disseminating it. AVEs were ignored or argued against by these bodies (Watson, 2012).

Barcelona Principles

There were further industry educational initiatives in the UK in the early part of the 21st century's first decade with the CIPR preparing a version of its previous Evaluation Toolkit document that targeted media evaluation. The service business of media measurement and public relations effectiveness evaluation grew rapidly, mainly with corporate clients. Its debates resulted in the adoption of The Barcelona Declaration of Measurement Principles at the European Measurement Summit in June 2010 (AMEC, 2010). The Barcelona Declaration demonstrates that public relations measurement and evaluation is an important and growing service business and a long way from the local and regional cuttings agencies of 50 to 100 years ago.

Conclusion – PR Sector in Two Parts

As noted earlier in the paper, measurement practice as evidenced by the author's personal experience in the UK is that AVEs live on without a metaphorical Barcelona Principles stake in their heart. Their appeal is simplicity and a monetary outcome, as noted by Leinemann and Baikaltseva (2004), which is favoured by financially-minded managers. As Watson (2012) has commented: "Perhaps this signifies an immature profession, which is unconfident in its practices" (p. 17). It may also signify that the universe of public relations has for some time been separate into two distinct parts: Publicity and "PR" – a short-termist tactical approach that relies on intuition, past experience and crude metrics; and Communication Management or Organizational Communication which employs social science-led planning, research and evaluation methods in search of mutual understanding. The survival of that "pernicious AVE weed", despite 60 years of well-researched warnings against its use, cannot be underestimated favours that interpretation.

(Stirling University); Prof Ansgar Zerfass (Leipzig University); Dr Karen Russell (University of Georgia).

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Toward a Better Understanding of Stewardship in Nonprofit Public Relations
"The test of our worth is the service we render." - Theodore Roosevelt

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Abstract

Stewardship has been called the critical fifth step in the public relations process employed by nonprofit organizations to develop and improve relationships with various stakeholder publics (Kelly, 2001). The purposes of this study are to explicate the meanings of previously proposed stewardship dimensions and to further develop the concept of stewardship for practitioners, researchers and educators.

Introduction

For decades, 501(c)3 nonprofit organizations have collectively represented one of the fastest-growing segments of our society. These organizations have relied on relationship management to build partnerships with donors, volunteers, policy leaders and other important publics to achieve their goals of leveraging improvements in their communities and making a positive contribution to solving pressing social issues at home and abroad. As Kelly (1998, 2001) posits, stewardship is one of the most important steps in the relationship management process for nonprofit organizations. In her conceptualization, stewardship comprises four strategies: responsibility, reporting, reciprocity and relationship nurturing.

Recent research investigating stewardship has focused primarily on donor publics and the fundraising function (e.g., Waters, 2008, 2009a, 2009b), rather than the myriad stakeholders integral to a nonprofit's success. In an era when nonprofit organizations have come under attack for mismanagement of funds, ineffective governance, unethical acts and failing to comply with reporting responsibilities, however, the focus of stewardship needs to be broadened. Additionally, as public relations theory, research and practice continue to embrace two-way relational and dialogic communication models, nonprofit public relations practitioners and scholars will benefit from including stewardship as part of a practical and ethical approach to building relationships and quantifying their effectiveness.

Building on the limited existing stewardship literature, this paper offers precise definitions and descriptions of the strategies and tactics involved in the four strategies of stewardship. In so doing, the authors hope to make the concept more accessible for public relations scholars interested in nonprofit research and measurement, practitioners working to effectively enhance public trust and communication, and educators training the next generation of nonprofit leaders.

In addition, by tracing the origins of the stewardship concept, cross referencing other pertinent theories and constructs, and applying practical wisdom from practitioners, this conceptualization of the four strategies of stewardship attempts to provide a foundation for future nonprofit public relations research. Finally, the paper offers recommendations for effectively incorporating stewardship communication strategies as part of a program to develop relationships with various stakeholder publics in addition to potential funders and addresses the implications of stewardship in today's technology-driven environment.

Literature Review and Concept Explication

Stewardship in Public Relations Research

Relationship management emerged in scholarly research when Ferguson (1984) suggested that relationships are at the core of public relations. Fifteen years later, Huang (2001) declared that relationship management had "emerged as an important paradigm for public relations scholarship and practice" (p. 270). Ledingham (2003) explicated relationship management as a general theory of public relations focusing on initiatives and strategies that are mutually beneficial for organizations and their many publics (Bruning, 2001; Grunig, 1993; Ledingham & Bruning, 1998). This relationship management approach to public relations scholarship formed the basis for the concept of stewardship.

For decades, scholars have recognized stewardship as a key component to relationship management for nonprofit organizations. In a 1991 article, Greenfield suggested that the purpose of stewardship is to "establish the means for continued communication that will help to preserve [stakeholder] interest and attention to the organization" (p. 148). Jeavons (1994)

described the concept of stewardship as having ancient, even biblical, roots and pointed to the notion that nonprofit organizations in particular have an obligation to be good stewards of their resources because they are entrusted with those resources to benefit the public good.

In 2001, Kelly proposed stewardship as one of the most important steps in the relationship management process employed by nonprofit organizations. In her conceptualization, stewardship is based on a need to inspire involvement and continued support, and she categorized the construct into four underlying strategies of stewardship. These strategies were *reciprocity*, or the demonstration of the organization's gratitude for support; *responsibility*, defined by actions of a socially responsible manner as understood by those who have supported the organization; *reporting*, defined as meeting legal and ethical requirements of accountability, and *relationship nurturing*, characterized as the organization accepting the importance of supportive publics and keeping them central to the organization's consciousness (Kelly, 1998, 2001).

Building on Kelly's work, subsequent studies have focused on stewardship in terms of the management of relationships between nonprofit organizations and their donor publics. One case study investigated the Coaches vs. Cancer campaign benefiting the American Cancer Society. Although limited in scope and not generalizable, the study provided early evidence of the need for all four stewardship strategies to be practiced by nonprofit organizations to ensure the success of a fundraising campaign (Worley & Little, 2002).

Other studies have continued to reaffirm the role of stewardship as an important component of nonprofit relationship building. For instance, Waters' (2009a) study of annual giving and major gift donors to a nonprofit hospital in the Western United States seems to be the first to operationalize the four strategies of stewardship using survey scale items. Waters defined *responsibility* as a nonprofit organization "keeping promises" to donors and other publics, and *reporting* as keeping donors informed about where funding goes and what it supports. R*eciprocity* referred to acknowledgement and appreciation of public support, and r*elationship nurturing* encompassed the many other ways in which nonprofit organizations seek to cultivate relationships and maintain open communication with donors. The survey revealed that while all four stewardship strategies were viewed favorably, reciprocity was considered the most important to donors (Waters, 2009a).

More recently, Waters (2011b) has taken stewardship outside the nonprofit realm and applied the concept to a content analysis of Fortune 100 companies' websites. In this conceptualization of the four stewardship strategies, *reciprocity* included listings of partners and community relations; *responsibility* included mission statements, vision, values and ethics; *reporting* included organizational publications, online newsrooms and audited financials; and *relationship nurturing* included feedback forms and social media. He found that, generally, for-profit corporations were more likely to display elements of reporting and reciprocity rather than responsibility and relationship nurturing (Waters, 2011b). Relationship nurturing, in particular, seemed to be missing from the Fortune 100 websites.

As Tapscott (2009) has pointed out, the future viability of an organization will, in part, be determined by its transparency, interactivity and collaborative communication, oftentimes made possible by online communications. It is, therefore, not surprising that recent research has focused on nonprofit new media communications. In contrast to some of Waters (2011b) findings from corporate websites, a content analysis of 117 randomly sampled, nonprofit health organizations' websites found reciprocity and relationship nurturing to be more prevalent than responsibility and reporting (Patel & Weberling, 2011); this contrast demonstrates some of the

differences between the sectors in terms of online communication. A qualitative content analysis of email messages from the nonprofit organizations, Susan G. Komen for the Cure and the Komen Advocacy Alliance, also reported evidence of all four strategies of stewardship, although the use of the strategies varied depending on whether the messages took an emotional, informational or political/economic approach (Weberling, 2012). This article stressed the need to continue exploring the concept of stewardship, particularly as it relates to online and direct communication with various publics.

Despite the broad initial conceptualization of stewardship, a common theme throughout the existing body of nonprofit-related literature has been a focus on donor communications. However, in the nonprofit sector, organizational credibility and engaging a wide array of publics are the cornerstone for success, built on a foundation of effective public relations strategies (Feinglass, 2005). Illustrating the need for development of the stewardship concept across stakeholder types, while one study found that nonprofits cater to donors more than volunteers on their websites (Yeon, Choi, & Kiousis, 2005), another study of nonprofit Facebook pages found that only 13% of the organizations in the sample conducted fundraising on Facebook (Waters, Burnett, Lamm, & Lucas, 2009).

In another study of community foundation websites, the researchers found that websites have been more effectively used to share financial and performance disclosures than to open channels of communication for stakeholder input and interactive engagement (Saxton & Guo, 2011). Clearly, nonprofit organizations are still determining how to communicate with multiple publics in various online environments and the industry is still in need of best practices based on empirical research.

Beyond compulsory requirements of reporting to governmental bodies, providing information and involving stakeholder publics are imperative to a nonprofit organization's success (Hon & Grunig, 1999). Thus, in this highly competitive environment, nonprofit organizations would be well served to use the strategies of stewardship to reinforce the trust, confidence and commitment of their existing and potential stakeholders as well as provide a mechanism for dialogic communication.

Stewardship and Theory

In addition to the aforementioned studies of stewardship in both the nonprofit and for-profit sectors, Waters has also researched the four strategies of stewardship as they relate to other popular concepts in public relations literature. In his study investigating the relationship between donor expectations and practitioner perspectives in the context of nonprofit hospitals, rather than using stewardship strategies as variables, Waters (2009b) added scales from marketing literature to variables related to the organization-public relationship (OPR) framework (e.g., access, positivity, openness, assurances, networking, sharing of tasks) to conduct a co-orientation study investigating each party's views on relationship cultivation strategies. His findings indicated that practitioners and donors agreed on the importance of these variables, but disagreed on the magnitude of their importance (Waters, 2009b).

In a related article, Waters (2011a) used structural equation modeling to show how the four strategies of stewardship can work with the elements of relationship cultivation. He used the OPR framework variables of access, positivity, openness, assurances, networking and sharing of tasks to predict trust, satisfaction, commitment and the feeling of the balance of power between donors and organizations. The impact of the different elements varied depending on whether donors gave occasional major gifts, or were more regular annual donors (Waters, 2011a).

Although Waters' work on expanding the concept of stewardship by using the four strategies to predict desirable outcomes is an important step, additional research is needed. The OPR model, which draws from the field of interpersonal communication and is defined by the "patterns of interaction, transaction, exchange and linkage between an organization and its public," (Broom, et. al., 2000 p 18) provides an interesting and relevant avenue for further inquiry.

Given the relative infancy of stewardship as a construct, drawing on relevant disciplines for more established theories like OPR could provide useful insights. To this end, the authors looked for other applications of stewardship and stewardship-related concepts in the academic literature. A search for the key word "stewardship" in the EBSCO Business Premier database returned 786 articles, ranging from law, to accounting, to public administration, from 1926 to 2012. This highlights the diversity of stewardship applications, as well as its history in the academic literature. Narrowing the time span to the last decade and peer reviewed articles only decreased the census of articles to 550. Reducing again by adding the key term "nonprofit," reduced the census of articles to 24. Several of these articles, and the theories discussed within the articles, are highlighted below.

Interestingly, although not cited in any of the recent public relations scholarship, management literature offers a stewardship theory derived from psychological and sociological traditions. The theory "defines situations in which managers are not motivated by individual goals, but rather are stewards whose motives are aligned with the objectives of their principals,'' (Davis, Donaldson, & Schoorman 1997, p. 21). This stewardship theory assumes that long-term relations are developed based on the variables of trust, reputation, collective goals and involvement and that alignment is an outcome that results from relational reciprocity. The management-related stewardship theory was proposed in response to the limitations of economics-based agency theory, which suggests that both principals and agents want to maximize their utility; however, it is presumed that the agent will not always act in the interest of the principal (Jensen & Meckling, 1976).

Using stakeholder theory to identify the interface (e.g., board members), internal and external stakeholders of a nonprofit organization, Puybelde, Caers, DuBois, & Jegers (2011) investigated the combined use of agency and stewardship theories to address nonprofit accountability beyond simply donor relationships. Because of the obvious parallels between these theories and the tenets of stewardship in nonprofit public relations, it seems clear that drawing from this stream of literature could enhance understanding of the predictive power of stewardship strategies for success in the nonprofit industry.

Given the prominence of the literature on outcomes of establishing, developing and maintaining successful relationship exchanges with stakeholder publics, the authors looked for theories that might contribute a better understanding of mediating variables and antecedents. One such prominent theory in the marketing literature is commitment-trust theory (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Cited more than 9,000 times by management, communications, nonprofit and other similar scholars, this theory holds that successful relationship marketing requires relationship commitment, an understanding that the relationship with a stakeholder is so important that it "warrants maximum effort to maintain it" (p.23). Another important element is trust, defined as "when one party has confidence in an exchange partner's reliability and integrity" (p. 23). Morgan and Hunt (1994) proposed, tested and validated scales of antecedents for these mediators, including relationship benefits, shared values, communication, cooperation, acquiescence and relationship termination costs. Scales such as these have the potential to add

depth to the understanding of how stewardship strategies function in a nonprofit context across stakeholder types.

Operating from a decidedly more applied perspective, Lee (2004) proposed the theory of public reporting as a practical method to increase citizen confidence in nonprofit activities and in the sector as a whole. Although not directly referencing the stewardship strategies or aforementioned theories, his work offers practitioners another avenue for considering the use of communication in developing positive stewardship strategy-related outcomes across a wider public stakeholder base than just donors. In his article, Lee proposed that nonprofits should view the mass general public as stakeholders, both because of taxpayer subsidy to the sector and in light of the potential for converting them into contributors and volunteers. He proposed that the normative principles, templates and examples from this public-administration-based theory provide a rich resource for enhancing the practice of nonprofit reporting. Among the examples highlighted in the article are repackaging financial information for the lay public, using websites, blogs, streaming videos and email blasts and paid advertising (Lee, 2004). There are many similarities between these examples and some of the variables used to represent the strategies of stewardship (specifically reporting and responsibility) in public relations research.

Stewardship in Practice

Thus far, the authors have shown that the term stewardship is growing in popularity in the nonprofit management and public relations literature. This review of pertinent scholarship has shown how stewardship provides the underpinnings for successful nonprofit governance. Further, by reviewing theoretical connections related to outcomes, mediators, and antecedents from public relations and other academic disciplines, the authors have provided direction and support for exploring how stewardship strategies function as a form of relationship management. Turning now to the use of stewardship in the practice of nonprofit public relations, the authors investigate how the nonprofit sector views stewardship.

A vast array of how-to books, blogs, conference reports, webinars, guiding practices documents and stewardship awards demonstrate that the concept of stewardship is a valued aspect of nonprofit effectiveness. Among the most prominent themes in this discourse are transparent reporting on the use of resources, financial accountability to stakeholders and donor-centered fundraising. However, many nonprofit resources focused on stewardship go beyond considerations of dollars and cents. One noted author, internationally recognized expert and nonprofit consultant has published two books focused on the stewardship concept. The first, *Nonprofit Stewardship: A Better Way to Lead Your Mission-Based Organization,* provides a foundation for nonprofit practitioners to understand, assess and implement stewardship in the day-to-day operation of the organization to "help you [nonprofit leaders] do more good for more people," (Brinckerhoff, 2004, p. xv). The second, *Smart Stewardship for Nonprofits: Making the Right Decision in Good Times and Bad,* published in 2012, focuses on mission-based decision making and provides a "Stewardship Decision Tree" as a framework for asking questions focused on organizational priorities, competencies, legal and service impacts, available information and consultation with stakeholders, including the board, donors, community and service recipients (Brinckerhoff, 2012).

The stewardship concept has become so imbedded in the lexicon of nonprofit work that many organizations grant awards for modeling stewardship principles. Awards vary from statewide recognition for nonprofit organizations to individual recognition, to corporate social responsibility initiatives. For example, the Nonprofit Sector Stewardship Award, presented by

the North Carolina Center for Nonprofits, honors the exemplary work of a nonprofit that advocates effectively for its mission, evaluates and communicates its results to the public, builds and maintains outstanding relationships with diverse stakeholders, conserves human, financial or natural resources or implements other types of innovative organizational practices (NC Center for Nonprofits, 2012).

On a smaller scale, the Carl D. Rolfsen Stewardship Award, offered by the Foellinger Foundation, recognizes exemplary work by trustees in Allen County, Indiana, and includes a $10,000 grant. Exemplary service is measured by factors such as protecting assets, supporting the chief executive, providing financial oversight, ensuring effective planning, monitoring and strengthening programs and services, ensuring legal and ethical integrity and enhancing the organization's public standing (Foellinger Foundation, 2011).

For-profit corporations have also seen the value of stewardship in the nonprofit sector. The national co-op outfitter REI (Recreational Equipment, Inc.) recently donated $600,000 to nonprofit organizations throughout the United States. Grantees were selected based on their ability to mobilize volunteers to care for local outdoor trails, parks and waterways (REI, 2012).

The Council on Foundations apparently believes that the concept of stewardship is so valuable that it has formed working committees to develop "Stewardship Principles and Practices" for each of the major funder types, including community, independent and family foundations as well as corporate giving programs. In one such document, stewardship is defined as follows:

"Stewardship: Our members manage their resources to maximize philanthropic purposes, not private gain, and actively avoid excessive compensation and unreasonable or unnecessary expenses. They pursue maximum benefit through their work, how they work, and by supporting the work of partners, colleagues, and grantees," (Council on Foundations, 2011).

Stewardship guiding principles tend to encompass best practices related to governance, institutional impact, ethics and accountability, and communication (Council on Foundation, 2004).

Stewardship Beyond the Literature

To ensure that the exploration of the concept of stewardship encompasses the general public's possible understanding of the construct, the authors also turned to alternative sources to determine other uses and definitions of the four strategies of stewardship. The *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford University Press, 2012) and *Roget's Thesaurus* (Thesarus.com, 2012) were consulted to identify the origin of the terms associated with stewardship strategies, as well as synonyms for these aspects of the construct. Drawing from the literature and other sources discussed above, the four strategies were defined in the following ways.

Responsibility is defined as the capability to fill one's duty toward a person or thing, the quality of being responsible, accountability for something, and a burden or moral obligation to respect a person or thing**.** The term is synonymous with answerability, accountability, commitment, reliability and trustworthiness. The authors summarized that responsibility as a strategy of stewardship refers to organizations acting in a socially responsible way, keeping promises, considering what stakeholders want and relaying how resources are used to fulfill the organization's mission and/or donors' wishes. From this, the authors further refined the term responsibility as applied to a nonprofit organization to mean mission fulfillment, which includes success stories on how the organization's mission is achieved and information designed to raise

awareness related to issues the organization supports. Simply put, responsibility is something organizations do and then demonstrate to the public (if they are good stewards); it does not include acknowledgements of donors or volunteers or invitations to participate in the organization's mission or related events, which are examples of other stewardship strategies described below.

Reporting conveys the action of reporting something, conveying information and facts or giving a specific account of a person or thing. The term is synonymous with describing, informing, narrating, publicizing and recounting. The authors summarized that reporting as a strategy of stewardship refers to explaining how organizational assets are used, informing publics about programmatic successes, providing updates on progress toward goals and demonstrating financial accountability. From this, the authors further refined the term as applied to a nonprofit organization to mean reporting that refers to precise descriptions or specific quantifiable statements. An annual report is an example of this definition of reporting. The added exactitude of specifying quantifiable information not only provides a more discernable delineation between reporting and responsibility, but also follows in the tradition of journalistic best practices and holds nonprofits accountable for providing evidence of the balance and flow of organizational funds.

Reciprocity means mutual dependence, action, influence, or exchange. The term is synonymous with cooperation and mutuality. The authors summarized that reciprocity as a strategy of stewardship refers to general demonstrations of gratitude, acts of appreciation or displays of sincerity and friendship between an organization and its publics. From this, the authors further refined the term as applied to a nonprofit organization to mean showing visible signs of listening to different publics and thanking or recognizing them in return for their contributions to the organization, more specifically acknowledgement of donors, volunteers or corporate partners. Volunteer or donor "spotlight" stories or a list of sponsors for a particular event are examples of this definition of reciprocity. Based on this definition, the authors suggest the possibility of renaming this "R" strategy as recognition, rather than reciprocity, because the actions taken on behalf of an organization toward an individual (e.g., a major gift donor) or a more general public (e.g., volunteers) are more likely to resemble acknowledgement and/or appreciation rather than an equal exchange or trade for the mutual benefit of all parties involved.

Relationship nurturing refers to binding participants to an organization. The term relationship is synonymous with affiliation, alliance, association, bond or interdependence. The term nurture is synonymous with cultivate, develop, support, foster, educate, or sustain. The authors summarized that relationship nurturing as a strategy of stewardship refers to regular contact between an organization and its publics, not merely soliciting publics for support but providing personalized attention (e.g., sending birthday cards to stakeholders or inviting them to lunch) and/or invitations to participate in various events (e.g., hosting an open house or special tours of facilities). From this, the authors further refined the term as applied to a nonprofit organization to mean initiating and/or participating in dialogues with various publics (including the use of social media), and expanding current involvement of individuals or publics into long-term relationships with the organization. Other terms synonymous with this strategy include relationship building, relationship cultivation and relationship maintenance.

Conclusions and Future Research

The purpose of this paper is not to draw specific conclusions related to nonprofit stewardship and its four strategies, but rather to summarize existing literature in order to establish the foundation needed to continue examining the concept through a series of empirical studies that will be conducted in the near future. This paper should be considered the first step in a multi-pronged approach for the authors to continue to explore the concept.

Stewardship Moving Forward

Following this explication, the authors' next step will be a content analysis of the top 10 nonprofit websites for each of the seven nonprofit types (e.g. arts, education; environment; health; human services; civil rights, social action, advocacy; other public benefit), based on their reported assets. This quantitative analysis is intended to test the tenets proposed in past stakeholder-specific research or studies focusing on a single organization to determine if stewardship strategies are depicted in the manifest content in websites of varying types of nonprofit entities. To this end, the study will include an analysis of the content present on commonly occurring web pages targeting the general public as well as potential stakeholders, including the "home," "about us," "take action/get involved" and "support/donate/join" pages as well as those communications targeting news media outlets (specifically, the top-listed news releases in the "press" section). Variables included in the coding scheme draw on public relations literature specifically studying stewardship as well as nonprofit new media literature.

The authors will then conduct exploratory qualitative research with nonprofit practitioners to investigate the items proposed as indicators of each stewardship strategy. Specifically, leadership of varying types of nonprofit organizations will be asked to provide definitions for stewardship strategies, as well as to rate the importance of the previously identified indicators in terms of the stewardship construct. It is anticipated that by consulting these experts, the items constituting the domain of each stewardship strategy can be expanded and tested to assure face validity. Building from this foundation, the authors will then conduct a large-scale survey of nonprofit practitioners from various nonprofit types to test and validate the scale items identified through the preceding qualitative research.

Given the prominence of new media channels in the nonprofit sector, the authors will then conduct two surveys using the newly developed stewardship scales to test their utility in assessing online strategies for communicating with potential and existing stakeholders. The first study will focus on nonprofit staff, and the next will focus on members, donors, volunteers and other individuals associated with a large nonprofit organization. The American Red Cross has been chosen because of the diversity of opportunities stakeholders have to help the organization achieve its mission (ranging from volunteers, blood donors, individuals who contribute supplies, to those who make financial contributions).

It is anticipated that, collectively, these studies will shed light on the role of popular Web 2.0 tools (e.g., websites, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, mobile apps, etc.) in achieving stewardship-related outcomes from both the perspective of the practitioner as well as organizational stakeholders. It is the authors' hope that this research will add to the current understanding of stewardship, and that the results will be useful to public relations practitioners, students and scholars as well as to nonprofit communicators, marketers and managers. By understanding the best practices involved in attracting, maintaining and expanding support and

participation by multiple publics, nonprofit organizations will be better able to succeed in fulfilling their missions and continue serving their many publics.

The authors invite colleagues to provide feedback on the research thus far and as they continue to pursue additional studies. The authors hope that others will join in continuing to explore the important concept of stewardship in terms of its many theoretical underpinnings and practical applications.

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Global Corporate Citizenship and Social Responsibility:
Insights from the C-suite

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Abstract

This study contributes to the development of a theoretical framework of global public relations by providing strategies from corporate leaders for the development of culturally-sensitive messages and actions for global engagement. The rich data show numerous efforts by American business to be global corporate citizens, engaging in activities that help address global problems. The findings show that U.S. international corporate leaders have a global business perspective, but at the same time work to make their companies as indigenous as possible, and have a tendency to distance companies from identification with the United States. This is done in order to position a company as global, which the interviewees viewed as advantageous, but also in response to the realization that American values and business practices are not viewed favorably in all parts of the world. Corporate leaders, while not addressing the issue of cultural imperialism directly, were very cognizant of the importance of being responsive to local cultural norms and values. Respondents viewed CSR programs as valuable tools for establishing credibility in other countries, and viewed corporate citizenship as an important component of corporate responsibility.

Introduction[1]

One month after September 11, 2001, Keith Reinhard watched a press conference during which George W. Bush repeated his infamous question, 'Why do they hate us?' As CEO of a global communications group[2] with agencies in 96 countries, Reinhard was aware of what he referred to as "people's resentment of our arrogance and ignorance about anything outside our border, as well as our tendency to talk and not listen." He recalled, "The next morning I called the head of our agency's research and said, 'send some cameras and recorders into shops and malls in a dozen or so countries around the world. Ask what do you like about the United Stated and what don't you like?' That was in October, and by the end of the year we had some interesting results from 17 countries" (Reinhard, 2011). The results were that people throughout the world held perceptions that the United States exploits and corrupts other cultures by promoting a lifestyle not consistent with local mores and values, as well as the perception that Americans are arrogant and culturally clueless.

Reinhard sought to mobilize the American business community to address these perceptions, which he believed could have a negative effect on business and the U.S. economy. In 2002, he founded the apolitical non-profit organization, Business for Diplomatic Action (BDA), with a strategic plan to provide resources and create partnerships to sensitize and train Americans about global citizenship and cross-cultural understanding. From 2002 to 2010, Business for Diplomatic Action operated to enlist the U.S. business community in actions aimed at improving the standing of America in the world. His aim was not only to improve the global business environment for American companies, but also to use the array of networks, resources, and proven cross-cultural communication techniques of the private sector to help improve the international reputation of the United States. During its eight years of operation, BDA conducted research and created and implemented programs credited with building new bridges of understanding among countries and cultures.

The current study is a secondary analysis of proprietary research commissioned by BDA as part of its Global Listening Project. Phase 1 of the project was designed to capture insights of corporate leaders and policy experts to explore how the problem of anti-Americanism affects American business and what solutions business might bring to the problem. Telephone interviews were conducted by Zogby International from February to April 2005. The report was provided to the researcher by Keith Reinhard with written permission to use and cite the data. Analysis for the current study was based on summaries of 45 qualitative interviews with C-level business leaders and thought leaders in the area of globalization and international strategic communication. Tables 1and 2 list the names of respondents who agreed to be identified in the study.

The purpose of the current study is to examine how U.S. international corporations are adjusting their communication and business practices to operate successfully in other cultures in a global context. It looks particularly for evidence of how corporations are behaving as global citizens to help solve world problems and how they exhibit intercultural sensitivity and cultural adaptation. The study contributes to the development of a theoretical framework of global public relations by providing strategies from corporate leaders for the development of culturally-sensitive messages and global engagement.

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[2] DDB Worldwide Communications Group Inc. Headquarters in New York City, Paris, and Sydney.

International Public Relations in the Global Public Sphere

Globalization as a phenomenon is characterized by the growing interdependence of national economies, connected financial and commercial institutions, the global reach of international media organizations, and the network of ever-evolving technologies that allows instantaneous communication around the world. In addition to the innovations and business practices that have compressed the world, a component of globalization is the increased consciousness of the world as whole and the *awareness* that the world is connected in a single social space or global public sphere (Jacobson & Jang, 2002). Globalization has created a transnational public sphere, which is a discursive arena that transcends borders of nation-states (Fraser, 2007). While there are financial, political, and social advantages to deliberate global interconnectedness, there are also perceived threats. In addition to global threats such as terrorism, environmental issues, and crimes including illegal trafficking of drugs, humans, and arms, globalization often is seen as a threat to cultural identity that could result in global hybridization. The 2007 Pew Global Attitudes survey found overwhelming support for economic globalization (international trade, multinational corporations, free markets), but also worldwide concern for the inequality that it will bring, concern for its effect on the environment, and concern that economic globalization will decimate local cultures and traditions (Kohut & Wike, 2008).

Many of the negative aspects of globalization – the rich/poor divide, global warming, loss of tradition - are often blamed on the United States (Kohut & Wike, 2008). Because the United States is viewed as the world's sole remaining super-power, there is fear that globalization will result in the "Americanization" of the world, a fear that has contributed to anti-American sentiments in many countries (Meunier, 2005). Anti-Americanism is not only a response to U.S. foreign policy, but is grounded in cultural interpretations of many aspects of American culture and values, and is affected by historical predispositions as well as political and economic ideologies (Berman, 2004). Fabbrini (2004) found that anti-Americanism among Europeans is based more on fear of the economic and cultural Americanization of Europe than on U.S. foreign policy. U.S. business practices are viewed as a form of imperialism in many parts of the world (Crockett, 2003). Indeed, American corporations are a powerful change agent, for better or worse, in the global sphere. There often are more American business people in other countries than diplomats, and multinational corporations spend more money on communication than do many governments. U.S. corporations seek to influence political decisions and to affect policy and media agendas as well as to reach consumers and suppliers. They hold great symbolic power and have the resources to influence public opinion (Reinhard, 2009).

For many U.S. corporations, the awareness of anti-American sentiment, as well as the emergence of a global public sphere to which corporations must respond has resulted in the growth of global public relations as multinational corporations enter new markets. Global public relations involves not only cross-cultural communication and the adaptation of communications strategies for different cultures, but also adaptation to an array of diverse values and attitudes throughout the world. In the realm of international public relations, the notion of stakeholders becomes more complex and cultural differences come to the forefront (Culbertson, 1996).

Global Corporate Citizenship and Social Responsibility

To be effective in the global sphere, international public relations must include corporate citizenship and social responsibility. The concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) is broad, including such things as corporate governance, workplace standards, environmental

sustainability, and corporate philanthropy, all of which acknowledge that companies have a responsibility for their impact on society and the environment (Dalsrud, 2006). Schwab (2008) believes that because many different activities fall under the umbrella of CSR, it is important to distinguish among them so that the work companies do to engage in society is recognized and appreciated. Corporate citizenship, a component of socially responsible behavior, implies that businesses are citizens in the communities in which they operate, and like individual citizens, have a responsibility to be involved in local communities. Schwab (2008) describes global corporate citizenship as the conviction that companies not only must be engaged with their stakeholders, but are themselves stakeholders alongside governments and civil society.

True corporate social responsibility goes beyond legal requirements and profit-driven motives to sincere concern for the relationship between businesses and the communities in which they operate, which implies a concern for cultural values of the host community as well as for the global public sphere beyond. Growth and investment must be sustainable. Scherer and Palazzo (2007) position CSR at the interface of management and political theory, noting that corporations, through socially responsible actions, can play a role in regulating global issues. White, Vanc, and Coman (2011) found evidence that corporations, through CSR activities and direct interaction with foreign governments, can function as corporate diplomats. U.S. businesses as corporate citizens wield power that can shape foreign societies and contribute to attitudes toward the United States.

To successfully engage with stakeholders in different cultures, U.S. multinational corporations must listen and understand the cultural context in which they operate. To do so requires an understanding of local cultural values as well as theoretical understanding of intercultural communication and adaptation that lead to intercultural competence. Scholars have begun to look more closely at culture and its influence on the communication process and its effect on corporate messages, and have called for more intercultural communication theory in public relations research. Sriramesh (2002) notes the importance of the link between culture and public relations since culture fundamentally changes cognitive processing. Zaharna (2001) proposes an "in-awareness" approach to the study of the communication functions of public relations to expose hidden cultural assumptions and expectations. In a separate study, she notes the strong link between intercultural communication and international public relations (which she calls sister fields), and contends that international public relations is more than the sum of separate, culture-specific variations of public relations practices (Zaharna, 2000).

While it simply is not possible to learn the norms and nuances of every culture, it is possible to understand the *process* of intercultural communication. Intercultural communication theories can provide insights into how cultural variables affect international public relations. Zaharna (2000) recommends that rather than looking at cultures separately (culture-specific) or as static variations (culture-general), scholars and practitioners can focus on what happens when two cultures interact, insights about which are offered by intercultural communication theories. In addition to theory guiding practice, public relations offers a wealth of concrete, applied examples that can expand the theoretical base of intercultural communication (Zaharna, 2000).

Theories of Intercultural Sensitivity and Adaptation

Businesses that operate in the global sphere must not only be aware of the potential for backlash against globalization and possible resentment of the United Sates, but must be responsive to political, cultural, environmental, and social considerations. The global strength of large multinational companies fosters fear of economic imperialism that can trigger cultural or

social resistance that can lead to government restrictions or customer resentment (Hormats, 1999). Therefore, business must respond to fears and cultural differences with adaptive behaviors and communication styles to accommodate the perceptions and values of the cultures and societies in which they operate.

There is a rich extant literature about intercultural communication and adaption with units of analyses at the individual, group, and institutional levels, many of which are based on the well-supported theories of Geert Hofstede and Edward T. Hall. A number of sub-theories have been derived from the works of Hofstede and Hall (Gudykunst & Moody, 2001). Hall (1976) said, culture is communication and communication is culture. Culture is shared meaning that can determine human attitudes and behavior. It is a mental software or collective programming of the mind that determines perceptions of the world (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). Culture is conveyed through communication that can be non-verbal as well as verbal, and includes behaviors and symbolic actions that often are determined by context. Therefore, the essence of intercultural communication has more to do with releasing the right responses than with sending the 'right' message since people from different cultures differ in their cognitive processes. Because people in different cultures process thoughts differently, they respond differently to messages. Communication is a receiver phenomenon. It is not what is said or done, but how it is interpreted that is important.

Hall (1976) provided typologies useful for understanding different cultural interpretations. They include different responses to context, time, and space. Context does not appear in the message itself, but for many cultures, provides more meaning for the message than do words. High context cultures rely on implicit meaning conveyed by status and behaviors, whereas in low context cultures meaning is more explicit. Time is perceived and conceptualized differently among cultures. Monochronic cultures view time as being divided into fixed elements (minutes, hours) that can be organized, quantified, and scheduled. In polychronic cultures, time is continuous, moving from an infinite past through the present to an infinite future. Monochronic cultures are characterized by 'doing' and polychromic cultures by 'being.' There also are cultural differences in how people react to spatial concepts (proxemics) such as territoriality and personal space as well as how much they touch and share physically and psychologically. Such differences affect communication styles, how conflicts are resolved, decision-making processes, and completing tasks, all of which have implications for international business relationships.

Hofstede's (2001) well-know cultural dimensions – power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism/collectivism, masculinity/femininity, and long-term orientation - provide theoretical insight to how people approach and react to intercultural interactions. Hofstede's cultural dimensions have been applied to many business and organizational communication studies including cross-cultural employee communication, international human resources practices, expatriate training, and international marketing. The dimensions are useful in the study of cultural adaption, which calls for two or more parties with the possibility of conflicting interests to agree for mutual benefit. Hofstede (2001) notes that international negotiations are affected by the decision-making structure and status of the negotiators (power distance), tolerance for ambiguity (uncertainty avoidance), the need for stable relationships (collectivism), the need for ego-boosting behaviors or sympathy (masculinity/femininity), and the perseverance with which ends are pursued (long- or short-term orientation). In cross-cultural situations, the dimensions are different for different parties, thus impacting communicative interactions.

Understanding theoretical frameworks of intercultural communication and interactions can help avoid the application of a Western perspective to international encounters and global public relations. For example, Hofstede (2001) points out that the highly-regarded Harvard Negotiation Model is fraught with hidden (Western) cultural assumptions. The model is based on four principles: separate people from the problem; focus on interests, not positions; invent options for mutual gain; use objective criteria (p. 436). However, separating people from the problem assumes an individualist value set. Focusing on interests rather than positions assumes low power distance as a cultural dimension. Inventing options assumes a high tolerance for ambiguity not found in high uncertainty avoidance cultures, and insisting on objective criteria assumes a shared definition of objectivity (Hofstede, 2001). In other words, the model assumes that both sides have Western cultural values and perspectives, which usually is not the case in intercultural exchanges. In some cultures, personal relationships are valued over expertise and performance. In other cultures, particularly high context cultures, actions speak louder than words. Therefore, effective intercultural business encounters require insight into a range of cultural values.

Cultural adaptation begins with intercultural sensitivity. Bennett (1993) offers a constructive developmental model that begins with awareness and leads to adaption and integration. The first stage in the model is to recognize cultural differences that may at first escape notice. The second stage is to become more tolerant of the differences. The third stage is to become more cognizant about one's own cultural values and avoid projecting them onto other cultures. Stage four requires a shift in perspective that leads to the understanding that the same behaviors can have different meanings in different cultures. The fifth stage is adaption, or the ability to take the perspective of another culture and operate successfully within it. Adaptation includes cognitive adaptation as well as behavioral adaptation, which leads to integration or the ability to operate successfully among cultures, which is the shift from ethnocentrism to polycentrism. Hofstede (2001) refers to this final stage of sensitivity and adaptation as becoming a third-culture individual.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative, inductive analysis that allows themes to emerge from the data without *a priori* research questions. Unlike deductive studies that derive specific hypotheses or research questions based on generalizations from previous studies, inductive reasoning takes events and makes generalizations (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). Inductive analysis looks for themes across data that can lead to grounded theoretical conclusions. The unit of analysis in the current study was the cultural interaction or disposition viewed from a theoretical perspective.

Data for the study came from the Global Listening Project conducted for Business for Diplomatic Action by Zogby International. The purpose of the project was to see how anti-Americanism affects U.S. business and what solutions business might bring to the problem. It provided BDA with "insight and understanding of how U.S.-based businesses were operating abroad in a climate of ever increasing anti-Americanism in order to provide ideas and guidelines for new initiatives based on existing best practices that can be implemented by others abroad. The desired impact was to foster corporate citizenship, maximize a positive role for U.S.-based companies, and build bridges with foreign consumers and influencers" (excerpted from the report). The 80+ page report contained brief summaries written by the Zogby group, primarily driven by extensive verbatim excerpts from the interviews. Context for the excerpts was

provided in the report. The report also contained an appendix of unused quotes that were included for analysis in the current study. The original interview transcripts were not analyzed for the current study.

The current analysis is not an additional analysis of the report, but rather a *different* analysis and mapping of the data. Rather than looking at the problem of anti-Americanism, the current study looked more closely at what is being done to address it, examining different patterns in the rich data to investigate how U.S. corporations use intercultural communication and adaptation strategies to adjust to cultural variations, and how they operate as global citizens in the global public sphere to address global problems. It looked for applied examples of intercultural sensitivity and adaptation that can expand the theoretical base of international communication and global public relations.

Analysis

Analysis of the report was guided by a method for analyzing qualitative data developed by Strauss and Corbin (1990). Using inductive analysis that prescribes linking and relating sub-categories by denoting conditions, context, strategies and consequences in a process that includes open, axial, and selective coding, the individual occurrences of evidence of cultural sensitivity and adaptation were examined. Open coding, the first stage of this process, allows researchers to open up the data and see what is there without making assumptions. Axial coding allows the data to be sorted into categories through a method of constant comparison and evaluation of ideas. In the selective coding stage, conceptual categories are determined by how they relate to one another, and what central themes or ideas emerged from the aggregate of concepts (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Approaching the analysis with this procedure in mind, the 80+ page report was similar to an organized qualitative data set at the stage of axial coding, for which Zogby had completed the break-down of the interview transcripts (open coding). While it is not known what method of qualitative analysis was used by Zogby, the organization provided a report to BDA with two (axial) categories, "Evidence of Anti-Americanism" and "Responses to It." Embedded in the evidence for the categories provided by interview excerpts were different dimensions of responses to anti-Americanism, how it was dealt with, and how it was minimized through local activities and adaption. The current study drilled down for responses grounded in theories of intercultural communication and adaptation and looked for overall (selective) themes from this perspective that emerged from the data.

Findings

Operating in the Global Sphere

The interviews show that leaders of U.S. transnational companies have a global perspective: they think, operate, and communicate in a global context. They tend to prefer for their companies not be seen as American, not necessarily because of anti-Americanism, but because they seek global positioning.

"The ideal scenario is to be a global company from a branding perspective."

"We recently had a large delegation of French farmers in the U.S. meeting with John Deere executives – their comment was John Deere is not an 'American' tractor it is a 'farmer's' tractor – the ultimate compliment to a fine piece of equipment."

"We don't want to be viewed as an American company abroad. We have approximately 40,000 global managers – 39,996 of which are non-U.S. citizens. We work hard to immerse ourselves in the local culture and habits in an effort to overshadow any foreign distinction."

"Consumers want to be associated with global brands, focusing on being American is a mistake. Setting a global standard is key. The way to win hearts and minds is to have an irresistible product or service. A strong connection and contribution to the local communities is vital."

Glocalization – Localizing Global Business Practice
The recognition of the vital link to local communities as part of operating in a global sphere was a theme throughout the interviews. Global companies make local adjustments on a country-by-country basis. Working with and employing local nationals was a strategy noted throughout the interviews. Many CSR programs were co-developed with representatives from local communities. There was acknowledgement that links are forged through recognizing and adjusting to local norms and regulations.

"There are some standard practices that were formulated in the U.S. with regards to branding, but most policies are formulated overseas – tailored to the specific country, on a country-by-country basis. Local country offices track data. They don't advertise the initiative because the goal is not to obtain publicity. We don't want to send the message that we are doing this for publicity. We want to show that we care about the communities that we serve and we have a good reputation for doing so."

"Our company does a lot for the communities where we work internationally. Our CSR initiatives are constructed by the in-country teams and are therefore tailored to country-specific issues. For example, our Indian company sent down volunteers to assist directly with the tsunami victims in addition to sending financial aid. In South Africa, we were the first company to contribute to HIV-AIDS efforts. Our motto is to 'under promise and over deliver'."

"We view our company as a 'bridge' for transport from country to country. We have not witnessed any anti-American sentiment because we act like a local company, not an American company doing business overseas. Sales, employee morale, recruiting, local government/community relations, are all issues that are handled by the global managers in the respective countries. All systems are running well, goals are being met and our global operation is again the fastest and most profitable component in the company."

"Companies should sit down with local company representatives and find out what matters in their community and figure out what can be done. CSR initiatives can be taken alone or in conjunction with local groups and organizations. There is an 'appropriate' way of letting the market know what you have done. This may vary from company to company, but a good motto is 'I care about what you care about'. Businesses should

make it clear that they are sincere for the long-term and avoid short-term initiatives which may not be seen as sincere."

"Conduct global CSR initiatives, but listen to the locals and give your local management a chance to be part of the solution as opposed to a firm's headquarters in New York or Chicago taking over these initiatives. Some corporations hash out their programs in Chicago, for example, and try to export them. That does not work."

"U.S. companies should identify more with the local community. They should have a visible spokesperson in-country. For example, McDonald's in Egypt should be seen as the Egyptian McDonald's. Americans must also learn to understand fear. The U.S. is 'big' in the eyes of the world and is seen as intimidating."

"Employees hired by U.S. firms should be locals (including senior staff) in order to do the appropriate outreach and become spokespeople. They should be involved broadly in community affairs, charities, local television, and local government."

Global Social Responsibility and Corporate Citizenship

As is evident in the previous section, corporate social responsibility is closely linked with operating in a local context. Interviewees recognized global problems such as poverty and hunger, education, health, gender inequality, economic development, and environmental sustainability and addressed them at the local level. Although there was evidence throughout the report to indicate mixed motives for engaging in CSR activities (to improve employee relations, influence government policy, enhance corporate image), there was much more evidence of the awareness of the need for businesses to be corporate citizens and help solve global problems. CSR programs were of a wide variety and focused on education issues and building schools, providing computers and other technological skill services, hunger and literacy projects, active encouragement of employee volunteerism, commitment to business alliances and NGOs, and professional and cultural exchange programs. Global corporate citizenship was viewed as an important component of social responsibility.

"The most effective way to achieve stature on corporate citizenship is for companies to proactively link their enterprises to initiatives, internal policies and institutions that in and of themselves demonstrate corporate social responsibility."

"We all need to be really committed to countries where we are involved. We need to establish our credentials as good corporate citizens. This will take different forms for different countries. We need to be good partners with our hosts. We also have to think in the long term and thus be sure to make an investment in time and effort, learn the culture, and encourage localized involvement."

"We do indeed implement these types of programs [CSR] with less a view of counteracting or preventing anti-Americanism than to simply be good corporate citizens. In fact, our approach is to ignore our U.S. roots completely when formulating such initiatives. It is irrelevant to our interests overseas. We believe in thoughtful and small-

scale efforts in the cultural and educational realm and that have a direct impact on the community."

"U.S. companies are not sticking their nose in the sand regarding these [global] issues, as it would be irresponsible to investors. American companies are making an effort worldwide through CSR initiatives ensuring protecting of the environment, observation of labor laws, responsible wages, health and educational initiatives. It's simply 'good business' and reflects a goal of sustainability - long lasting social well-being in the communities which they operate."

"We work with non-profits and business alliances like the National Alliance of Business and the National Community Education Association to create initiatives that serve communities. We actively encourage companies to work together on initiatives for the common good, to build synergy between organizations that have similar missions, to eliminate redundancy between alliances, and to find organizations that can fill in the gaps – in order to ensure a breadth of coverage."

Government Relations and Corporate Diplomacy

Part of citizenship is active participation in government. Corporations as citizens interact directly with foreign governments at local and state levels to provide aid and cultural exchanges, and to negotiate favorable regulations and policies. They are involved in diplomacy, both through their interactions with governments and through direct interactions with local communities. Regard for cultural differences is evident in the data.

"We do a lot for our communities in partnership with local social or government initiatives. Almost all of our initiatives are conducted without fanfare. They are for the community at hand. On certain occasions, such as the cholera initiative with the local government agencies of Latin America, it was much more public due to the inherent nature of the project.

"We participate in a number of educational initiatives worldwide, – e.g., providing free video equipment, satellite dishes, training for schools, and relevant programming. We do these in conjunction with local government officials. These types of things are generally directed by the local communities as we first listen to what their needs are. Then we conduct training so that they can carry on the process independently. We do not advertise these initiatives, although we definitely help in easing government relations related to doing business in-country."

"High profile American companies will always be seen as American, thus they must be sure to cooperate with the local government. They can be models for good Americans. It is all about good corporate citizenship."

"The current CEO of Intel is very active in pushing CSR initiatives worldwide. They are very active in educational initiatives and put a lot of funding into training of teachers, providing computer labs and equipment. They generally work in conjunction with local

government or public entities and ensure that initiatives are legally blessed by the local governments."

"I see governmental agencies – particularly in the EU – as causing difficulties for American businesses that bulldoze their way into foreign markets without showing the proper respect and understanding of these host countries."

"I believe that style is a key ingredient in international dealings – for not only in the world of politics but also in the business community. And while the U.S. has actual diplomats and ambassadors on the ground, I believe firmly that American business figures overseas constitute another important diplomatic contingency that can have a sizeable impact on countering anti-Americanism."

Intercultural Sensitivity

Permeated throughout the responses was the recognition of the need for cultural sensitivity as well as awareness about attitudes and opinions about the United States. There was recognition of the need to build long-term, lasting relationships and not to be perceived as arrogant. Businesses and cultural exchanges as well as training were acknowledged as strategies to enhance cultural sensitivity.

 "The bottom line for me is that we need to become better listeners. People feel Americans are arrogant, although I think that maybe rather than arrogance we are perceived that way because we are always in a hurry to get things done and can come across as steamrollers. We need to understand the cultures that we do business in and listen better. CSR initiatives should be part of your fundamental business model and be tailored to that individual country's needs through the local communities."

"If companies engage in CSR initiatives they must be publicized effectively and in a gracious way – not an arrogant manner. For example, the publicity should highlight what the company has done as opposed to the company itself or the U.S."

"I do have some recommendations for companies working overseas: develop local talent, create programs that require executives to work in unfamiliar markets, and exercise good corporate responsibility with regard to sensitivity training."

"The U.S. attitude comes across to some as, 'if the rest of the world doesn't like it – tough'. For issues like Kyoto, debt relief, poverty and AIDs, land mines, trade pacts, the U.S. needs to provide more assistance and avoid unilateral decisions. We tend to be on one side and the rest of the world on the other."

"I believe that frequent travel to countries where a company does business is equally important – not just to visit operations but also to interact with policymakers, academia, and other business leaders in those countries."

"American business can no longer rest comfortably that they are dominant. Many Europeans feel that they are in a position to take over – for example airlines. In Asia, it is clothing and culture. We used to make everything we wear and use – no longer."

"We also need to make sure that we are sending good corporate ambassadors overseas. There should be a screening process in the U.S. to check their suitability for specific international markets."

"All companies operating overseas should implement some kind of educational program that breeds sensitivity and awareness to a company's international dealings. Such a program would cover topics ranging from globalization and its benefits to international protocol. Each company has its own unique corporate identity and needs which are best served by defining and executing customized programs."

"There was one failed initiative that we have gleaned knowledge from: in 1976 we spread to Germany and tried to take American cultural values into the German market. It was a mistake."

"I am adamantly opposed to any initiative that has even a whiff of an advertising campaign. There are no shortcuts. Any efforts the American business community undertakes should take a long-term view, be nuanced and low-key, and placed in such vehicles such as educational exchange programs, local PR efforts, and training programs that bring foreign hires to the U.S., then send them back to their home base."

Summary

It is an overused cliché, but U.S. transnational corporations think globally and act locally. They think and operate in a transnational sphere with a global mindset; they do not see themselves as American companies, but as global companies. They establish legitimacy in the countries in which they operate by demonstrating good intentions through socially responsible activities that are localized and often developed with local participation. With respect for different cultural values, CSR activities are conducted without fanfare and publicity.

U.S. corporate leaders in the sample were cognizant of the need to be corporate citizens, both globally in respect to global problems and locally through helping provide local solutions and working with foreign governments in diplomatic and partnership roles. There was evidence they were sensitive to cultural contexts, and adopted a long-term orientation to local initiatives, realizing that in many cultures actions speak louder than words.

Discussion – Linking Theory and Practice

The study provides applied examples of intercultural sensitivity and adaption that Zaharna (2000) reckons can expand the theoretical base of international communication and global public relations. The analysis of the data using Strauss and Corbin's (1990) prescription for linking and relating sub-categories by denoting context, strategies and consequences found evidence that interviewees went through stages in the process of intercultural adaption described by Bennett (1993), moving from stages of minimization and acceptance to adaptation and integration. Adaption is the antidote to imperialism.

At the minimization stage, similar to Zaharna's (2001) "in-awareness" concept, interviewees were aware of anti-American sentiment in many parts of the world. They recognized that "the U.S. is 'big' in the eyes of the world and is seen as intimidating," and that "the U.S. attitude comes across to some as, 'if the rest of the world doesn't like it – tough'." They practiced active listening and made efforts to learn local culture and habits, making adjustments for different cultures. Bennett (1993) contends that for intercultural interactions to be successful, both parties must understand both their own culture and the other culture. Working with local nationals was a strategy to accomplish this, as was noted throughout the interviews. Furthermore, there was the recognition that cultural shifts do not come naturally. The need for sensitivity training was evident in the interviews.

Bennett's acceptance stage requires a shift in perspective, while maintaining commitments to values. The task in this stage is to understand that the same behavior can have different meanings in different cultures. In the adaptation stage, people learn to function in a bicultural capacity and take the perspective of another culture and operate successfully within it, which requires both cognitive and behavioral adaptation. It requires an evaluation of the norms of one's own culture as well as of the second culture. Evidence of recognizing values of two cultures was seen in quotes such as: "People feel Americans are arrogant, although I think that maybe rather than arrogance we are perceived that way because we are always in a hurry to get things done and can come across as steamrollers;" and, "If companies engage in CSR initiatives they must be publicized effectively and in a gracious way – not an arrogant manner."

At the stage of integration, people can shift perspectives and frames of reference from one culture to another in a natural way and evaluate situations from multiple frames of reference Bennett, 1993). Global corporations operate in a number of different cultures. Excerpts such as: "Most policies are formulated overseas, tailored to the specific country, on a country-by-country basis;" and, "We need to establish our credentials as good corporate citizens - this will take different forms for different countries," show strategies for moving among cultures. The integration stage is summed up thusly: "We act like a local company, not an American company doing business overseas."

There were examples in the data that CSR activities were conducted in ways that are appropriate for high context cultures. Context does not appear in the message itself, but for many cultures, provides more meaning for the message than do words (Hall, 1976). High context cultures rely on implicit meaning that is often conveyed by actions rather than explicit words. The following sentiment, which shows regard for context, was repeated throughout the interviews: "Almost all of our initiatives are conducted without fanfare. They are for the community at hand."

In terms of Hofstede's cultural dimensions, the United States differs from many other cultures most dramatically in the dimensions of individualism/collectivism and short-term/long-term orientation. On a continuum, U.S. culture is highly individualistic and short-term focused (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). U.S. business often is driven by short-term goals with the focus on the next quarterly report. However, the study showed evidence of awareness of acting for the collective good with long-term orientation, as the following excerpts illustrate: "Businesses should make it clear that they are sincere for the long-term and avoid short-term initiatives which may not be seen as sincere." Long-term orientation is related to Hall's conceptualization of time. Cultural consideration for both time and context are illustrated in the following quote: "Any efforts the American business community undertakes should take a long-term view, be nuanced

and low-key, and placed in such vehicles such as educational exchange programs, local PR efforts, and training programs."

Conclusions and Implications for Global Public Relations

A global perspective of public relations places the process in a transnational public sphere in which international corporations seek legitimacy through responsible corporate citizenship and culturally-sensitive communication. The study found that top-level executives and communication strategists in the sample have a global perspective and position their companies outside of any national boundary. This is done primarily to position their companies as global corporations, which they view as advantageous to international business, but they also acknowledge that U.S. values and business practices are not viewed favorably in all parts of the world.

While holding a global perspective, U.S. business leaders strategically localize their global strategies to adapt to different cultures and work to make their companies as indigenous as possible in the countries in which they operate. They feel a responsibility to be global corporate citizens, engaging in activities that help address global problems. They acknowledge that doing so is good for business. They see CSR programs as valuable tools for establishing legitimacy and credibility in other countries, and view corporate citizenship as an important component of corporate responsibility.

Local Partnerships

It was evident throughout the interviews that one of the most important strategies for developing cross-cultural messages and CSR activities was partnerships with locals in the communities in which U.S. companies operate. In the interview data, it was not always possible to link the responses to business operations in a specific country, but there were similarities as to how cultural adaption was achieved across all of the interviews. In almost every interview, respondents made mention of consulting locals, employing locals, or using locals to develop initiatives as part of their international business strategy.

The recurring theme of local involvement, evident throughout the interviews, addresses the important and thorny issue of how to adapt to a vast array of cultural differences around the globe. It simply is not possible in a lifetime to learn the nuances of every culture, or to fully understand even one different culture. The combination of understanding the processes of intercultural adaptation and the use of cultural natives to interpret deep layers of meaning can lead to successful intercultural communication and negotiations. Both parties are cultural mediators.

U.S. Business Engagement as Corporate Diplomacy

A finding grounded in the data was that international corporations engage in activities that can impact public diplomacy through involvement with foreign governments as well as through CSR activities in foreign countries. Wang (2006) contends that the study of public diplomacy should include the impact of the private and nonprofit sectors in diplomatic efforts since businesses have vast soft power resources and expertise, as well as a global worldview that can be advantageous to public diplomacy. Reinhard (2009) believes that American business leaders should take an active role in public diplomacy since multinational corporations have a record of creative problem solving and building cooperation among nations, and have cutting-edge resources to do so.

A consequence of globalization is that globalized technologies and institutions, such as international corporations, transcend geographic boundaries and diminish the power of individual nation-states (Schwab, 2008). Global problems require multi-lateral, global solutions that international companies can help provide, particularly through CSR efforts. A component of CSR is corporate citizenship, and a component of corporate citizenship is corporate diplomacy.

Limitations and Future Research

A limitation of the research is that the complete interview transcripts were not available for analysis. Although the Zogby report was extensive and provided long excerpts from the interviews as well as an appendix of unused quotes, there may have been important ideas in the original transcripts that were not available for consideration in the current study. Another limitation is the data were collected in 2005; however, most of the activities that were described were on-going and long term. Despite these limitations, the report contained rich information from top-level executives in major U.S. corporations and nationally-recognized thought leaders, whom it would have been difficult to have access to otherwise.

This study found evidence of participation by international corporations in diplomatic activities, which has been explored in previous research (Wang, 2006; White, Vanc, & Coman, 2011). More research is needed to further explore the concept of corporate diplomacy and the role of the private and non-profit sectors as non-state actors in public diplomacy.

The current study used a few seminal theories of intercultural communication, but there are many other intercultural and international communication theories that were not explored. More research is needed to link culture and global public relations from different theoretical perspectives.

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Table 1
CEO's and Corporate Leaders Interviewed by Zogby International

Altria Group, Inc. - Mike Pfiel, VP Corporate Communications

Anheuser-Busch Companies, Inc. - Patrick Stokes, President & CEO

Bell South Corp. - William Pate, VP Advertising and Public Relations

Boeing - Ambassador Thomas Pickering, Senior VP International Relations

The Clorox Company - Jerry Johnston, President & CEO

Colgate Palmolive Company - Jim Figura, VP Consumer Research & Insights

Countrywide Financial Corp. - Andrew Bielanski, Sr., Senior Director Marketing and PR

Deutsche Bank Securities - Wolfgang Winter, Managing Director

Discovery Communications, Inc. - Judith McHale, President & CEO

Forbes, Inc. - Kip Forbes, Vice Chairman

General Mills, Inc. - Tom Forsythe, Director of Corporate Communications

General Motors Corp. - Orlando Padilla, Director of Public Policy

Hasbro - Alan Hassenfeld, Chairman of the Board & Former CEO

HBO, Inc. - Richard Plepler, Executive VP

Intel Corp. - Hannes Schwaderer, Country Manager for Germany, Austria, & Switzerland

InterGen - Robert Morris, VP Public Affairs

Levi Strauss & Co. - Phil Marineau, President & CEO

Mars, Inc. - Paul Michaels, President

McDonald's Corp. - Jack Daly, Senior VP, Corporate Relations

Michelin North America - Michael Fanning, VP Corporate Affairs

Motorola, Inc. - Norman Sandler, Director of Global Strategic Issues

Pepsi Cola International - Salman Amin, CMO

Starbucks Corp. - Martin Coles, President

State Farm Insurance - Ed Rust, Chairman & CEO

Travel Industry Association of America - Roger Dow, President and CEO

United Air Lines, Corp - Jerry Dow, Director of Worldwide Communications

United Parcel Service of America, Inc. - Mike Eskew, Chairman & CEO

United Parcel Service of America, Inc. - Ken Sternad, VP of Public Relations

US BanCorp - Steve Dale, Public Relations

Wachovia Corp - Jim Garrity, CMO

Wells Fargo - Chris Hammond, VP Business Development

Table 2
Thought Leaders Interviewed by Zogby International

Graham Allison, Douglas Dillon Professor of Government, JFK School

Nicholas Checa, Managing Director, Kissinger McLarty Associates

Lt. General Daniel Christman, Senior VP, International Affairs, US Chamber

Ambassador Edward Djerjian, Exec. Director, Baker Institute, Rice University

Ambassador Edward Gabriel, former US Ambassador to Morocco

Dr. John Hamre, President, CSIS

Alberto Ibarguen, Publisher, *Miami Herald*

Dr. Marvin Kalb, Senior Fellow, Shorenstein Center

Noel Lateef, Director Foreign Policy Association

Dr. Joseph Nye, Former Dean, JFK School of Government, Harvard University

Dr. Shibley Telhami, Anwar Sadat Chair, University of Maryland

Dr. James Steinberg, Senior Fellow, Brookings Institute

John Sullivan, Executive Director, CIPE

Shashi Tharoor, United Nations Under Secretary for Communications & Public Information

Outcomes of Communication Audits

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Abstract

This is the fifth in a series of studies and reports on communication audits by this research team. A population study was conducted of established, nationally recognized communication audit consultants (N=32). Closed-ended probes asked audit consultants to identify indicators of successful and unsuccessful audits. The most important indicator of successful audits is that it results in a strategic plan for the client organization (77% said this was "very important"), followed by client pays bill (71% "very important") and client funds audit follow-up study (45% "very important"). The most important indicator of an unsuccessful audit is when the client shelves and ignores the audit report (90% said this was a "very important" indicator of an unsuccessful audit), followed by client challenges the methodology of the audit (50% "very important") and client disputes bill (33% "very important"). Open-ended comments regarding successful and unsuccessful audits indicated that assessing outcomes is complex, nuanced, and varies from organization to organization.

Introduction

Success. A simple word. Everyone knows loves it and uses it with relish. In the classical sense, the word means winning. Achieving the goal. Crossing the finish line first.

But, when used in the communications audit business, the definition of the word is not so simple. It does not necessarily mean winning, as in "we won the game". Or, it may not mean first to finish. Or even achieving a goal.

More often than not, success is a complicated and very personalized, consensualized concept having more to do with a variety of self-defined, academic and/or relationship enhancements that can be failure in one organization and a time to break out the bubbly in another.

In other words, success is a relative concept that means only what we want it to mean when trying to understand how to value the results of an audit of an organization's communications plans, strategies and tactics and, of course, results.

Forgive the cliché here, but success in the audit business is one of those identities that is easily seen, but not so easily understood, explained or—to be totally truthful—communicated. Thus it is that this study explores a seemingly endless number of definitions of the concept of success, while admitting that we don't have a single measure or standard against which we can measure all audits.

A personal story might best illustrate the point: Several years ago, an author of this paper conducted an audit of a large, privately held food processing company. The audit was completed using all the standard qualitative and quantitative measures. The process was smooth. People cooperated at every level. The population sample was more than adequate.

The results, unfortunately, were quite negative. They pointed to an organization in communication crisis. Trust between the organization's various job/functional levels was non-existent, unrest within the blue collar ranks was rampant. This was clearly a place where serious change was going to be necessary to maximize the human, financial and manufacturing resources.

And that was the story we told to the executive committee of management. To our surprise, they denied. In full. There was total disbelief among them. "It's just not possible," they said as one. And no matter how we tried to convince them with the data, denial won the day. We were dismissed; our bill was paid promptly. And we never got a chance to help implement any remedial action.

With that knowledge, could the audit be termed a success? Certainly it did the job it was supposed to do, alerting management to a serious problem in communication throughout the organization. Yet, obviously, no self-respecting consultant would call that audit a success.

But, what is success? How do consultants who are experts in the field define that word. More important, what expectations should one have when conducting an audit? Are there results that we can agree with that define the term?

The answer is, as we said earlier, complicated. But, in the end, understandable.

Stream of Research on Communication Audits

This paper is the fifth in the stream of research analyzing communication audits. In the first paper (Williams & Dozier, 2008; Williams & Dozier, 2009, November), we explored audits that were conducted by one of the authors over a twenty-five year time span. (A career tour, as one academic friend put it.) Some 23 audits were examined to identify factors important to the process. On the one hand, it was a limited study because the audits were all based on one

company's experience. On the other hand, we were able to get first-hand knowledge (and depth) of each of the studies, something that would have been more difficult in a broader based study.

In the second paper (Williams & Dozier, 2009, March), we explored in greater depth the results of two of the most successful audits and two of the less-than-successful audits used in the earlier study. Those two studies created a working framework of three general categories of project determinants, elements considered essential to the process: 1) logistics, including such items as budge, methodology, length of time for the process, and the complexity of the organization; 2) coincidental items, including the experience levels of the public relations staff (and the actual buyer), cooperation of HR, an organization's previous audit experiences, financial strength of the organization, and "status" of the communication department within the organization; and 3) cultural attributes of the organization being studied, including management support, politics, and openness to bad news and candor levels.

In the third paper (Williams & Dozier, 2010, March), we reported partial results of a population study of consultants in the United States that conduct communication audits as a significant portion of their business. This allowed us to (1) expand the scope to the population of other consultancies, strengthening external validity; (2) move from a multiple case study methodology to a quantified process that other researchers may replicate; (3) explored philosophies and techniques used by audit consultants, especially their client reporting strategies, and definitions of success; and (4) gained further understanding of how recommendations that emanate from an audit are framed, communicated and linked to organizational acceptance and successful outcomes.

In the fourth paper (Williams & Dozier, 2011, March), we explored the barriers that communication audits encounter when they seek to conduct communication audits of organizations. The most common roadblock is "lack of trust in the organization," with 87% of consultants indicating that this roadblock occurs sometimes or often. This was followed by "not enough time available from the communication staff (70%) and "no support from management" (56%). The qualitative findings provided additional insights.

In this fifth study of communication audits, we investigate the positive and negative outcomes of communication audits. As in past reports, the present study combines both quantitative and qualitative data to provide a more robust and complete understanding of the outcomes of communication audits.

Research Questions

As previously noted (Williams & Dozier, 20112), communication audits are objective reports of an organization's internal communication, based on a comprehensive study of the communication philosophy, concepts, structures, flow and practice within organization, in order to improve communication and organizational effectiveness (Hargie & Tourish, 2002). As such communication audits are powerful tools for both communicators and organization management to understand and improve communication processes and organizational outcomes. In this study, we examine the positive and negative outcomes of communication audits from the perspective of a distinguished panel of communication audit consultants who participated in an online survey.

Methods

This research project sought to conduct a population study of established, nationally recognized communication audit consultants. Louis C. Williams assembled the list of communication consultants, based on his knowledge of the top communication audit consultants

in the United States, as well as input from others in the field. Thus, the sampling strategy was purposive/judgmental, not a probability sampling technique. For this reason, this study follows the methodology and data analysis strategy of a quantitative case study (Kafka & Dozier, 2009; Allen & Dozier, 2010; Allen & Dozier, 2012) for the quantitative portion (see also Williams & Dozier, 2010, 2011). For the qualitative analysis, the research design most closely resembles a Type 3 holistic multiple case study design (Yin, 1989).

The original sample frame consisted of 48 communication audit consultants. Of those three were employed by the same organization. After conferring with the participants, one participant responded for the entire organization. This reduced the valid sample to 45. Another communication audit consultant on the list was no longer active in the business, reducing the valid sample to 44 participating consultants/organizations.

Data were collected using an online survey, with an embedded link sent to each participant. Multiple emails were sent in December 2009, and January 2010. Responses were received from 32 participants, a 72.7% completion rate. Data were downloaded from the online survey and transferred into a data file for statistical analysis (SPSS 19 for Macs).

To test relationships, the following decision rules were utilized. Because the present research involved a purposive or judgmental sampling strategy, quantitative relationships are not tested by statistical inferences from samples to populations. Rather, the researchers utilized the decision rules previously reported by Kafka and Dozier (2009).

A relationship is rejected and the null accepted if the independent variable accounts for less than 5% of the variance in the dependent variable. If the independent variable accounts for 5% or more of the variance in the independent variable but less than 10% of variance, then the relationship is confirmed and denoted as a *weak* relationship. If the independent variable accounts for 10% or more of the variance in the dependent variable, but less than 20% of variance, the relationship is confirmed and denoted as a *moderate* relationship. If the independent variable accounts for 20% or more of the variance in the dependent variable, the relationship is confirmed and denoted as a *strong* relationship.

This brings quantitative rigor to the study of small populations (see Kafka & Dozier, 2009) or to purposive/judgmental samples such as those used in this study. The goal is not to generalize to a larger population from a sample, as is explicitly done when tests of statistical significance are invoked. Rather, the goal is to assess the relative strength of the relationship with a particular population or non-representative sample (in the statistical sense) and to make judgments about relationships that are interesting to pursue in future studies and those that seem less promising.

The online questionnaire utilized a mix of closed-ended and open-ended questions. The instrument was designed in two phases. First, the two researchers designed a series of open-ended probes. Then the first author, who worked as a communication audit consultant for several decades, completed the open-ended probes, as if he were a participant in his own study. His responses were then used to design closed-ended questions for the quantitative portion of the study. After completing the quantitative items, participants were then asked to provide additional comments. In the sections that follow, the quantitative data analysis is presented first. Then qualitative findings are reported next.

Results of the Quantitative Study

The results of the study reported in this paper focus on positive and negative outcomes that communication audit consultants encounter. Participants were given the following written instructions in the questionnaire:

> *Audit consultants define <u>successful audits</u> in different ways, using different indicators. For the following, please indicate the importance of each indicator in your professional evaluation of a <u>successful</u> audit.*

Figure 1
Breakdown of Responses to the Closed-ended Items Regarding Successful Outcomes of Communication Audits.
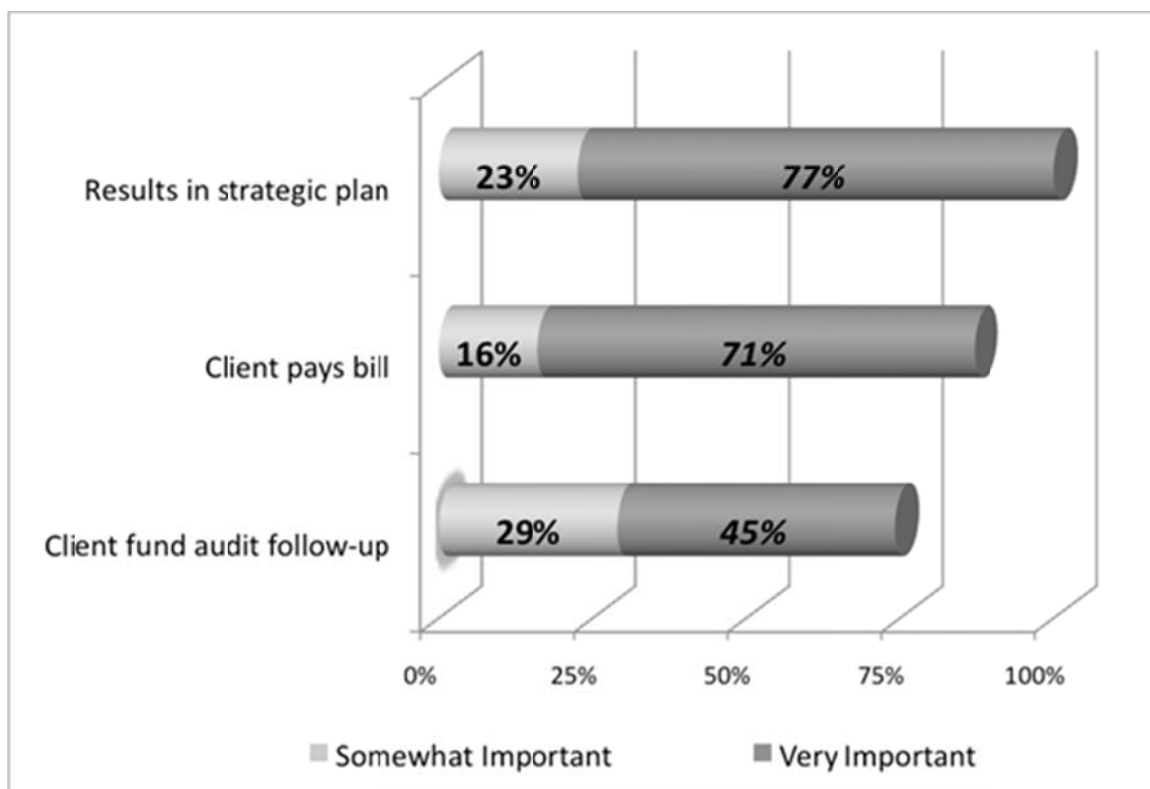
The answer choices were very important, somewhat important, or not important. The results are displayed in Figure 1.

The most important indicator of a successful audit is that the audit process results in a strategic plan. All participants (100%) said that a strategic plan was a "very" or "somewhat" important outcome of a successful audit. A second important indicator—and especially from the consultant's point of view—is that the client pay the bill for the communication audit. Fully 87% of participants reported that paying the bill is a "very" or "somewhat" important indicator of a communication audit. Another important indicator of a successful audit is when the client funds a post-audit follow-up. Fully 74% of participants said that funding a post-audit follow-up was a "very" or "somewhat" important outcome of a successful audit. Subsequent to the three closed-ended questions about successful audits, participants were asked if any other indicators define

positive audit outcomes. These findings are reported in the following section, *Results of the Qualitative Study.*

In addition to positive indicators of successful audits, the consultants in the sample were asked to indicate the importance of three indicators of unsuccessful audits. Specifically, participants were instructed as follows:

> *As with positive outcomes, audit consultants define <u>unsuccessful audits</u> in different ways. For the following, please indicate the importance of each indicator in your professional evaluation of an <u>unsuccessful</u> audit.*

As with positive indicators, each indicator was rated as very important, somewhat important, or not important. The results are displayed in Figure 2.

The most important indicator of an unsuccessful audit is when the audit report is placed on a shelf and ignored. Fully 97% of participants said this was a "very" or "somewhat" important indicator of an unsuccessful audit; of those, 90% said it was "very important." The second most important indicator of an unsuccessful audit is when the client disputes the billing for the audit. About 83% of participants indicated that disputes over billings are "very" or "somewhat" important indicators of an unsuccessful audit. Third most important indicator of an unsuccessful audit is when the client challenges the methodology of the communication audit. Eighty percent of participants indicated that this was a "very" or "somewhat" important indicator of an unsuccessful audit. Subsequent to these closed-ended questions about unsuccessful audits, participants were asked if they could identify and describe any other indicators of unsuccessful audits. These findings are reported below.

Figure 2
Breakdown of Responses to the Closed-ended Items Regarding Unsuccessful Outcomes of Communication Audits
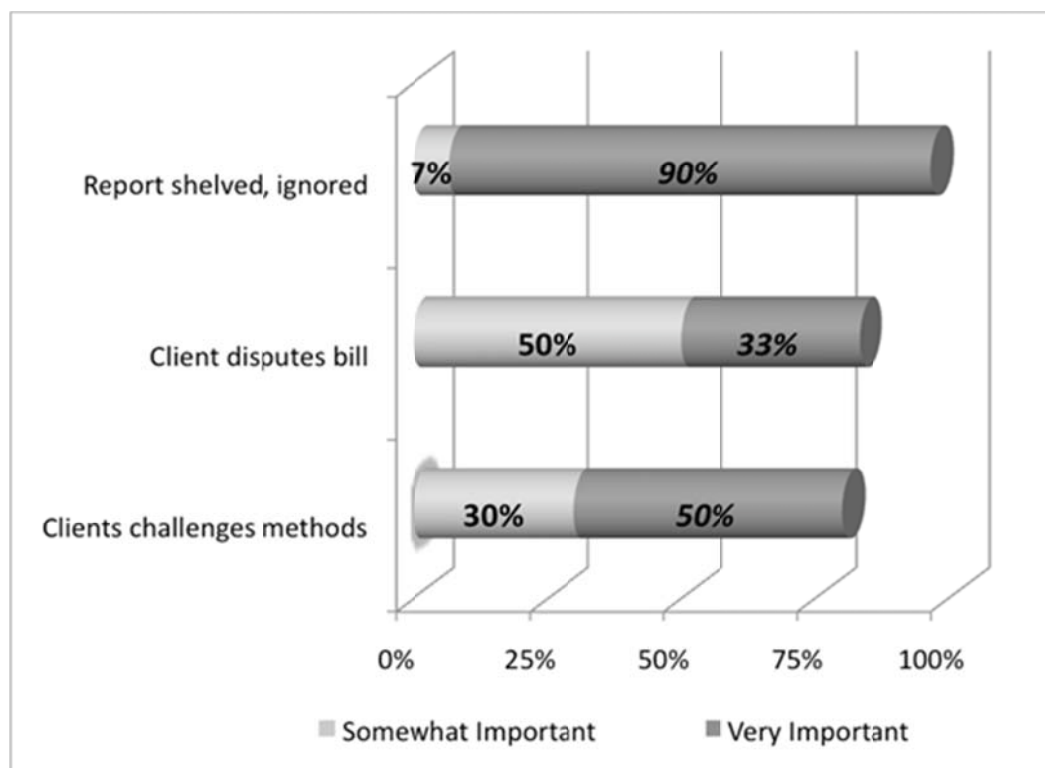
The indicators of positive and negative outcomes of audits were correlated with gender, years of professional experience as a communication audit consultant, and percentage of total consulting business dedicated to communication audits.

Regarding positive outcomes, men participating in the survey considered client funding of an audit follow-up as more important than did women participants, r (29) = -.32, $p < .05$. Gender accounted for 10% of the explained variance in this indicator of positive outcomes of audits, a moderate relationship. The greater the percentage of a consultant's practice dedicated to conducting audits, the less important he or she considered client funding of audit follow-ups, r (29) = -.24, $p = .10$. Percentage of practice dedicated to audits accounts for 6% of the explained variance in the importance of audit follow-ups, a weak relationship.

Regarding negative outcomes, the more years consultants have conducted communication audits, the more importance they place on challenges of audit methodologies as an indicator of an unsuccessful audit, r (28) = .35, $p < .05$. Years of experience as a communication audit consultant accounts for 12% of the explained variance in the importance of methodological challenges as indicators of unsuccessful audits, a moderate relationship. Women in the study considered shelving and ignoring the audit report as a more important indicator of unsuccessful audits than did participating men, r (28) = .22, $p = .13$. Gender accounts for 5% of the explained variance in the importance of shelving/ignoring audit reports as an indicator of unsuccessful audits, a weak relationship. The greater the percentage of consultants' businesses committed to communication audits, the less importance such consultants place on challenges to audit methodologies, r (28) = -.24, $p = .11$. Percentage of business dedicated to communication audits accounts for 6% of the explained variance in the importance of methodological challenges as indicators of unsuccessful audits, a weak relationship.

Results of the Qualitative Study

In addition to the quantitative (closed-ended) questions, two open-ended questions were asked as follow-ups. Subsequent to closed-ended questions about indicators of successful audits, participants were asked: *Are there any other indicators that you use to define positive results? Please describe:*

Subsequent to closed-ended questions about indicators of successful audits, participants were asked: *Are there any other indicators that you use to define negative results? Please describe:*

The responses to this question are provided in Tables 1 and 2. We consider it noteworthy that 21 of the 32 participants in the study (66%) took the time to provide a written response to the positive indicator probe. Of the 32 participants, 15 or 47% provided written responses to the probe about indicators of unsuccessful communication audits. Participants had a variety of ideas about how to evaluate successful and unsuccessful audits, and which indicators to use.

There were, however, significant differences in their perceptions as to what constitutes a positive result. As might be expected, many of the comments focused on the general area of implementing a plan or whether changes were implemented, or the development and introduction of benchmark metrics based on the audit results, or the management's explicit expression of satisfaction with a job well done. Some felt that if the audit results were shared with employees, one could consider that a positive marker. Still others talked vaguely about results where the organization "actually improves" or exhibits "learning and insight."

And, also as expected, the reverse situation, where the consultants perceived negatives post-audit, many of the comments covered the territory of "failure to adopt findings" or a

management unable to accept communication as important or just didn't buy in to the results or was faulty in follow-up options. Some thought a negative result would mean a challenge to the findings.

It was quite clear in both the positive and negative comments that this group of consultants is not worried about being paid. There was a sense of confidence in the methodologies chosen to get the job done, the veracity of the results, and the value provided to an organization. Just as clearly, the group felt that meaningful action must take place post audit. And this action must include a communication of results component, a plan component, and follow-up considerations.

What was perhaps the most interesting aspect of the open-ended comments was what was not there, for the most part: consideration of how an audit could affect the desired outcomes of the organization, as in creating a sense of teamwork, or new levels of efficiency, or understanding, or employee satisfaction. Only one comment specifically addressed this topic, although there was some general consideration given to a discussion of "new behaviors" and how "the organization actually improves". What also was not there was any reference to improved communication to the audiences served. That is, did the results of the audit make a difference in how or what was communicated following the implementation of a plan?

And, although our original close-ended question on this subject spoke of a "strategic" plan, not one of the comments picked up on that word, although one could make the case that in talking about "improving the organization" or "new behaviors" the implication is that a plan must be strategic.

And, other than one comment that covered "short and long term" elements to a plan, there was no discussion of what should be found in a plan.

Only one comment covered the possibility that it was possible some key information was missed, and thus could have led to recommendations being inappropriate. We conclude that negatives were not a major consideration for this group; this is a very confident group of consultants.

Conclusions

Success, as we said earlier, is a most difficult concept to understand and fulfill when grappling with communications audit efforts. Consultants who conduct audits have huge responsibilities and pressures to overcome. It is not inexpensive to carry out a sophisticated, thoughtful probe into the far corners of an organization's communication efforts. Expectations for the "right" result can be a powerful force when voiced by various management levels (especially the top), communication staff (which has much to lose in a negative report), HR (which senses it could do the job as well or better than anyone) and those whose voices got heard in the process (and may or may not believe management will act on the information they provide). Worse, those groups have strong feelings on what "good" communication is not, how to recognize it and how to make it work properly. Why else would engineers or accountants or lawyers so very often be named to oversee the communications effort of an organization? The reverse is never likely to happen. Communicators don't—and are not expected—to know how to complete mechanical drawings or conduct labor negotiations or litigate a case in court.

This overlay of history, as well as the perceived origins of the communication profession (e.g., spinmeisters, publicity hounds, influence peddlers, stuntsters), make it difficult to even gain consensus on the understanding of what the problem really is, let alone solve them.

Thus it is that consultants are cautious about their ability to recommend significant changes to communication flow and content in order to make the business more successful. They may know in their heart of hearts that good communication can grease the skids to success, but they are hard pressed to prove it.

In truth, not enough research has been done on communication to prove that there is one right way to succeed. There is so much relativity involved: corporate culture, resources, knowledge, training, expertise, personalities, turf battles, power, position within the organization, workforce make-up, and more. Two plus two may add up to four for the accountants each and every time, but for communicators, coming to that conclusion may make for a very bad idea. If coming up with the number four gets you into trouble, you may want to settle for 3 ½. Or even 3. It's all relative.

All of which is to say that defining success in conducting communication audits is a relative subject. It's a given that in some cases just the very fact that an audit is conducted is a huge sign of success. Forget a long-range plan; it may make more sense to develop some basic tactics that you can introduce.

The Holy Grail of a communication audit search may be to implement steps that will have organizational impact, outcomes that are business related, but it may also be much more simple—even mundane—helping management talk about communication with comfort, thinking twice before saying no to even having a plan. Again, it's all relative: Where are you coming from, and where are you attempting to go.

Even the subject of metrics is clouded with possible this's and that's. Let's say you set a metric goal based on benchmarks you've set. And your goal is to move one point up in a period of a year, and you only go up ½ point. Is that failure? Or is it success?

Because of these factors and more, definitions of success must be gauged very cautiously. This study would seem to confirm that. The consultants we surveyed—all sophisticated and experienced—are not going to be pigeon-holed into an absolute answer to the question. They know better.

There are dreams, certainly. But, when the chips are down and the money spent, consultants are realists. They understand that they can only lead their clients as far as their clients will allow themselves to be led. And, if that means doing a fast walk instead of a run, so be it. If that means doing a run instead of fast walk, so be that. Their job is to recognize which pace is appropriate, and make it happen.

It's all relative.

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Table 1
Open-Ended Responses to the Probe:
"Are there any <u>other</u> indicators that use to define <u>positive</u> results?"

Key metrics/evaluative measures demonstrate new behaviors, changes as a result of programs implemented from audit process.

Analysis of results includes business outcomes -- correlation to business results.

Client communicates audit findings internally. Client implements audit recommendations. Client expresses satisfaction with findings.

That the client organization actually improved as a result of actions taken following the audit.

Immediate learning and insight
A benchmark followed by a review of progress as plan is implemented.

Broad base of management support for the changes recommended and a commitment to change

Payments made to me have nothing to do with a successful audit, just managing a successful consultancy. Successful audits lead to changes in the communication department that result in improved numbers when they re-audit. It's that simple.

Client clearly sees actionable items that, when acted upon, will improve communication and organizational results

Not all changes are immediate, some occur over a period of time. That is, the auditor may never see the full ramifications of the audit. A successful audit is one where the client agrees to the logic within - that findings are appropriate and that conclusions and recommendation flow properly from the findings. They may or may not agree with the conclusions and recommendations but they agree that the conclusions are properly supported by the findings and that the recommendations are supported by the conclusions.

Short and long-term improvements are made to communications and results are communicated back out to the organization at large -- especially those who participated in the process

Client gets an excellent understanding of what the organisation is like at a point in time - strengths, weaknesses, opportunities to improve, priorities etc. This understanding is such that they can see what actions will improve the performance of the organisation via improved communication.

Payment for services is an expected contractual obligation for services provided. I do not consider this a metric for a successful audit. Resulting in a plan is most important. I would put as second adopting the plan, implementing action steps, and measuring success against that plan.

Measures of impact on budget, effectiveness, staff morale
Client acts on recommendations and they work.

Implementing recommended changes is the most important measure of success. Whether they do this with or without me doesn't matter. I just want them to follow through. This is the most frustrating part of deliver such consulting.

Table 2
Open-Ended Responses to the Probe:
"Are there any <u>other</u> indicators that use to define <u>negative</u> results?"

Client fails to adopt recommended findings. Client fails to communicate findings to those who supported the process.

Client claims results are "wrong" -- thinks that he knows better than the respondents.

Arguing over billing and methodology rarely, if ever, occurs with us. We may get questions about our methodology, but it is never negated by the client.

Ignoring the report and refusing to implement indicated changes are the top two for me

Management change causes delays. Employees or those involved never receive follow-up.

Lack of commitment to organizational change. Reluctance or refusal to communicate the results to the organization

I haven't had an unsuccessful audit. The worst that has happened is that my initial client left a company and the audit was never completed by a successor who didn't care about measurement.

1. lack of top management buy-in 2. Organization does not value recommendations sufficiently to provide resources necessary to take action.

It has not happened to me, but if a client "denied" the findings then this would be an unsuccessful audit. Rarely do clients argue over billings as mostly my audits are priced in advance. I have never had methodology challenged as this always agreed in advance.

we missed some key information so our recommendations were wrong or irrelevant.

Methodology should be clarified at the start and client should be reminded of the methods along the way. Arguing over methods or billing are usually result of the client not liking the results, in the sense that they may require too much change or a change in strategic direction.

Senior management does not buy in/support.

Even though I always get the methodology approved up front, I have had clients who didn't like the results to later complain about the methods used to gather the information.

Most important indicator is no follow through to recommendations. It's more than putting the report on the shelf. It's a coordinate effort of excuses and distractions to avoid responding to the improvements that would deliver more value to their organization.

The Value of Twitter as a Crisis Communication Tactic

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Abstract

Social media have had a huge impact on public relations practice by shifting the power away from organisations to social media users and promoting two-way communication (Pavlik, 2007; SNCR, 2008; Wright & Hinson, 2009).

Existing literature focuses largely on the influence of the Internet upon crisis management and crisis communication (DiNardo, 2002; Gonzalez-Herrero & Smith, 2008; Taylor & Kent, 2006) but has only recently begun to explore the impact of social media and, in particular, the 140-character Twitter messaging service (Fearn-Banks, 2011; Smith, 2010).

This study explores the role and value of Twitter as a crisis communications tactic through the qualitative analysis of two recent high-profile European mass transport crisis case studies.

These were (a) the Eurostar crisis of late 2009 when five London-Paris high speed trains were trapped beneath the English Channel by snow-related problems and (b) the performance of Eurocontrol (Europe's air traffic coordination system) in managing the "Icelandic ash cloud" travel disruption to air travel and communicating with passengers in April 2010. One case study focuses on the impact upon organisational reputation when Twitter-based communication is ignored, whilst the other identifies the reputational benefits of continuous engagement using the messaging service.

The case study-based qualitative methodology used two approaches – mini-depth interviews (Malhotra & Birks, 2007; McGivern, 2003) with key participants in the management or monitoring of communication in both crises and content analysis of blogs and social media that commented on these crises (Wrigley & Fontenot, 2010; Smith, 2010). Literature concerning crisis management, crisis communication and social media is reviewed.

The findings of the research have led to the preparation of best practice guidelines for using Twitter in a crisis. These include preparation and development of awareness of corporate Twitter 'handles' ahead of crises, inclusion of social media in crisis communication plans alongside traditional media, and flexibility to maintain social media dissemination and responses around the clock until the main period of the crisis has subsided.

Introduction

Crisis management is an important function for organisations and failure to have a crisis communications plan in place can result in serious harm to stakeholders, financial losses and even the downfall of a company (Coombs, 2007). The Internet has transformed the way that stakeholders access information and this has had an impact on PR practice, including crisis management (Pavlik, 2007).

The emergence of social media has shifted the power of communication away from PR practitioners and towards social media users (Smith, 2010). Instead of traditional communication, where organisations would disseminate information to its stakeholders, social networks encourage two-way communication based on a mutual understanding between a company and its stakeholders (Tench & Yeomans, 2006). In the UK alone, over 30 million adults access the internet daily and 43% of users post to social networking sites (Office for National Statistics, 2010). Social media allows communication to flow 24 hours a day which means companies need to adapt their communication strategies accordingly. This new technology empowers citizens by giving them an active audience to voice their opinions to, which can have both a positive and negative impact on a company. According to Social Media Today (2010), Twitter is the third most popular social networking site in the world and has over 175 million registered users. The information network connects users to a vast amount of information and allows individuals to connect with other users, organisations and the media through 140 character 'tweets' or by uploading photos and other media (Twitter, 2011).

The purpose of this research was to determine the role of Twitter as a crisis communications tactic. It examined how Twitter can facilitate an organisation's crisis response, the motivations of individuals using Twitter, and perceptions of the value of Twitter as a valuable and efficient crisis communications tactic in order to prepare proposals for best practice.

It uses crises surrounding Eurostar and Eurocontrol as case studies to investigate the role of Twitter as a crisis communications tactic. Eurostar experienced a crisis in December 2009 after five of its trains travelling from Paris to London broke down due to temperature variations in the Channel tunnel trapping 2,000 passengers for up to 16 hours (TechCrunch, 2011). Four days later services were resumed, however Eurostar failed to communicate with stakeholders through Twitter, resulting in angry customers tweeting in place of the company (Business Zone, 2009). The Eurostar case study shows the importance of the role of social media in crisis management as many customers posted on Twitter seeking information (Business Zone, 2009).

In April 2010, an Icelandic volcano erupted causing the closure of some of Europe's busiest airports (Figaro Digital, 2011). In response, Eurocontrol, the European Organisation for the Safety of Air Navigation, kept airlines, passengers and press up-to-date with the latest information using Twitter (Social Media Series Blog, 2011). During this time the press communicated that Eurocontrol's Twitter account was the main channel for air travel developments and this saw the number of followers jump from 350 to over 7000. As a result of the way Eurocontrol handled the crisis its reputational position changed and the organisation is now more highly regarded (Social Media Series Blog, 2011). Both case studies illustrated the effect Twitter can have on a company's reputation as a result of a crisis and will be analysed in-depth later.

Although there is research concerning crisis management and the Internet there is currently little regarding the impact of social media. Despite this, many organisations have been criticised for the ineffective use of Twitter during a crisis (PR Moment, 2011). According to Jim

Preen (PR Moment, 2010) Twitter is ideal for updating customers with information quickly, but ignoring the social network can place reputation at risk. Compared with Facebook, Twitter is designed for a constant flow of information enabling companies to frequently communicate updates with stakeholders (Figaro Digital, 2011). This research will add to existing crisis management studies and by analysing two case studies will demonstrate the role of Twitter as a crisis communication tactic.

Crisis Management and the Internet

The Internet has transformed the way publics access information and this presents major implications for PR (Pavlik, 2007). Consumers can now publish their content online and this is putting pressure on organisations by placing them in the spotlight and attracting other disaffected customers (Brown, 2009). Relationships with stakeholders are also being transformed by the Internet as consumers can communicate openly about an organisation (Van Der Merwe, Pitt & Abratt, 2005). Although the web provides an attentive audience to those with a problem against a company, it also gives businesses the opportunity to respond efficiently and minimise the spread of incorrect information (Haig, 2000).

Pavlik (2007) argues that the web 2.0 is forcing practitioners to engage in two-way communication because the Internet is empowering consumers. Organisations can be left out of conversations if they do not respond. An example is the American Red Cross which was unaware of the power of social media until Hurricane Katrina hit in 2005 (SNCR, 2008). As the charity had no online monitoring in place it was not able to monitor criticism and therefore was unprepared to respond effectively. In addition to criticism, the Red Cross was also subject to misinformation regarding relief efforts by unofficial sources, which may have also upset those affected by the hurricane. In response, the organisation hired a new media specialist to monitor online conversation and reply to comments.

DiNardo (2002) believes the Internet is a useful crisis communications tool as it allows organisations to reach a large audience with in-depth information, consistently. As it allows for two-way communication, companies are able to provide and share information with publics allowing solutions to be developed together. The Internet also allows organisations to monitor their environment online, prepare a crisis communications plan that incorporates the Internet, respond to crises using online tools, and establish Internet-based actions post-crisis (González-Herrero & Smith, 2008).

Blogger Jeff Jarvis's negative experience with Dell's customer service (the so-called Dell Hell) illustrated how citizen-generated content can have an effect on brand reputation. Jarvis blogged trenchant criticism on his website Buzzmachine and quickly attracted a large group of Dell customers who voiced similar concerns (Market Sentinel, Onalytica and Immediate Future 2005). Jarvis became their de facto spokesperson and soon the story reached mainstream media. Market Sentinel, Onalytica and Immediate Future (2005) studied the influence that bloggers have on brand reputation using the Dell Hell example. The research concluded that blogs can be influential, especially if they voice the concerns of others, and this can have a negative impact on a brand.

Wigley and Fontenot (2009) also examined citizen-generated content in relation to the Virginia Tech shootings in 2007. Practitioners have always faced problems with the media using non-official sources but now they have to deal with new technologies that allow the media to collect information from non-official sources (Wigley and Fontenot, 2009). The study analysed

1161 sources used in the media coverage of the shootings. Findings show that 6.5% of sources were citizen-generated and reporters were more likely to use this content than official statements during the beginning of the crisis. Although this percentage is small, it showed that citizen-generated content is being used in coverage and practitioners need to react instantly in order to gain control of the message.

Social Media

Social media can be defined as a two-way form of media which allows users to create personal identities through dialogue and self-presentation (Smith, 2010). This new communication technology has shifted the power of communication away from PR practitioners and towards social media users. Pavlik (2007) noted that it can be difficult to know how to communicate online where the social and cultural rules differ to those offline. However, he identified transparency, clarity and immediacy as being key elements to consider when planning a response.

SNCR, The Society for New Communications Research, (2008) examined the adoption of social media by communications professionals and found that of 237 organisations surveyed, 56% used social networks in their communications plan and 57% of respondents believe that social media tools were increasingly valuable as more customers use them. In addition, 27% said social media is a core element in communications strategy. The main goals for usage of social media were to enhance relationships, improve reputation and seek consumer feedback (SNCR, 2008).

Wright and Hinson (2009) found that increasing adoption of social media by organisations was impacting on PR practice, globally. They found that 73% agreed that social media has changed the way organisations communicate and 68% felt social media has changed the way external communications are handled. 88% also agreed that social media has made communications more instant as it forces companies to respond to criticism more efficiently.

Twitter

Twitter is an information network that connects users to various information depending on their own personal interests (Twitter, 2011). Users are able to express opinions in 140 characters called tweets and share photos and other media with their followers. Twitter (2011) currently has over 175 million registered users and 95 million tweets are written per day.

According to Fearn-Banks (2011), an increasing number of companies are now using social media to prevent and deal with crises. Whilst monitoring Twitter, Coca-Cola recently discovered a tweet from a frustrated customer who was having difficulty in redeeming a prize from the My Coke reward program (Fearn-Banks, 2011). The customer, who had over 10,000 followers, received an apology on Twitter from the organisation and help with obtaining the prize. To show his appreciation the customer changed his Twitter picture to a photo of himself holding a can of Coke. This case example illustrated how Twitter can be used as a tool for monitoring conversations and responding to disgruntled customers thus allowing a company to take preventative action.

Fearn-Banks (2011) considers that social media is an effective method for monitoring and participating in two-way communication and is useful for emergency communications as information can be disseminated efficiently. The view that Twitter can facilitate communication between an organisation and its stakeholders does not mean that all companies are engaging in

this. Rybalko and Seltzer (2010) found that, although social networks provide useful information and are easy to use, they are not used to their full potential as primary tools by *Fortune* 500 companies. This study of two recent crises contributes to the understanding of the potential social media has as a communication tool for organisations and also highlights that companies are still unsure of how to use social networks to their full advantage.

When examining crisis communications and Twitter, insights can be sought into the manner by which individuals use the social network. Smith (2010) found interest in a topic is an important factor for users becoming involved with conversation on Twitter. This suggests that users may be more interested in belonging to a community and representing an issue than sharing their own personal insights (Smith, 2010). However, his study focused on interactivity following the Haiti earthquake in 2010 and, although this positions social media as a tool for crisis management, it may only be representative for extreme disasters and not reputational crises.

Research Methodology

This research uses an inductive approach as it is an exploratory study in which the objectives are investigated in order to develop general conclusions or theories (Trochim, 2006). Its aim is to consider the role of the social media tool Twitter as a crisis communication tactic. The research objectives have been developed from the literature review, which found that although there is existing research on the Internet's role in a crisis, there is little investigation of Twitter's usage as a crisis communication tactic. The objectives are:

1. To examine how Twitter can help an organisation provide a crisis response to its stakeholders;
2. To investigate the motivations of individuals for using Twitter in a crisis;
3. To identify perceptions of the value of Twitter as a useful crisis communications tactic.

Two research methods have been applied in the research – mini-depth interviews (Malhotra & Birks, 2007; McGivern, 2003) of central participants in the management or monitoring of communication in the two crises; and content analysis of blogs and social media that commented on the crises (Wrigley & Fontenot, 2010; Smith, 2010). Qualitative research methods were chosen, in favour of quantitative methods, in order to provide insights and understandings in particular areas (Malhotra & Birks, 2007) and to explore and illuminate new areas of study (Holliday, 2007).

Mini-depth interviews are unstructured interviews in which the interviewee is probed to uncover underlying attitudes on a topic and to gain understanding of the respondent's experiences (Malhotra & Birks, 2007). They last between 20 and 40 minutes. Compared with quantitative interview methods, they are more flexible as they allow the interviewer to react to conversation and adapt the interview accordingly (McGivern, 2003).

Two interviews were conducted in order to achieve mini-depth accounts of the Eurostar and Eurocontrol crises and to support the interpretation of the articles and blog posts that referred to them. Both interviews used Skype as the interviewees were far distant (one was in Paris) from the primary researcher. Each interview lasted around 25 minutes and was recorded with the approval of the interviewee.

The interviewees were chosen in a purposive manner as they were at the centre of both crises. One – social media expert Colette Ballou - was on a Eurostar train when it broke down

underneath the English Channel after damage caused by snow ingress into the train's power plant. The other – Aurelie Voltat - played a central communication role for Eurocontrol during the "Icelandic ash" problems that halted European flights. Both actively used Twitter for communication during these events. The interviewees both have public relations and corporate communications employment backgrounds.

To gain further insight into the two crises, 17 articles and blogs (see Appendix A) that commented on them were collected from the Internet and their content analysed and coded (Berg, 2009; Denscombe, 2004). Content analysis of relevant and timely textual data was seen as time efficient and quantifiable (Daymon & Holloway, 2002; Denscombe, 2004). In addition to the mini-depth interviews and content analysis of textual material, data were collected from four PR practitioners using a questionnaire comprising 13 open-ended questions (Tench & Yeomans, 2006). Response to the questionnaire, which was distributed by email, was disappointing but the data was included, where relevant, in Tables 1-4, which were prepared from the content analysis. Coding was thematic and in relation to the research objectives (Jankowicz, 2005) and enabled the qualitative information to be presented in a quantitative form in the Tables.

Findings and Discussion

Overview

Overall, 17 blogs and articles, four questionnaires and two interviews were analysed. The blog posts were written by industry professionals, whose areas of expertise ranged across crisis management, social media and communications. The two interviews were with experts, Colette Ballou and Aurelie Voltat (Eurocontrol) who were at the heart of Twitter-related communication crises.

Twitter as a Crisis Communications Tactic

According to Fearn-Banks (2011) social media is an effective method for participating in two-way communication and disseminating information quickly during a crisis. Objective one was to examine how Twitter can help an organisation provide a crisis response to stakeholders. In order to achieve this, sources were analysed and the reasons why companies use Twitter was identified as a theme. The results, as shown in Table One, show that instantly updatable news and information and ease of engagement with stakeholders and customers were the primary reasons advanced for organisational adoption of Twitter, ahead of dialogue creation. Crisis management appears to be a secondary benefit.

Table 1
Why Organisations Use Twitter

N=23 (Three gave multiple answers)

Reason	N
Instant updates of news / information	9
Engagement with stakeholders/ customers	6
Create dialogue	4
Crisis management	3
Reach a wide audience	2
Show human side of organisation	1

Instant Updates

Holtz (2002) believes one of the first organisational actions in a crisis is to provide a response. The initial 24 hours are crucial for an organisation delivering a comment as it illustrates the company is aware of the situation and details its plan of action (Levick, 2007). Twitter's ability to provide stakeholders with instant updates appeared the most popular reason for why a company should use it. The importance of a quick response was evident in the Eurostar crisis. The company failed to communicate with stakeholders until late the next day. As a result one passenger stepped in and used Twitter to provide information.

When analysing the sources, Eurostar's failure at crisis management emerged as a theme. Table Two shows Eurostar's lack of information and its ignorance of social media were the two main problems with the way the crisis was managed. Not only does this illustrate the importance of responding quickly during a crisis but it also shows Twitter is viewed as a communications tool companies should be using. Although it may be a factor of the social media-related blogs and articles that were analysed, Eurostar is perceived as dilatory in providing information and ignoring the benefits of social media and, in particular, Twitter. Failing to offer information and to respond quickly will have had reputational impacts as there was a social media storm of criticism as evidenced by the blogs and articles analysed.

Table 2
Indicators of Eurostar's Failure in Crisis Management (December 2009)

N=23 (Nine gave multiple answers)

Indicator	Number
Ignored social media	10
Did not offer information	8
Didn't act quickly	7
Didn't own have corporate Twitter account	7
Passed the blame to others	2
Blamed its PR agency	1

Twitter's ability to provide instant updates supports DiNardo's (2002) view that the Internet is a useful crisis communications tool for allowing an organisation to provide information to a large audience. Even though this information is limited to 140 characters, companies are able to direct stakeholders to their more information heavy websites. Aurelie Voltat, social media expert at Eurocontrol, commented with regard to the Icelandic eruption:

Twitter was most convenient for providing information and sending short links to our information heavy website which was an operational site and had information on it 24/7.

Although providing instant updates has appeared as a key factor which is supported by the response to the Eurostar crisis, organisations can be restrained in their speed of response to a crisis if there are legal and liability issues to consider. Colette Ballou commented that, "Communications lawyers do have to be involved and messages do have to be carefully crafted so they don't admit guilt." With reference to Eurostar, she added: "In this case people didn't know if their relatives were OK and that is the worst case scenario … you can't mess with people like that".

This presents a problem with Twitter as a crisis communications tactic. It is evident from the case study that the media and stakeholders expected Eurostar to use Twitter to provide information. However this may not always be possible especially if an organisation is afraid of admitting liability or there is a disagreement over who is liable. (Eurostar is the train operator, but the trains were stranded under the English Channel which is operated by another organisation, Eurotunnel). Further research may be needed to advise companies how to respond to different crises. This is important as if the company does not provide the first comment; someone else might and could cause further damage (Coombs, 2007).

Engaging and Creating Dialogue

Engaging with stakeholders and creating dialogue also emerged as popular reasons for why a company should use Twitter. Marketing Week (2011) notes that PR practice has been quick to embrace Twitter as a way of reaching, teaching and influencing stakeholders. PR Moment (2011) also says PR is seen less about disseminating information and more about the conversation. Aurelie Voltat of Eurocontrol endorsed this perception: "[Twitter] is quite amazing. Other airlines mentioned how well Twitter helped them communicate too."

These findings support Pavlik's (2007) view that the Internet is forcing PR practitioners to engage in two-way symmetric communication. Respondents, in these two cases, recognised Twitter's ability to provide a platform where conversation can take place. This is potentially highly valuable. Fearn-Banks (2011) points out organisations which take part in two-way symmetrical communication often avoid crises or experience them for a shorter time with less impact. This was evident with the Eurocontrol crisis. The organisation engaged with customers on Twitter by responding to questions and disseminating information. As a result its reputational position improved (Social Media Series Blog, 2011).

Although the findings together with the Eurocontrol case study show that Twitter is useful for communicating with stakeholders, this will be dependent upon each organisation and its policies and practices. Unless it is willing to create and respond to conversation then organizational use of Twitter may not be as successful. Colette Ballou commented somewhat negatively on PR agencies' use of social media which may indicate that they have not understood the conversation-creating role of Twitter and other social media:

> They use it to blast out information and that's not engaging. It's also old school PR which was just about communicating down to the masses and not listening back, which is what social media is all about.

Summary

The findings for Objective One illustrate that PR practitioners recognise Twitter's ability to facilitate communication with stakeholders during a crisis. Existing literature shows these factors to be important and therefore this research illustrates that Twitter can assist organisations in providing a prompt crisis response to stakeholders. However, the use of Twitter appears to be dependent on the company and crisis and therefore additional research is needed. Also, despite the results illustrating the benefits of Twitter they do not confirm whether companies are actually engaging with it. This is similar to Rybalko and Seltzer's findings (2010) that *Fortune* 500 companies understand the benefits of Twitter for communicating with key publics but do not use it to full potential.

Motivations for Individuals using Twitter

Smith (2010) found that individuals' interest in a topic was a key factor for users becoming involved with conversation on Twitter. Objective Two was to identify the motivations for individuals using Twitter during a crisis. To achieve this, sources were analysed to identify information relating to this theme. Some 13 pieces of material were considered (Table Three).

Table 3
Individual motivations for using Twitter

N = 23 (10 gave no indication; two offered more than one reason)

Motivations	Number
Access to information	8
Real-time information	3
Express opinions	1
Monitor issues/news	1
Personal networking	1
Ask questions	1

Accessing information and the ability to do this in real-time emerged as key motivations for individuals using Twitter. This was supported by both case studies and together illustrated that users logged on to Twitter in order to gain updates on the crises. The Eurostar case study, in particular, highlighted the issues which can arise when a company does not respond to stakeholders' information needs. Colette Ballou commented on the response of passengers: "They were very very angry and frustrated, which you can appreciate. They were really furious." When asked about their response to Twitter posts, she added, "You could see people talking about what was happening on the train and you could see the retweets…" Aurelie Voltat identified a similar reaction during the volcanic ash eruption: "they [customers] were retweeting, but we also had lots of direct questions about individual flights."

Summary

The findings for Objective Two highlight that individuals use Twitter to gain instant updates in real-time. Existing literature shows the importance of responding to a crisis efficiently and providing stakeholders with information. These findings also show that stakeholders' response to a crisis has not changed because of the emergence of social media. It illustrates that individuals expect organisations to deliver updates more quickly than is required with traditional media, thus supporting Pavlik's (2007) view that the Internet has transformed the way individuals access information. However, as previously noted organisations' ability to provide immediate information may be dependent upon the crisis. Therefore additional research may be useful to explore how a company should handle stakeholders when faced with this situation.

The Value of Twitter

Existing literature illustrates the importance of the Internet within crisis management. The introduction of social media has shifted the power of communication away from PR practitioners towards social media users (Smith, 2010). Objective Three focused on identifying perceptions on the value of Twitter as a useful crisis communications tactic. The findings for

objective one also contributed towards this objective together with information relating to the perceived problems of Twitter.

Benefits of Twitter

As previously discussed, instant updates, engaging with stakeholders and creating dialogue emerged as the most popular reasons for why a company should use Twitter. This is supported by the Eurocontrol case study which clearly illustrated how Twitter can facilitate a crisis response. However, in order to identify the value of Twitter to organisations, the perceived problems of the social network also need to be examined.

Table 4
Problems with Twitter

N = 23 (16 gave no indication; three provided more than one reason)

Reasons	Number
Rumours/Gossip	4
Crises spread faster	2
Used only as marketing tool	2
Information freely available (i.e., uncontrolled)	2
Hard to control	1
Budget (to implement)	1

Problems of Twitter

Table Four highlights the perceived problems of Twitter which were apparent in seven of the sources. One issue appears to be that Twitter is perceived as a gossip zone where rumours are able to circulate quickly. This supports the assertions of Fearn-Banks' (2011) who recognised there is no middle person or mediator to correct misinformation on social networks before it is released. Rumours will always circulate during crises and this can happen more quickly due to the nature of Twitter. However, this should not deter organisations from using social networks as, by monitoring conversations, companies are able to correct misinformation.

Freedom of information and the speed at which crises spread were also identified as problems. The availability of information is a characteristic of social media and organisations need to adapt to this. As with rumours, information will circulate regardless of whether a company is engaged with Twitter or not. By using Twitter, organisations can monitor and influence conversations taking place. The Internet has changed relationships with stakeholders and PR practitioners need to recognise the increasing power of consumers (Van Der Merwe, Pitt & Abratt, 2005). This view supports Lambert (PR Week, 2011) who commented that brands need to embrace stakeholders and allow individuals to interact in a personal way.

Although the research has highlighted problems with Twitter, these can be attributed to organisations and PR practitioners coming to terms with the nature of social media. These can be overcome by companies adapting and learning about using social media, monitoring conversation and becoming more open in their discussions.

Summary

Twitter is relatively new and still adapting to the needs and wants of its users, however, the research shows Twitter is a valuable communications tactic and also useful for monitoring brand mentions and reputational issues. The problems of Twitter relate more to the user adjusting to the nature of social media rather than issues with the social network itself.

Recommendations

This section provides recommendations to the public relations and corporate communication sectors in the form of social media and crisis management guidelines and recommendations for future research.

Recommendations for Best Practices

When analysing the primary research, crisis communications and social media guidelines emerged as a theme. Although these materials may have been produced with ulterior motives, as authors may be pitching their services, the sources provide views and opinions from experts practising in this area. Information was therefore collated and analysed to produce these guidelines:

1. Engage with stakeholders prior to crises so they know where to find you and can build a relationship;
2. Update social media, especially Twitter, regularly with new developments and do not withhold information. If information is unavailable release a short holding statement so stakeholders understand you are aware of the situation.
3. Monitor brand and reputation using platforms, hashtags and lists so you can engage with stakeholders and quickly correct misinformation.
4. Have a crisis communications plan in place that fully incorporates social media detailing the platforms and services to be used and responsibilities of team members.
5. Use Twitter to supplement traditional media and let the media know where stakeholders can find further details. [During the Eurostar crisis, Sky News UK fed Eurostar tweets on to its website to help passengers seeking information].
6. Own your brand on social media platforms and ensure the organisation's name or brand is easy to find.

Recommendations for Future Research

Analysis of the primary research also identified areas for further research. With regards to the methodology, more time and money would have allowed for a larger sample of face-to-face interviews with industry experts. The findings also highlighted areas which could be investigated in order to obtain a more complete picture of crisis management and Twitter-based tactics. This study identified the importance of providing instant updates to stakeholders but this can be difficult when there are disagreements over liability. Therefore research to guide companies on how to respond to crises in the digital era would benefit organisations when a more straightforward response is not possible. Future research could also monitor Twitter during a crisis in order to analyse tweets. This would enable the researcher to observe how organisations react to crises and how Twitter is used to communicate with stakeholders. Depending on the

length of the crisis, analysis of news articles would give insight into perceptions of how the crisis was handled and help determine Twitter's usefulness as a communications tactic.

Conclusion

Overview

The aim of this study was to determine the role of Twitter as a crisis communications tactic. Existing research has focused on the impact of citizen journalism on PR practice (Fearn-Banks, 2011), how organisations use Twitter to communicate with stakeholders (Rybalko & Seltzer, 2010), and Twitter users' response to crises (Smith, 2010). PR practice is adapting to technological changes more quickly than research can be conducted. As a result of the literature review, three objectives were established to investigate how Twitter can help organisations communicate with stakeholders, the motivations of Twitter users, and PR professionals' perceptions of the value of Twitter as a crisis communications tactic. An analysis of blog posts, articles, interviews and questionnaires contributed to the findings.

Considerations

The main limitations of the study were a result of the methodology. As there is limited research on the topic, it was challenging to locate materials from reliable sources that contained relevant information. Despite identifying 17 blog posts and articles for analysis, the majority did not contain information that would inform all themes. This meant, on some occasions, that less than ten sources were used in analysis which affected the representativeness of the findings.

The interviews gave an in-depth understanding of the crises to further support these materials. However, as they took place conveniently during break periods at the respondents' workplace, there may be limitations in the details that interviewees could offer.

Key Outcomes

The research revealed that Twitter can facilitate an organisation's crises response through instant updates, engagement with stakeholders and creation of dialogue. This supported Fearn-Bank's (2011) view that companies should engage in two-way communication with stakeholders in order to reduce the duration of crises and with less magnitude. The findings also suggest that using Twitter as a crisis communications tactic is dependent upon the crisis and company.

Individuals' motivations for using Twitter were identified as gaining instant updates in real-time. This was supported by both case studies which illustrated that individuals were using Twitter to gain information.

With regard to the perceptions on the value of Twitter as a crisis communications tactic, benefits and concerns of Twitter were identified. Instant updates, engagement with stakeholders and dialogue creation emerged as benefits of Twitter, whilst rumours, freedom of information demands and the speed at which crises spread were identified as problems. However, as these concerns are related to the ability of organisations to adapt to social media and not problems of Twitter itself, it can be considered a valuable crisis communications tactic.

Summary

The aim of this study was to determine the role of Twitter as a crisis communications tactic. It found that industry experts recognise the benefits of using Twitter as a crisis communications tactic, supported by the case study examples. The findings add to existing

literature and provide guidelines for organisations. As social media and crisis management is a new area of PR practice, recommendations have also been made for future research in order to gain a more complete picture.

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Appendix A
Articles and Blog Posts

Name	Type	Title	Available from
Brand Republic	Article	Crisis-hit Eurostar discovers social media users want more than marketing	http://www.brandrepublic.com/news/974801/Crisis-hit-Eurostar-discovers-social-media-users-want-marketing/
Business Zone	Blog	Eurostar: A hard lesson in customer engagement	http://www.businesszone.co.uk/blogs/dan-martin/dan-martin-editor039s-blog/eurostar-hard-lesson-customer-engagement
Chad Goode	Business continuity and disaster recovery blog	Twitter for Emergency Management and Crisis Communications	http://chadgoode.com/2010/06/twitter-for-emergency-management-crisis-communications.html
Communicate Magazine	Article	Eurostar – A blizzard of criticism	http://www.communicatemagazine.co.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=963:a-blizzard-of-criticism&catid=44:currentissue&Itemid=113
Danny Whatmough	Blog	#eurostarfail social media is for good times AND bad	http://www.dannywhatmough.com/2009/12/19/eurostarfail-social-media-is-for-good-times-and-bad/
Fresh Networks	Social Media Agency blog	Social Media as a Crisis Management Tool	http://www.freshnetworks.com/blog/2009/12/social-media-as-a-crisis-management-tool
Gabba	Social Media Agency blog	Brands – Eurostar is your wakeup call	http://letsgabba.com/2010/06/brands-%E2%80%93-eurostar-is-your-wake-up-call-2/
Institute for PR	Article	Crisis Communications and Social Media	http://www.instituteforpr.org/topics/crisis-communication-and-social-media/

Name	Type	Title	Available from
London Calling	Article	How to prevent your own 'Eurostar moment'	http://londoncalling.co/2009/12/how-to-prevent-your-own-eurostar-moment/
PR Moment	Blog	Digital agencies don't understand how Twitter works, says Lewis PR's chief operating officer Paul Charles	http://www.prmoment.com/286/lewis-prs-paul-charles-says-digital-agencies-dont-understand-how-twitter-works.aspx
PR Rogue	Blog	Eurostar crisis shows social media not optional	http://publicrelationsrogue.wordpress.com/2009/12/25/eurostar-crisis-shows-social-media-not-optional/
PR Week	Article	Crisis Communications: 5 steps to better crisis management	http://www.prweek.com/news/986223/Crisis-Communications-Five-steps-better-crisis-management/
Silicon Valley	Blog	Twitter as a Crisis Management Tool	http://timdyson.wordpress.com/2010/08/16/twitter-as-a-crisis-management-tool/
Simply Zesty	Social Media Agency Blog	Social media in a crisis	http://www.simplyzesty.com/social-media/social-media-crisis/
Social Media Today	Blog	PR Crisis Management in the 'Twitter Age'	http://socialmediatoday.com/index.php?q=SMC/183186
TechCrunch	Article	One year after a Twitter backlash, has Eurostar finally got social media?	http://eu.techcrunch.com/2010/12/17/one-year-after-a-twitter-backlash-has-eurostar-finally-got-social-media/
Torben Rick	Blog	How to use Social Media as a Crisis Management Tool	http://www.torbenrick.eu/blog/social-media/how-to-use-social-media-as-a-crisis-management-tool/

Quake Hits PR: The Impact of 3.11 Earthquake on Public Relations in Japan

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Abstract
The Great East Japan Earthquake on March 11, 2011, has not only broken the global supply chain, but also turned the Japanese public relations industry upside down. The public relations department of Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO), once deemed as one of the most successful corporate public relations in Japan, is being criticized for failing to provide accurate information on failed nuclear power plants in a timely manner. In the current study the authors hope to share how the public relations industry in Japan is trying to re-define itself.

The Great East Japan Earthquake on March 11, 2011, has not only broken the global supply chain, but also turned the Japanese public relations industry upside down. The public relations department of Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO), once deemed as one of the most successful corporate public relations in Japan, is being criticized for failing to provide accurate information on failed nuclear power plants in a timely manner. How TEPCO had been trying to build cozy relationships with media, politicians, and local communities have been revealed. Communication activities of various organizations and the way people react to such communication are said to have changed after the earthquake.

In the current study, the authors wish to share with researchers and practitioners in the field of public relations the lessons we have learned from the aftermath of the Great East Japan Earthquake.

The Earthquake

- At 2:46 pm on March 11th 2011, a 9.0 magnitude earthquake struck northeast Japan in the Pacific Ocean, about 80 miles off the coastline and 234 miles from Tokyo.
- Shortly before 3pm, the first tsunami hits shoreline. The wave broke many tidal wave recorders, but one of them read 9.3 meters or 31 feet before it stopped functioning. Later survey revealed that the highest point that tsunami reached was 40 meters or 133 feet above sea level. In total, $561km^2$, or 216 mile^2 were washed by tsunami.
- As of 3/10/2012, 15,854 people were confirmed dead and 3,726 still missing. 128,768 houses were totally damaged and 245,626 houses were deemed half-destroyed (lost 20%-70% of its function).
- 41 power plants including 10 nuclear power plants were automatically shut down.
- Within a week, 2,182 temporary shelters were provided nationwide, accommodating 386,739 people.
- The number of people in temporary shelter reached 386,739 a week after the quake.
- As of February 2012, 52,620 temporary houses have been built and offered to the evacuees in addition to 22,327 government owned apartments. All but one temporary shelters have been closed and 342,509 people are living away from home, 342,509 of which in temporary housing, 16,901 with relatives, and 584 in temporary shelter.

Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant Accident

3/11
- Of six nuclear reactors in the Fukushima Daiichi, three (No. 1-3) were in operation, others (No. 4-6) were under inspection.
- (2:46 pm)When the earthquake hit, all three reactors automatically shut down and external power supply were destroyed. Emergency diesel generators kept cooling system running.
- (15:45) Tsunami washed away fuel tank and most of the cooling facilities in the No. 1-3 reactors.
- (16:42) Tokyo Electric Power Co. (TEPCO) notified the government of the cooling system failure.
- (19:03) The government declared the nuclear emergency situation.
- (20:50) The Fukushima prefecture government issued an evacuation order to residents within 2 km radius of the Fukushima Daiichi power plant.

- (21:23) The Prime Minister issued an evacuation order to residents within 3 km radius and ordered residents within 3 to 10 km radius to take shelter.
  3/12
- A part of the nuclear fuel in the No. 1 reactor started melting.
- Hydrogen explosion occurred at the No. 1 reactor, destroying upper walls of the reactor housing.
  3/13
- Boiling of the cooling water caused nuclear fuel in the reactors No. 1 and 3 to be exposed.
  3/14
- Nuclear fuel in the reactor No. 2 were exposed.
- Hydrogen explosion occurred at the No. 3 reactor.
- Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency (NISF) issued an evacuation advisory to residents within 20 km radius of the power plant.
  3/15
- Rise in the level of radioactive particles in the atmosphere near the power plant started to be observed from time to time.
- NISF advised residents within 30 km radius to take shelter.
  3/17
- Cooling the reactor with fire engine began.
  3/18
- TEPCO implemented scheduled partial blackout until March 28.
  3/19
- The government advised residents within 30 km radius to evacuate.
  4/22
- The area in the 20 km radius was officially specified as evacuation zone and 20 to 30 km radius as evacuation preparation zone, allowing residents in the 20 to 30 km radius to return home.
  12/16
- The Prime Minister declared that all the reactors of the Fukushima Daiichi have been cooled down. The removal of fuel is scheduled to begin within two years and decommissioning of the reactor is to be completed within 30 to 40 years.

Formation of the *Nuclear Power Village* in Japan

The Atomic Energy Basic Act was enacted in 1955. In 1956, Mr. Shoriki, the owner of Japan's leading newspaper Yomiuri Shimbun and lawmaker since 1955, became the first chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission. Later in the year he became the Director-General of the Science and Technology Agency. He was the leading advocate of the nuclear power. A CIA document later revealed that the Agency collaborated with Shoriki to promote nuclear power in Japan as he had both political and media power (Arima, 2008).

The "Oil-Shock" in the 1970s urged Japan to rely heavily on nuclear power. Initially there were tensions between the government agencies that wished to take control of electricity supply and the power companies that wished to maintain the independence, however, the balance shifted in response to the "Oil-Shock" as promotion of power plant became the national policy. The growing difficulty of securing nuclear power plant site also forced power companies to

move closer to the national government. As a result, the national government and the power companies became closer (Kitsukawa, 2011).

As many of the nuclear power plant site were in communities in remote area that were left out from the booming economy of Japan, the decisions were often made on the money promised to such communities upon acceptance of the nuclear power plants. Heavy subsidy to local government were prepared to facilitate acceptance of nuclear power plant. These communities joined the *nuclear power village* as someone who share the same destiny, and played certain role in maintaining the structure (Kainuma, 2011). The acceptance of nuclear power plant in a community was a perfect pork-barrel as there were budget both in the national government and power companies already waiting to be spent. It is said that a community that accepts a power plant will receive about $3billion in 45 years. Power companies relied on heavy electric machinery makers for nuclear technology, and they in turn relied on top universities for human resources. Huge amount of money is spent on campaigns to promote safety of nuclear power. A closed community with strong tie among industry, academia, policy makers, bureaucrats, and media was thus formed. The idea that "nuclear power is absolutely necessary, therefore, it needs to be safe," transformed into a myth that "nuclear power is absolutely safe." To preserve the myth, any effort to warn about, or prepare for, potential risk was suppressed (Maruyama, 2011).

The nuclear power industry mobilized various public relations tactics including press tour, PR events, and nuclear power museums, to promote nuclear power. Huge amount of money were spent on promotional advert. Research funds were provided to key universities. Affiliated organizations such as the Federation of Electric Power Companies of Japan, Japan Atomic Energy Relations Organizations were mobilized to established close relationship with reporters (Shimura, 2011). Ironically, the Chairman of TEPCO was in China when the earthquake hit, with multiple journalists that TEPCO had invited. The journalists were said to be retirees of mainstream media who were still active influentials as writers or TV commentators. ("Goyo Media", 2011).

The collaboration between the industry and the government, supported by the media thus formed the *nuclear power village*. The village mentality further grew and was enhanced to the point that it was untouchable even within the power company until the earthquake exposed the problem nurtured in the village.

Problems With Government and TEPCO PR Exposed

Facing the unprecedented natural disaster and atomic accident, the public relations activities of the government and TEPCO seemed chaotic during the initial stage - about two weeks after the quake. There was a lack of coordination within the government. For example, press conferences were held by different government branches on a same topic. It is not difficult to imagine that media had a difficulty allocating reporters to each of these press conferences and that media had to check and consolidate information as many of these press conferences took very long time providing reporters with loads of information.

Conflicting messages were sent from national and local government. For example, the evacuation orders were issued to the residents near the Fukushima power plant by the national government half an hour after the local government issued the same order, but with different geographic specification.

Unprofessional public relations practice by TEPCO was also pointed out. As many persons appeared at press conferences, and the members were not always the same, it was

difficult to determine who was in charge of external communication at the company on the issue. TEPCO also bombarded journalists with technical terms, making it difficult for journalists to interpret what was being said (Koda, 2011). It makes us wonder if, for TEPCO, the fact that dissemination is done, is more important than having itself understood. This also shed light on the shortage of knowledgeable reporters as most of reporters in top tier media do not come from journalism schools and they are trained on the job (Shioya, 2011).

In the next stage, from the end of March till April, the post quake public relations activities and media reactions showed some changes. On April 25, the national government, NISF, and TEPCO began holding joint daily briefing sessions. However, the main-stream media continued to write stories based mostly on information released by the government or TEPCO, rather than write critical stories based on their own investigation. Freelance reporters and magazines began criticizing main-stream media for the lack of efforts to probe deeper into the truth. In this context, the kisha-club (closed circle of main-stream media in various government agencies and industry organizations) were also criticized by non-club members (foreign media, magazines, online media etc.) for being a PR tool for the government and TEPCO, and not telling the truth. In response, the main-stream media rebuffed those criticism saying that such claims are sensationalism and only creates anxiety among general public. (Uesugi, T., & Ugaya, H., 2011).

May 2011, when the government asked Chubu Electric Power to shut down nuclear reactor at its Hamaoka Power Plant, through December 2011, when the government declared that the reactors in the Fukushima Power Plant had come to the cold shutdown condition, can be categorized as the third stage of the post-quake public relations activities. During this period, the general public's attention began shifting towards energy policy, safety of other nuclear power plants, and the diffusion of radioactive particles.

On May 12, TEPCO acknowledged that Fukushima No. 1 reactor fuel had melted down earlier, and on May 24, the company acknowledge that No. 2 & 3 reactor fuel had also melted down earlier. It can be seen as a response to the criticism that TEPCO was hiding truth from public.

It was revealed that Kyushu Electric Power (KEPCO) urged its employees and vendors to send emails indicating their stance and opinions on the nuclear power plant issues, to a special TV program in which potential re-starting of KEPCO nuclear power plant were to be discussed. Although the company request did not specify which stance to take, but in Japanese corporate culture, it is rather obvious that they were asked to support the company's position, which was to re-start reactors early. The reporting of this incident led to allegations of similar actions by other power companies.

Focus on the subsidiaries of mega advertising agencies as major players in the PR industry in Japan, and the amount of ad spending by power companies led to criticism that media, advertising, and public relations had jointly implemented a "nuclear promotion propaganda" (Maruyama, 2011, Okumura, 2011, Shioya, 2011, Uesugi & Ugaya, 2011). Although TEPCO does not disclose the amount of advertising spending, the company in fiscal 2010 spent JPY 26.9 billion (about US$ 336 million) for "popularization and development related cost" (TEPCO annual report), which is believed to be spent on creating friendly atmosphere among media, politicians, government, and community.

Books on the earthquake and its aftermath started to come out. One of the key criticisms in many books were about "the collaborative efforts of the policy makers, bureaucrats, industry, and media to promote nuclear power," or "so-called nuclear power village," and the "public-

relationization of journalism (Maruyama, 2011, Okumura, 2011, Shioya, 2011, Uesugi & Ugaya, 2011).

Starting in December 2011, reports by various entities investigating the Fukushima nuclear power plant accident started to come out. On December 26, 2011, the government's "Investigation Committee on the Accident at the Fukushima Nuclear Power Stations" submitted an interim report to the Prime Minister. The report revealed that the Prime Minister's office demanded TEPCO not to disclose certain critical information without prior consent of the office. It was also reported that NISF controlled the use of certain terminologies in their press conferences in a way that would minimize fears among citizens, however, this was apparently not standing on the "safe side" in terms of minimizing health damages to the citizens.

The "National Diet of Japan Fukushima Nuclear Accident Independent Investigation Commission (NAIIC)" interim report on December 26 revealed TEPCO's effort to ignore warnings about potential tsunami, to which TEPCO publicly refuted in a press conference. Deputy Prime Minister Okada disclosed on January 27 that 10 governmental organizations and commissions did not have meeting minutes.

A civil independent investigation commission organized by Rebuild Japan Initiative Foundation was released on February 28. Interviews with politicians, bureaucrats and scientists revealed chaos and mistakes. However, TEPCO did not cooperate with the investigation.

Post Earthquake Survey Findings

Surveys were conducted by various organizations to find out how earthquake and the nuclear accident affected attitudes and behaviors of corporations and consumers. Below are the findings from five surveys.

Corporations

Of the companies surveyed,
1) More than 73.6% immediately after the earthquake suspended advertisement, sales promotion, and events. The mode of duration of suspension was one month (Kyodo PR, 2011)
2) 84.5 % of the companies surveyed implemented measures to reduce electricity use to cope with potential electricity shortage (Kyodo PR, 2011)
3) 67.5% established an emergency headquarters on the day of the quake. In total, 76.6 % of the companies surveyed established an emergency headquarters (Kyodo PR, 2011)
4) 20.2% decided to make contribution to the relief effort by the day after the quake and 58% within four days (Kyodo PR, 2011)
5) 83.3% donated money and 57.1% contributed goods to the earthquake victim relief efforts. Only 4 % say the company did not do any support for the victim relief (Kyodo PR, 2011)
6) 49.2 % kept a part (or all) of their employees on home stand-by, and 10 % suspended recruiting (Kyodo PR, 2011)

Corporate Public Relations

Of the corporate public relations departments surveyed,

1) 82.1 % issued messages from top management to its employees. The media included the intranet, email, and direct face to face communication (Kyodo PR, 2011)

2) 86.0 % say the workload for the public relations department increased. Of these, 86 % say that the budget for the department were not increased. Media relations work increased at 79.7 % of the companies surveyed, internal public relations at 63.6 %, crisis management at 61.5 %, and external information gathering at 54.5 % (Hokkaido University, 2012)

3) 65,6 % say that the earthquake related work was unprecedented, and 66.7 % say that the PR department is still engaged in earthquake related work after one year (Hokkaido University, 2012)

4) 68.8 % positively evaluate their public relations activities for one year after the earthquake. As the result, 31.2 % say the recognition of the public relations activities by the top executive have improved and 34.4 % say the recognition of the public relations activities by other sections in the company have improved (Hokkaido University, 2012)

5) The internal public relations activities that they wished to have done more are:
   - exposure of top management - 84.1 %
   - facilitating communication between domestic and overseas operations - 52.9 % (Hokkaido University, 2012)

6) The external public relations activities that they wished to have done more are:
   - better coordination with group companies - 80.3 %
   - exposure of top management - 75.2 % (Hokkaido University, 2012)

7) 78.3 % say they are satisfied with the overall activities during one year after the earthquake (Hokkaido University, 2012)

8) Anticipated change in the public relations activities are:
   - formulation of human network outside the company will be more important - 87.3 %
   - formulation of human network inside the company will be more important - 83.6 %
   - enhancement of expert skills will be necessary - 77.2 % (Hokkaido University, 2012)

9) 58.4 % refrained from publicizing its CSR activities (Kyodo PR, 2011)

Consumers in General

1) 87 % donated money to the victim relief efforts, 35 % proactively purchased products from the quake-hit area, and 7 % participated in some form of volunteer activities. 7 % say they did not do anything to support victims/affected zone (Japan Institute for Social and Economic Affairs, 2011)

2) 77 % positively view victim support activities of corporations (Japan Institute for Social and Economic Affairs, 2011)

3) Asked to name companies that consumers highly evaluate based on their victim support and ad/PR activities, the list differed from regular brand evaluation research. The top three were:
   - Soft bank for its CEO's private donations and proposal for building mega-solar power plants in the affected regions - 31.2 %

- ▪ Yamato Transport for the relief fund drive associated with its package delivery service and the efforts by the company's delivery drivers to rebuild logistics network in the affected regions - 12.3 %
- ▪ Uniqlo for its CEO's private donations and relief fund drive from its sales - 11.8 % (Nikkei BP Consulting, 2011)
4) 36 % of those in the affected region and 30 % of those in other regions say they have reduced work hour and spend more time with families or doing house choir (Keio University, 2011)

These findings imply that both corporations and consumers have changed in response to the earthquake. Corporations moved quickly to respond to the disaster and to help support victims. Many of the consumers highly recognize corporate CSR activities and share altruistic value with corporations. While almost 60 % of the companies withheld publicizing their CSR activities and donations made, companies that proactively publicized such activities improved their images in the minds of consumers. Fears of criticism for proactively publicizing ones altruistic activities is a reflection of Japanese sense of morality, and corporate public relations professionals seem to have had a hard time trying to decide whether to publicize it, and if to publicize when. We can infer from these findings that altruistic activities and CSR activities will be more important in the evaluation of corporate activities.

Conclusion

The Great East Japan Earthquake on March 11, 2011 unveiled the role public relations had played in the formation of iron-solid *nuclear power village*. However, the *nuclear power village* is now in the process of melt-down and the entire country is trying to figure out how to cope with this tragic event. How public relations could have done its job better while keeping public interest as part of its mission is subject to further study.

The findings from surveys tell us that both companies and consumers view companies engaging in altruistic activities as better companies. This seems to provide guidance to corporate public relations that are searching for a balance between capitalistic goal as business corporations and humanistic goal as corporate citizens.

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A Test of the Excellent Leadership Model in Crisis Management: An Examination of BP Oil Spill in 2010

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Abstract

Using the model of Excellent Leadership in Public Relations, this study explored the BP oil spill in 2010 by analyzing three newspapers' (the *New York Times*, USA *Today*, and the *St. Petersburg Times*) coverage of BP leaders' crisis communication, and comparing BP's leadership effectiveness to its crisis management effectiveness (reputation scores, and stock prices). Findings validated the Excellent Leadership model, and showed a strong correlation between BP's reputation scores and its stock prices. But BP's leadership effectiveness was found to have no significant impact on either its reputation or its stock prices. Possible explanations were discussed.

Crisis management is a test of the quality and character of leadership as much as it is a test of skill (Schoenberg, 2005). Some studies have suggested the importance of leadership in managing crisis situations (e.g., Hwang, 2009; Sanchez & Verma, 2009), and offered tips to avoid crisis leadership mistakes (McNulty, 2011), but few studies have explored a comprehensive framework about excellent leadership in crisis management. Through an analysis of what has been done by BP's leadership in managing the crisis as portrayed by media reports, the present study aims to test the validity of Meng, Berger, and Gower's (2009) model of Excellent Leadership in Public Relations under crisis conditions. Other than that, this study also aims to examine how BP leaders' performance can be related to the reputational outcomes.

Background: BP Oil Spill in 2010

On April 20, 2010, the Deepwater Horizon drilling rig, which was leased to BP by Transocean Limited exploded when methane gas ran up the drilling column and ignited. The explosion left 11 platform workers killed and 17 others injured (Welch & Joyner, 2010). The rig sank two days after the explosion and set off an unrestricted flow of oil below the surface of the Gulf of Mexico. Within 88 days, an estimated 55,000 barrels of crude oil was released into the Gulf per day, covering 3,850 square miles and contaminating about 491 miles of coastline in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida (Polson, 2011; Robertson & Krauss, 2010). The spill was finally sealed on September 19, 2010, nearly five months after the initial blowout. For the extensive damage done, BP's oil spill became the largest accidental spill in the history of petroleum industry, and "the worst environmental disaster that the U.S. has ever faced" (BBC, 2010).

The damage brought by the spill was unprecedented. Beside long-term impacts on ecology, food safety, and water quality, it has severely threatened several "at-risk" industries such as commercial fishing, tourism, and enterprises tied to natural resources. With regards to damage on tourism, the estimated economic impact of the oil spill on tourism across the Gulf Coast over three-year period could exceed approximately $23 billion (Proctor, 2010).

In the disaster, BP and its partners were blamed for making cost-cutting decisions that increased the risk of the blowout (Rascoe, 2011). As a consequence, the company suffered great financial losses and reputational damage. For instance, BP's market value lost $60 billion within one month of the explosion, and increased to $105 billion after two months, accounting for over half of the company's total market value (Tharp, 2010). Meanwhile, BP was bombarded with negative opinions. A national survey by the Gallup Group indicated 37 percent of respondents viewed the oil spill as the worst environmental disaster in the U.S. in the last 100 years, approximately half thought BP had operated the oil rig very poorly, and over 75 percent responded that BP should be blamed for the crisis with 59 percent of them suggesting that BP should pay for all financial losses resulting from the oil spill "even if the company might be driven out of business by it" (Newport, 2010). According to the annual reputation quotient survey of the 60 most visible companies in the United States by a leading market research firm, Harris Interactive (2011) revealed that BP's reputation ranking had fallen from 41st to 59th following the oil spill crisis.

Conceptual Framework

The Excellent Leadership Model

The first step in excellent management lies in organizational leadership. Focusing on the contribution of individuals' personal attributes, leaders' behavior, role relationship, influence over followers, and influence on communication effectiveness, Meng, Berger, and Gower (2009) defined excellent leadership in public relations as "a dynamic process that encompasses public relations executives' personal attributes and efforts in leading the team to

facilitate mutual relationships inside and outside of organizations, to participate in the organization's strategic decision making processes, and to contribute toward the effectiveness and success of the organizations they represent" (Meng et al., 2009, p. 10).

Based on a comprehensive review of studies in leadership principle as well as public relations principle, Meng et al. (2009) proposed the Model of Excellent Leadership in Public Relations, which includes the five key dimensions and five sub-dimensions: (1) "*self-dynamics dimension*", including self-insight, shared vision (a shared vision that specifies organizational values and personal beliefs in making things happen), and team collaboration (abilities to support the organization to execute public relations strategies and to achieve excellence in communication management), with an emphasis on the leader's inherent personality, skills, styles etc.; (2) "*ethical orientation dimension*", which refers to public relations leaders' belief in and maintenance of professional values when caught in ethical and legal dilemmas or conflict between responsibilities and loyalties; (3) "*relationship building dimension*", which refers to the extent to which public relations leaders are willing to facilitate mutual benefits for the organization and publics based on the perceived significance of relationship building, and includes two sub-dimensions: internal relations (relationship among employees and relationship between employees and senior managers), and external relations (relationship between organization and its key publics); (4) "*strategic decision-making dimension*", referring to leaders' capability to understand both external social environment and internal organizational structures, processes, and culture, and to apply the knowledge into effective advocacy and to get involved with decision-making processes; (5) "*communication knowledge management dimension*", which refers to leaders' capability to apply public relations knowledge and communication expertise to enhance the effective communication in the organization and between organization and its publics. Based on the model, the following research question is developed:

RQ: Which dimension of the Model of Excellent Leadership in Public Relations was most visible in BP's crisis communication during the oil spill crisis?

Reputation and Crisis Communication

The role of organizational leadership is crucial in times of crisis. This aspect is tested when looking at how prepared and well-poised organizations are in managing their communication efforts during crisis situations. In a study looking at the integral role of management during operational crises such as explosions and chemical spills, Gonzalez-Herrero and Pratt (1996) showed that mismanagement during crises could be a determining factor to the corporation's reputation and survival. The authors developed an integrated symmetrical model for crisis communication management to highlight the importance of management displaying a certain level of leadership in issues management, planning-prevention, and strategy implementation when tackling crises. In which, a failure to manage a crisis effectively may point toward the failure of organizational leadership.

Ascertaining the level of leadership displayed by organizations when managing a crisis is however not straightforward, especially when the media serves as intermediary to the crisis communication efforts taken by organizations. In a series of studies carried out by Holladay (2009) to identify the extent to which media reports adequately depict the strategies and information deployed by organizations involved in chemical accident crises, it was found that organizational spokespeople were not prominently featured in the news reports. They were being overshadowed by "first responders" (e.g. law enforcement, emergency response, the fire department etc.), people who journalists go to for quick information pertaining to the crises (p. 209). When this happens, the public may be given the impression that the organization is not in control, or worse, crises news may potentially already be "framed"

according to first responders' accounts (Coombs, 2007; Holladay, 2009). This means that not only do organizations need to have a better understanding of the journalistic processes of the media during crises communication; they need to have an understanding of who is portrayed in the media reports and how his or her portrayal may have an impact on the organization during crisis situations. In this regard, how organizational leadership is displayed in media reports during crises can have an impact on its image and reputation.

Closer to the present study's focus, scholars have also looked at the impact of BP's communication efforts during the Deepwater Horizon oil spill crisis on its reputation. Harlow and associates (2011) applied Benoit's (1995) image repair theory in their analysis of BP's website during the crisis and found that BP had done a sizeable effort online by creating a prominent "Gulf of Mexico response" section on its web site containing videos about the event, still images, contact information, social networking links, and press releases. The authors however noted that BP had mainly carried out crisis management strategies centered on describing what they were doing to correct the problem and to compensate the victims, but did not include strategies such as admitting their own blame. Their analyses were unable to link these strategies to BP's reputational and image outcomes. Another study done by Muralidharan, Dillistone, and Shin (2011) had similarly applied Benoit's (1995) image restoration strategies and looked at BP's online crisis communication efforts, albeit through social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Flickr. Besides identifying the image restoration strategies carried out by BP, the study further highlighted the visibility of organizational leadership during crisis communication. The authors noted the high visibility of BP's chief executive officer, managing director, and chief operating officer in BP's attempt to display a high level of affirmation and responsibility to the crisis.

The prior studies highlighted above elucidate BP's crisis communication efforts done in online media during the oil spill crisis. Although the latter study provided a closer look at the importance of organizational leadership in crisis communication, both studies had only managed to highlight the crisis responses provided by BP without looking at its impact on BP's image or reputation. The present study aims to provide another dimension to BP's communication efforts during the crisis by examining BP's leadership performance as displayed in news reports and its relationship with BP's reputation. The following hypothesis is posited:

H1: BP leaders' performance in crisis communication is positively related to its reputation score.

Reputation and Stock Price

A significant amount of information asymmetry exists between companies and the stock market (Myers & Majluf, 1984). The stock market is sensitive to a multitude of information about companies, such as business reports, companies' actions, strategies, and tries to interpret the information as signals of the companies' future financial performance and company value (Ross, 1977). The stock market's evaluation of company-related information including those found in media reports is reflected in stock price change.

News releases are the key information sources used by the market for company evaluation. An extensive body of literature has indicated that stock prices appear to drift after important company news announcements (e.g., Danie, Hirshleifer, & Subrahmanyam, 1998; Kothari & Warner, 1997). For example, positive news is generally met with price appreciation and thus a positive drift, while negative often generates negative market reaction and a negative drift (Chan, 2003). Scholars also noticed that if news, for example, crisis-related news involves both positive and negative aspects, the stock market will react to the negative rather than the positive aspects (Viale, 2007). That is why a company's stock price

usually declines dramatically when the company's reputation is tarnished by negative news releases, even if the news reports are found to be rumors. For example, in 2003, a news report on cable television misrepresented earnings of Federal Express Corporation (FedEx), suggesting that FedEx was not meeting Wall Street's expectations. Within a few minutes, FedEx's stock dropped by nearly two dollars (Fernando, 2005). The great influence of valence of news releases on stock price might be due to several reasons, while one of the key reasons for this phenomenon is the impact of news releases on a company's reputation.

From the discussion above, it will be interesting to examine the impact of BP's reputation affected by their leadership's performance during the crisis on their stocks. Therefore, the following hypotheses are posited:

H2: BP's stock price is positively related to its reputation score.
H3: BP leaders' performance in crisis communication is positively related to its stock price.

Method

To test the aforementioned hypotheses and research question, the current study conducted a content analysis of news coverage of the BP oil spill crisis by national and state newspapers. Due to their high national circulation, prominence, and influence on public opinion, the *New York Times* and *USA Today* were chosen to provide national perspective. The *New York Times* is the "paper of record" (Gitlin, 1980, p. 299) and generally considered to be "the weatherman of American journalism" due to its influence on the content of other mass media (Manoff, 1985). *USA Today* was selected since it stands one of the most widely read newspapers in the United States. Prestige newspapers are used here primarily because, as Krippendorff (2004) argued, they set political agendas and lead public debates.

In addition to the two national newspapers, the *St. Petersburg Times* of Florida State was also selected to offer the perspective of affected area. Among four states where coastline was contaminated by the spill, the State of Florida was chosen since the spill was "hardest on Florida's economy in terms of lost wages and income" as well as tourism (Morales, 2010; Spear, 2010). In addition, months of June through August, when the oil spill erupted, is the peak tourism season, which usually generates "70 percent of its yearly income during the summer" (Morales, 2010, p. 2). Moreover, a long-term economic forecast indicated that the economic fallout from the BP oil spill would affect the state for years to come, and the leisure sectors won't start growing again until 2012 (Harrington, 2010).

Sampling

The BP oil spill crisis began on April 20, 2010 when the Deepwater Horizon drilling rig exploded and released crude oil into the Gulf of Mexico. It is considered to have ended on January 5, 2011, with the White House oil spill commission concluding that the oil spill was the result of systematic management failure between BP, Transocean, and Halliburton (Goldenberg, 2011). Considering news stories are normally published one day later, the timeline for data sampled in this study was April 20, 2010 to January 6, 2011.

News reports were retrieved from the *ProQuest Newspapers* database with keywords "BP" and "oil" or "spill" in abstract. The search yielded a total of 156 news stories in the *New York Times*, 143 news stories in *USA Today*, and 184 news stories in the *St. Petersburg Times*. Instead of coding all the news reports, this study specifically analyzed the news stories quoting directly or paraphrasing BP leaders. This was done for three reasons. First, given the limited access to complete and systematic information regarding BP leaders' crisis handling process, the messages that BP conveyed to its external publics were somewhat the relatively accurate information that can be accessible, as well as a good reflection of BP's crisis

communication performance. Second, this study was aimed to investigate leaders' communication effectiveness, and as Gilbson and Zillmann (1993) argued, quotation, in particularly, direct quotation can "greatly influence readers' perceptions of issues" and imbalanced quotations in testimony can be "effective in swaying readers' opinions to one side of an issue" (p. 800). Lastly, the primary data used in this study were news stories, and news frame "largely unspoken and unacknowledged, organize the world both for journalists who report it and, in some important degree, for us who rely on their reports" (Gitlin, 1980, p. 7). In order to reduce the potential bias brought by description of and comments about BP in news stories, an analysis of news source would be a better choice. Because of aforementioned concerns, the final numbers of news stories selected from the *New York Times*, *USA Today*, and the *St. Petersburg Times* were 66, 45, and 46, respectively.

Independent Variables

The independent variable in this study is BP executives' performance in front of the media. We used the full-text news story as the coding unit, and coded each story based on seven dimensions of the model of Excellent Leadership in Public Relations, consisting of a total of 45 items (Meng, 2009). All item were coded based on a 5-point scale ranging from "1" representing "strongly disagree" to "5" representing "strongly agree".

(1) *Self-insight* consists of 6 items such as "dependable", "trustworthy", "engaging in strategic decision-making", "proactive" etc..

(2) *Vision* includes 6 items, for example, "forward looking", "enlisting other communication professionals in a shared vision", "providing a vision of potential changes and developments in areas affecting the organization", and "vision about public relations values and role".

(3) *Team collaboration* was coded based on 6 items, such as whether BP leaders "collaborate with members in other divisions of the organization", "actively cope with crisis situations", "develop a communication team" and so forth.

(4) *Ethical orientation* was coded based on whether the leaders maintained "the core values of PR", "integrate these core values into actions", "no deceptive practices or communications", had "consistent behaviors", and another 2 statements.

(5) *Relationship building* was coded based on whether the leaders' statements on the press reflected that they "cultivate relationships with key external publics", "foster trust and credibility with media representatives", and "understand the needs of key publics".

(6) *Strategic decision-making* was coded based on 5 items including whether leaders had "knowledge of the organization's business and its environment",
"be proactive in the organization's internal decision-making processes", and "have knowledge of decision-making processes, practices and structures in the organization".

(7) *Communication knowledge management* was coded based on 8 items including whether the leaders "converted knowledge about publics and issues into effective and representative advocacy of these publics and issues with decision makers", and whether they "applied public relations knowledge to crisis situations", and "used knowledge of media to help the organization communicate effectively with publics".

Inter-coder reliability. To test inter-coder reliability, two coders coded 10 percent random sample from each newspaper. The Krippendorff's alpha coefficients for all variables representing the seven dimensions ranged from .70 to .82, which is within acceptable limits for inter-coder reliability.

Dependent Variables

The dependent variables in the current study are reputation score, and BP's stock prices during the period of crisis.

Reputation scores were collected from the Corporate Reputation Index released by Steel City Re, which is a consultancy targeting the risk stemming from bad publicity. The reputation index is calculated based on four indicators: shareholder behavior, communications effectiveness, operating costs, and a company's ability to command premium pricing based on brand (Katz, 2010).

Stock price data were collected from the official website of BP (www.bp.com). The time line for data selection is consistent with the time line of news stories selection, which is from April 20, 2010 to January 6, 2011.

Data Analysis

Two steps were conducted to analyze data in this study. First, we coded all selected news stories based on the model of Excellent Leadership in Public Relations to achieve leadership scores, and then used the leadership scores for the model evaluation.

Second, given that the reputation scores were on weekly-basis, but both leadership scores and stock price were on daily-basis, leadership scores and stock price were recoded into weekly-basis variables, and then average leadership score and average stock price within each week were calculated respectively for hypothesis tests.

Results

Model Evaluation

To test the validity of the model of Excellent Leadership in Public Relations, the internal consistency of all seven dimensions were first analyzed. As indicated in Table 1, the Cronbach's alpha values ranged from .704 to .781, meeting the recommended minimum of .70 (Nunnally, 1978). The reliability coefficient of "strategic decision-making" which was lowest as .576, may still be considered acceptable (Cronbach & Shavelson, 2004). Thus, the constructs demonstrated relatively good internal consistency. Correlations were used to further test the model. Correlations results were statistically significant (see Table 1), which confirmed that relations did exist among "self-insight", "vision", "team collaboration", "ethical orientation", "relationship building", "strategic decision-making", and "communication knowledge management". That provided more evidence for the validity of the model.

Table 1
Means, Standards Deviations, Coefficient Alpha Reliability, and Correlations

DIMENSIONS	MEAN	S.D.	α	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Self insight	3.27	.38	.752	1						
2. Vision	3.15	.29	.704	.812**	1					
3. Team collaboration	3.20	.35	.751	.819**	.805**	1				
4. Ethical orientation	3.22	.39	.715	.758**	.634**	.686**	1			
5. Relationship building	3.19	.29	.729	.829**	.727**	.773**	.716**	1		
6. Strategic decision-making	3.21	.23	.576	.758**	.673**	.642**	.552**	.698**	1	
7. Communication knowledge management	3.25	.35	.781	.671**	.441*	.370*	.634**	.597**	.549**	1

**p < .001, * p < .05

Test of Research Question and Hypotheses

The research question investigated which leadership dimension was most prominent during BP's crisis communication. Mean values of all sub-dimensions were calculated. Results show that in BP oil spill case, the most significant item in *self-insight* dimension was "proactive" (*M* = 3.52) and "applying diverse strategies depending on different situations" (*M*

= 3.41); in *vision* dimension was the attribute "forward looking" (*M* = 3.59), in *team collaboration* dimension was "actively cope with crisis situations" (*M* = 3.51) and "bring diverse groups together to collaboratively solve problems" (*M* = 3.22), in the *ethical orientation* dimension was "consistent behaviors" (*M* = 3.48), in *relationship building* dimension leadership attributes focusing more on external relationships such as "understanding the needs of key publics" (*M* = 3.46) and "fostering trust and credibility with media representatives" (*M* = 3.39) were most prominent. The key item of *strategic decision-making* dimension was "interpret information from publics for organizational decision makers" (*M* = 3.27). While "apply public relations knowledge to crisis situations" (*M* = 3.61) and "use knowledge of media to help the organization communicate effectively with publics" (*M* = 3.48) were salient in the *communication knowledge management* dimension.

Mean values of the seven key dimensions were also calculated. Results show that BP leaders' performance in the crisis communication was acceptable (*M* > 3.00, 1-5 scale). The leaders attained higher scores on self-insight (*M* = 3.27), communication knowledge management (*M* = 3.25), and ethical orientation (*M* = 3.22), but low score on vision (*M* = 3.15) (see Table 1).

H1 predicted that BP leaders' performance in crisis communication is a factor that influences BP's reputation. A multiple regression was performed on BP's reputation scores and leadership scores. Neither the overall regression nor the predictor – leadership score was found to be significantly associated with reputation. The hypothesis was thus not supported, suggesting that in the spill event, the prominence of leaders' communication strategies in media reports did little to help repair BP's contaminated reputation.

Table 2
Summary of Multiple Regression for Leadership Dimension Versus Reputation, and Stock Price

	Reputation				Stock price			
	B	SE	t	p	B	SE	t	p
Self insight	.544	.593	.917	.369	-.804	14.539	-.055	.956
Vision	.107	.490	.218	.829	2.626	12.000	.219	.829
Team collaboration	-.062	.543	-.114	.910	-3.898	13.302	-.293	.772
Ethical orientation	-.567	.412	-1.377	.182	-.689	10.090	-.068	.946
Relationship building	-.064	.488	-.132	.897	7.135	11.961	.597	.557
Strategic decision-making	.230	.541	.425	.675	.229	13.256	.017	.986
Communication knowledge management	.030	.364	.081	.936	-9.158	8.929	-1.026	.316

H2 predicted that BP's stock prices will be positively related to BP's reputation score during the period of crisis. A Pearson correlation analysis was performed. As predicted, results revealed a strong significant correlation between the reputation score of the BP Company and its stock price (*r* = .677, p < .001). In order to further examine the relation between reputation and stock price, a simple linear regression was also performed by regression reputation on stock price. Results suggested that the overall model is significant (*F* (1, 28) = 23.675, *p* < .001), and BP's reputation score accounted for approximately half (45.8%) of the variance of BP's stock price.

H3 predicted that BP leaders' performance in crisis communication is a predictor of BP's stock price. A multiple regression revealed that there was no significant effect of BP leaders' statements and responses made on media on BP's stock price (*p* > .05, see Table 2),

suggesting BP's stock price was not significantly influenced by the message convey by its leaders to the media and other key publics. Thus, this hypothesis was not supported.

Discussion and Conclusion

Through the lens of the model of Excellent Leadership in Public Relations (Meng et al., 2009), this study explored communication effectiveness of a company's leaders under crisis conditions by examining the *New York Times*, *USA Today*, and the *St. Petersburg Times*' coverage of the BP oil spill in 2010.

The model testing validated the seven essential dimensions of leadership in public relations, which consist of self-insight, vision, team collaboration, ethical orientation, relationship building, strategic decision-making, and communication knowledge management ability. This suggests that the leadership model is also applicable to crisis conditions. The analysis of BP oil spill case indicates that a leader's personal attributes, ethical orientation, and communication knowledge management capability are critical factors for achieving excellence in crisis communication. To be specific, excellent leadership in crisis means being proactive, forward looking, being able to actively cope with crisis situations, and ability to bring diverse groups together to collaboratively solve problems. Excellent leadership under crisis situations also requires an understanding of the needs of key publics, especially the necessity to foster trust with media, and capability to communicate effectively with publics.

In addition, according to the model, leaders should be capable to apply diverse strategies depending on different situations. That is consistent with Coombs' (2006) suggestion that organizations should choose appropriate crisis communication strategies to match different crisis situations based on crisis types, severity of damage, crisis history of the organization, and stakeholder-organization history. Interestingly, the model testing also pointed out that displaying consistent behaviors, which were relatively unexplored in previous crisis communication studies, emerges as a significant factor for excellent leadership during crises.

Findings show that BP gained higher leadership scores on "self-sight", "communication knowledge management" and "ethical orientation". Though BP was later found to ignore early warnings and make decisions that increased the risk of oil spill, the company did a good job in crisis communication. It actively cooperated with the media, which was evidenced by the volume of news coverage quoting BP leaders' words. BP leaders, including spokesperson, chief executive, BP American vice president, senior vice president, and managers, were quoted directly or paraphrased in approximately one third of the selected news stories from the three newspapers. In most of the quotations, BP executives explained the steps that the company was taking to quell the spill and the company's efforts in cleaning up the spill, mentioned that the work of stop the spill was challenging, answered allegations (e.g. BP paid affected employees money to not saying anything about the blast), responded to comments (e.g., BP's safety was not improved as promised three years ago), claimed no information disclosure to individuals, assured investors that BP is financially sound, and so forth. BP's good crisis communication might explain the interesting findings revealed in PR Week's surveys that conducted in June 2010 and April 2011. According to the survey, right after the oil disaster, though 69 percent of respondents believed that BP should take full responsibility for the spill, and half responded that they had more negative opinion toward BP, 38 percent of respondents thought BP had handled the crisis quite well, and 68 percent said they would not avoid its products and 61 percent said they would not turn to competitor products (PR Week, 2010). Similarly, a survey conducted one year later showed that 86 percent of respondents said they had not boycotted any BP products as a result of the spill, and approximately half of respondents thought BP handled the crisis very well (Magee, 2011).

Consistent with prior studies, this study had also revealed a significant correlation between reputation and stock prices. This provided empirical support that reputation conveys important information about the profit and long-term potential of a company (Brown, 1998; Brown & Perry, 1994; Fombrun & Shanley, 1990), and has an increasing appeal as an investment choice (Chajet, 1997). However, no significant association was found between leadership score and reputation. The lack of association between leadership score and reputation might be because there is a lagged response before crisis communication works on reputation recovery. The impact of communication strategies on market may appear in subsequent weeks or even months.

Limitation and Future Research

The study is limited by its selection of news publications. Although the *New York Times*, *USA Today*, and the *St. Petersburg Times* provided both national and state perspective, future research should also include state newspapers from Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama where coastlines were contaminated in this oil spill crisis. Additionally, future research could also include more media coverage, such as newsmagazines, electronic news (e.g. blogs), social media and television coverage, to better examine how BP communicated with its key publics during this crisis. Another limitation of the present study is the dependent variables tested. Only reputation and stock price were tested, future research should include more variables related to the company's crisis communication to investigate the effects of a company's crisis communication strategies.

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Enabling, Advising, Supporting, Executing:
A Theoretical Framework for Internal Communication Consulting Within Organizations

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Abstract

This paper analyzes the consulting and enabling function within the role set of communication managers and provides an initial theoretical framework for internal communication consulting in organizations. The idea of communication professionals as *consultants* and *enablers of communication* has already been introduced by a number of researchers. Nevertheless, the necessity of this task as well as the specific dimensions and practices of *internal communication consulting* and its various objectives, forms, and specifications have not been elaborated until now. This paper takes an initial step towards closing this gap by developing a theoretical framework based on research in business consulting and existing public relations role models.

After a short introduction (section I), the necessity of the consulting function will be emphasized by introducing the concept of the *communicative organization*, in which managing relationships by communication is part of every employee's job profile (section II). In order to fulfill this requirement, communicative competencies in a much broader sense than traditional business and interpersonal communication have to be developed on a broad scale. This leads to a new challenge for communication professionals: they are asked to advise organizational members regarding communicative topics and to enable them to resolve *communication-related issues* as well as *task-related issues* (section III). Based on a review of the relevant streams of research in different disciplines, a framework for internal communication consulting has been constructed by combining the dimensions of consulting forms and objectives (section IV). Qualitative interviews with communication executives of major European organizations have been conducted to verify the breadth and plausibility of this framework (section V). The paper closes by outlining implications for the research, education, and practice of public relations (section VI).

Introduction

Today's organizations are embedded in a broad set of stakeholder relationships as well as legal, economic, and cultural constraints. There are numerous organizational touchpoints and interactions with the environment located within almost all the parts of an organization. The traditional strategies of allocating and limiting access and interactions for specific stakeholders to dedicated units like marketing and sales, public relations, or customer services are no longer viable in networked societies. This development challenges the traditional understandings of strategic communication and public relations (Arthur W. Page Society, 2007). Obviously, a rising number of organizational touchpoints with the environment leads to increasing risks of inconsistent communication as well as a lack of orientation, identity, and common understanding of goals and values.

Traditionally, the communication function has been mandated to shape the image of the organization as well as to stimulate processes of identity building and cultural identification by communicating with external and internal stakeholders. Moreover, communication is necessary to facilitate operational processes, e.g. by influencing consumers' preferences, informing about strategic decisions, helping leaders to motivate team members, and attracting public attention to community activities. However, this is obviously not only performed by communication professionals, but by leaders in nearly every department as well as by every co-worker and employee who is in contact with other people within his or her job (Heide & Simonsson, 2011, pp. 201-202). That is exactly what today's complexity, speed, and changes require. Therefore, organizations and their members need to be able to integrate communicative implications into their decision-making processes. This may lead to a fundamental change within the role set and job profiles of communication managers in organizations: "To be able to meet this challenge requires that professional communicators move their professional focus from leading communication processes to developing the organisation's communication skills on all levels" (Hamrefors, 2009, p. 19). The conceptual background for this development is outlined in relation to the concept of the communicative organization.

The Communicative Organization

Since organizational communication or public relations is understood as a function to support the top management by attaining the overall organizational goals, like the protection of "advantages in competitiveness" (Zerfass, 2008, p. 68) as well as the development and "preserving of social legitimacy" (Verhoeven, Zerfass, & Tench, 2011, p. 96), it impacts on economic and social dimensions as well as receiving impacts from them at the same time (van Ruler & Verčič, 2005, pp. 263-265; Zerfass, 2008, pp. 67-68). From this point of view, organizational communication does not only include the traditional "outbound" paradigm of communication, including a focus on speaking out, announcements, and trying to deliver messages to audiences, which are predominant in communication and public relations perspectives (Zerfass, Tench, Verhoeven, Verčič, & Moreno, 2010, pp. 26-28). Besides, there is empirical evidence that a more comprehensive understanding of the communication function, also including the "inbound" activities of listening and monitoring to inform overall strategic decision making (and not only communication campaigns), is gaining in importance (pp. 28).

Along this line, the *Stockholm Accords*, a collaborative effort of more than 1,000 leaders of the global public relations profession from 42 countries, proposed the vision of a *communicative organization* that "requires timely information, knowledge and understanding of economic, social, environmental and legal developments, as well as of its stakeholders'

expectations. This [is] to promptly identify and deal with the opportunities and risks that can impact the organization's direction, action and communication" (Stockholm Accords, 2010).

These communication activities take place at nearly every point in the organization – not only in the communication department (Belasen, 2008, pp. 4-5; Heide & Simonsson, 2011, p. 202). The employees of the financial department need to be aware of communicative effects and consequences when communicating with their stakeholders, just as members of the human resources, legal, or sales department need to be. Communicative consequences and effects need to be decoupled from the exclusive link to explicit communication activities like targeted announcements, communication campaigns, and events. The focus needs to be broadened and consciously linked to everyday interactions with suppliers, business partners, public departments, potential employees, or other internal and external stakeholder groups within the individual job execution but also in their private lives (Heide & Simonsson 2011, p. 212). Furthermore, activities like the monitoring, interpretation, and inclusion of information in decision-making processes and organizational activities need to be integrated into communicative competencies: "Because teams operate close to the frontlines of the organization (upstream systems) and often communicate directly with customers, they need to be familiar with corporate communication goals and messages. Performing diverse organizational tasks and often faced with the need to handle boundary spanning activities, team members must be familiar with core communication activities and products and act in accordance with corporate communication goals" (Belasen, 2008, p. 164). Heide and Simonsson (2011) even go beyond the corporate communication goals by emphasizing that employees need "to be able to engage in dialogue, to give and take feedback and to share information in a meaningful way. In relation to the employer and the growing importance of branding, each employee is an important messenger. All employees must have a thorough understanding of their employer's strategies and values, of how their own work fits into the bigger picture, and of how to communicate accordingly" (p. 205). In order to meet this challenge, the management of relationships by communication needs to be understood as not restricted to dedicated functions and departments, but as part of every employee's job profile (Heide & Simonsson, 2011, p. 206). Therefore, everyone within the organization and thus the whole organization itself needs to be able to communicate effectively (van Ruler & Verčič, 2003, p. 23; Brønn, van Ruler, & Verčič, 2009, p. 78; Tench, Verhoeven, & Zerfass, 2009, p. 151).

Figure 1
Core Elements of the Communicative Organization
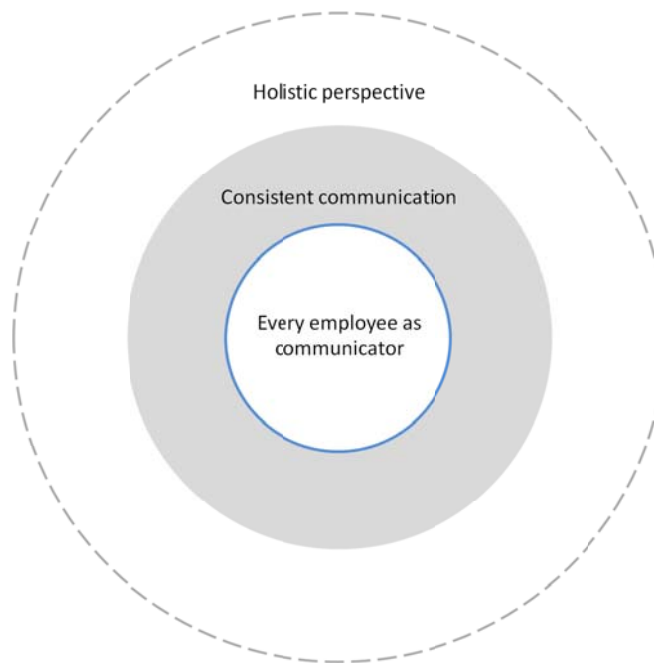
Based on these assumptions, the understanding of the communicative organization in the literature and in this paper includes the following elements, also illustrated in figure 1:

− awareness of the *communicator role of every employee*
− *consistent outbound* communication
− *inbound* activities with a *holistic view* as well as integration and interpretation of information from neighboring areas.

To ensure the realization of this concept, every employee needs to have communicative competencies including active communication competencies (*outbound*) and perceptual and interpretative competencies (*inbound*), as well as cooperative competencies (*integrative*), which provide the knowledge and skills to combine active communication and perceptual competencies in order to build a common communication practice (Belasen, 2008, p. 164; Cornelissen, 2008, p. 72; Zerfass, 2010, pp. 189-192).

In order to ensure the communicative competencies of an organization and its employees, "professional communicators [need to] move their professional focus from leading communication processes to developing the organisation's communication skills on all levels" (Hamrefors, 2009, p. 19) and "building communicative capacity" (p. 10). This, within a holistic perspective, requires a reconceptualization of the role set for communication managers within organizations by moving the focal point from communication execution to *communication consulting*: "Hence, communication practitioners will have to take a role as internal consultants, coaches and trainers to a much greater extent than before" (Heide & Simonsson, 2011, p. 206). Based on their professional knowledge and expertise, they have to advise members of the organization on communication issues as well as enabling the whole organization to

communicate adequately (van Ruler & Verčič, 2005; Grove Ditlevsen, 2008, p. 21; Hamrefors, 2009, p. 22; Heide & Simonsson, 2011, p. 202;).[1]

Therefore, communication managers need to cover a spectrum of enabling others on the one hand as well as giving expert advice on the other hand. These consulting forms are well researched within the general consulting literature. For communication consulting this has not yet taken place in a detailed and comprehensive way. For that reason, this paper will describe the forms of consulting that exist within the role set of communication managers in organizations and even go beyond that by zooming in on the specifics of communication consulting.

Theoretical Approaches to Internal Consulting

The idea of communication professionals as *consultants* and *enablers of communication* has been introduced by a number of public relations researchers (Moss, Warnaby, & Newman, 2000, pp. 277-300; Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2002, pp. 232-234; Moss, Newman, & DeSanto, 2005, p. 878; van Ruler & Verčič, 2005, pp. 263-265; Hamrefors, 2009, pp. 53-54). Usually these studies are linked to the general consulting role as one of many roles enacted by communication professionals (Broom & Smith, 1978; Dozier, 1984; Moss et al., 2000; Grunig et al., 2002; van Ruler & Verčič, 2002; Moss et al., 2005; Hamrefors, 2009) or deal exclusively with external communication consulting executed by agencies or freelance consultants (see e.g. Kubr, 2002; Röttger & Zielmann, 2009b; Fuhrberg, 2010). In both cases, the specific dimensions and practices of *internal communication consulting* and its various objectives, forms, and specifications have not been researched comprehensively until now. To close this gap, this paper reviews the existing literature on business consulting and existing public relations role models. The focus explicitly lies on internal communication professionals who consult departments and employees of the same organization.

Elements of Internal Consulting Processes within Consulting Research

In general consulting research, the area of *internal consulting* has not been studied in the same way as the field of *external consulting*. Nevertheless, some literature and studies have been published and some ideas and concepts of external consulting can also be carefully adopted for internal consulting.

Internal consulting by employees of functional departments who have specialized knowledge and experience in specific areas of the organization have always been part of organizations. A new aspect is the increasing degree of institutionalization (Oefinger, 1986, p. 14; Klanke, 1992, p. 103). Institutionalization describes the official embedding of tasks in functional roles as well as the self-evidence, legitimacy, and acceptance of it (Brandl, 2005, pp. 22-25; Sandhu, 2009, pp. 82-83; Tench et al., 2009, p. 151). For consulting tasks, this means that they are a natural part of functional departments' role sets and are also perceived as such but always remain a secondary function beside the actual core function (Schlüter, 2009, 18f.).[2]

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[1] Since training and development traditionally lie within human resource departments (HR), it has to be noted that the approach of building communicative competencies by communication experts does not neglect the responsibilities and tasks of HR. While communication experts take the responsibility for focusing on communicative aspects within everybody's roles, the execution of training and skill development can be conceptualized as a joint approach of HR and communication departments (Heide & Simonsson, 2011, p. 215).

[2] Internal consulting must be differentiated from *in-house consulting* as a stand-alone function in organizations, the primary task of which is consulting. In contrast, functional departments are defined by a specific core activity that is complemented by consulting tasks.

Consulting can generally be differentiated into a *functional* and an *institutional* perspective, which again are constitutive of each other (Kubr, 2002, p. 3; Caroli, 2005, p. 4). The latter perspective focuses on the role and characteristics of the consultant and the client as well as a so-called *consulting system* in which the two roles interact (Carqueville, 1991, p. 263; Kubr, 2002, p. 3; Fuhrberg, 2010, p. 39). This perspective will not be emphasized in this paper since the function of consulting is in the interest of research and not its context and actors in the first place. The functional perspective is based on the institutional perspective and observes the consulting process, its structure, and its elements. Consulting includes "any form of providing help on the content, process or structure of a task or series of tasks, where the consultant is not actually responsible for doing the task itself but is helping those who are" (Steele, 1975, pp. 2-3), with emphasis on the fact that the consultant does not have direct control or decision power (Kubr, 2002, pp. 3, 76).

Consulting processes are mainly differentiated by their *form*: there are two core forms, which have evolved during the last decades. Traditionally, consulting started with the idea of an expert giving advice based on professional expert knowledge and experience. This form is therefore called *expert consulting* (also referred to as *content-related consulting*) within the general consulting literature. It is the most prevalent form of consulting today (Kubr, 2002, p. 70). It includes advising activities, direct information and knowledge transfer, as well as making suggestions for alternative actions. In contrast to external consultants, internal consultants from functional departments automatically gather the required specialized expertise through their original job profile (Weiss, 2003, p. 3). For communication managers, this means that the communication knowledge and expertise that they use and develop within their daily job build the basis for content-related input and advice. Beside the actual expertise, the recognition of their expert status is crucial to be perceived as an expert consultant. Therefore, communication managers need to prove their specific expertise and its relevance to the organization in order to be recognized as internal consultants.

While this kind of internal consulting questions *what* to change or to undertake, the second core consulting form is characterized by the provision of structures and processes addressing *how* to solve certain issues. This consulting form is called *process consulting* and supports the client's decision-making ability (Kubr, 2002, p. 72). Its goal is to enable clients to solve problems and take decisions independently by making underlying processes and structures transparent and by facilitating their reflections (Kubr, 2002, pp. 70-72).

Along this line, the range of consulting provided by communication professionals may include the *advice* of fellow members of the organization on how to communicate appropriately (expert consulting) as well as the *enablement* of others to master communicative challenges by themselves (process consulting) (see figure 2). This latter consulting form emphasizes that "[s]upporting the communication of others does not necessarily mean that communication professionals need to be directly involved in all communication processes, but rather be a director who stages and provides preconditions for fruitful communication" (Heide & Simonsson, 2011, p. 214).

Both forms of consulting belong to the consulting role within the role set of communication managers. In some situations, one or the other might be more effective, sometimes they need to be combined, and sometimes one provides a starting point and needs to be taken over by the other (Kubr, 2002, p. 72). Most crucial is the awareness of both forms and their strengths and weaknesses as well as the ability to utilize them appropriately.

Figure 2
Different Consulting Forms Within the Process of Internal Communication Consulting

Consulting process

Expert consulting	Process consulting
- Advice	- Enablement
- Information and knowledge transfer	- Development of competences
- Demonstration of action options	- Development of reflectivity

Another characteristic element of the consulting process is the *objective* of consulting, i.e. the kind of issue or problem for which the consultant supports the client in finding a solution or making a decision. Generally, internal consulting by organizational departments addresses issues that are closely linked to the core functionality and expertise of the respective department. For example, the HR department usually advises on personnel topics, the legal department helps to solve legal issues, and the finance department supports questions of accounting. Following this logic, *internal communication consulting* should address the contents, structures, and processes of communication within organizational activities.

While business and consulting research helps to identify these basic dimensions, it does not elaborate the specific tasks and roles of internal communication consulting. It is necessary to review role concepts from PR and communication research in this respect. The distinction of consulting forms and objectives will help in reading these role models anew.

Consulting within role concepts in PR and communication research

Research on roles is a popular area within PR and communication research (Moss et al., 2000, p. 279; Grunig et al., 2002, p. 202). The starting point for this discipline was laid by the *role models by Broom and Smith* (1978), in which they identified four (originally five) roles for communication experts: Expert Prescriber, Communication Facilitator, Problem-solving Process Facilitator, and Communication Technician (Broom & Smith, 1978; Grunig et al., 2002, p. 198). Two of these roles contain consulting elements.

The *Expert Prescriber* is described as a kind of doctor with a huge amount of knowledge in the area of communication prescribing suitable treatment for a patient regarding communication-related issues (Broom & Smith, 1978, p. 6). This understanding is shaped by the study's time of origin, but includes the idea of the knowledgeable expert giving direct, issue-related advice to the client. In contrast, the main task of the *Problem-solving Process Facilitator* is the support and enablement of a client regarding communication-related issues by facilitating information exchange and decision-making processes (Broom & Smith, 1978, p. 10). These elements match the other core form of consulting, process consulting, the target of which is to support and enable the client to solve issues independently.

The two remaining roles, the *Communication Facilitator* and the *Communication Technician*, are not consulting but execution roles, as they do not give advice or enable the client but rather support him actively in the execution of communication tasks *(Communication Facilitator)* or even execute the communication in his stead *(Communication Technician)*. As the

distinction between consulting and execution is quite narrow, the tasks are often mixed. To describe the concept of communication consulting properly and derive requirements for the communication expert's role and status in the organization, it is essential to differentiate between these activities as two separate parts of the role without neglecting their close linkage.

Another study dealing with consulting elements within communication managers' roles is the *excellence study* by Grunig et al. (2002). This line of research has also identified four roles *(Managers, Senior Advisors, Media Relations Specialists,* and *Technicians),* but only one role, the *Senior Advisor* role, contains consulting elements. In this case, the role is explicitly allocated to team and department leaders and the client is predefined as the dominant coalition in the organization. Nevertheless, the execution of the role implicates on the one hand the contribution of information regarding solutions and decisions without having decision-making power as well as on the other hand providing structures and processes to enable the dominant coalition to involve stakeholder interests (ibid., p. 234).

Beside these studies from the United States, considerable research on the topic has been conducted in Europe. *Moss et al.* (2000) assigned the consulting role to *Public Relations Practitioners* at the middle and upper management level. Instead of distinct roles, they described a task cluster for these managers, in which consulting takes one part. In contrast to the studies described previously, they integrated consulting activities regarding organization processes and therefore aimed for other functions' task-related issues. They had to admit that only a minority of communication managers addresses these objectives: "However it was acknowledged that public relation counsel was mainly sought where problems were seen to have a strong communications-related dimension. Relatively few practitioners appeared to contribute regularly to broader operational problem solving at the corporate and business levels. The exclusion of many practitioners from participation in broader operational decision-making activity was attributed to a lack of understanding and experience of operational or business matters and, in particular, the limited appreciation of financial management issues among practitioners" (Moss et al., 2000, p. 300).

The lack of knowledge about the context and the organization is stated as one main reason for not being involved in task-related decisions. The authors point out that besides other elements like the branch, organizational structure and culture, role expectations, and expert knowledge, especially organizational as well as contextual knowledge are absolutely crucial for communication managers to be recognized as serious consultants (Moss et al., 2000, pp. 277, 296). The consulting activities described can again be categorized as expert advice but for communication-related as well as for task-related topics.

Another study by Moss et al. (2005) describes various areas of responsibility for communication. One of them is called *Key Policy and Strategy Advisor* (p. 878). This area includes on the one hand the integration of information based on observation of the environment into the decision-making processes of the top management. Communication consultants also illustrate potential critical communicative consequences as well as providing the communicative perspective in functional discussions. Furthermore, they build awareness of the communicative implications of strategic decisions and with that enable other employees to integrate the communicative dimension into their professional activities and decisions themselves. On the other hand, they give advice regarding concrete communication activities and how to communicate decisions properly. With these distinctions the study categorizes two kinds of consulting objectives – communication-related and task-related objectives – as well as two consulting forms – advising and enabling – as distinctive of internal communication consulting.

These two main forms of consulting are also described by *van Ruler and Verčič* in their concept of *Reflective Communication Management* (van Ruler & Verčič, 2002a; van Ruler & Verčič, 2003; van Ruler & Verčič, 2005). Based on four dimensions, which have been identified in various studies (e.g. van Ruler, Verčič, Bütschi & Flodin, 2000; van Ruler & Verčič, 2002b; van Ruler & Verčič, 2004), they derived several core tasks and roles of communication managers. One of the main responsibilities is the establishment of communication management as a core function for organizations (van Ruler & Verčič, 2005, p. 264): "Communication management as a specialty helps organizations by counseling the deliberations on legitimacy, by coaching its members in the development of their communicative competencies, by conceptualizing communication plans, and by executing communication means, using informational, persuasive, relational, and discursive interventions" (van Ruler & Verčič, 2005, p. 265).

The tasks of *counseling* and *coaching* include the concepts of advising and enabling and therefore consulting elements, whereas *conceptualizing* and *executing* clearly contain execution tasks.

Counseling describes the task of observing the environment regarding communication-related topics, interpreting the results and information, and integrating them into task-related, organizational decision-making processes, as well as creating awareness of the necessity of this integration by giving advice from a communicational expert perspective. At the same time, it accomplishes a basis on which organizational members can reflect and adapt their own actions. Counseling therefore addresses task-related issues by giving advice as well as enabling organizational members (van Ruler & Verčič, 2005, p. 265). In contrast, *coaching* aims to support communication-related issues by supporting organizational members in their communication competence as it is required in today's world. Both tasks are clearly allocated to communication managers' roles: "The role of the communication management specialist, however, is to advise and coach [the members of] the organization in this process" (van Ruler & Verčič, 2005, p. 263).

One of the latest studies focusing on communication experts' roles within organizations and stressing their consulting function is the research project *Business Effective Communication* supported by the Swedish Public Relations Association (Sveriges Informationsförening) (Hamrefors, 2009). The aim of this study is not to describe the status quo but rather to provide an outlook regarding essential tasks and skills for communication managers in the future (Hamrefors, 2009, p. 10). It differentiates between two forms of leadership, *ideological leadership* and *contextual leadership*; ideological leadership is supported by contextual leadership, in which communication management can be classed (Hamrefors, 2009, p. 33). This form of leadership is characterized by taking a holistic and wider perspective, "contributing awareness of both the risks and opportunities inherent in various possible actions" (Hamrefors, 2009, p. 33) and offering guidance for possible solutions. Furthermore, it develops and supports the relationship building with various internal and external stakeholder groups and can "develop the employees' ability to judge what they should absorb from the outside world and provide support in these processes" (Hamrefors, 2009, pp. 33, 49). Taking up these aspects, they contain elements of the concept of the communicative organization as it has been described earlier in this paper. Hamrefors further specifies the contextual leadership by deriving four different roles from it: *System Builder*, *Mediator*, *Coach*, and *Influencer*. Except for the first role, all of them include consulting elements, which is a consequence of contextual leadership having been conceptualized as a supporting and enabling function.

Within the role of the *Mediator*, communication experts facilitate the communication between different parties, discover potential risks, and integrate this information and suggested solutions into the respective processes. With these activities they mainly cover the part of giving advice regarding task-related issues (Hamrefors, 2009, p. 53). Additionally, they take over the task of enabling and promoting the communication competence of others within the role of the *Coach*: "The contextual leader also has the task of assisting others in developing their communications. The task comprises both helping others to improve in conveying the organisation's ideology and their own contextual communication" (Hamrefors, 2009, p. 54). Both roles are combined in the role of the *Influencers*, which supports especially the holistic view as well as a reflection and change of perspectives (Hamrefors, 2009, p. 54). Overall, both communication-related and task-related issues are covered by different consulting roles within the role set of communication managers.

Figure 3 summarizes the analysis of role concepts in public relations and communication research and links those models to the dimensions identified in the business and consulting literature.

Figure 3
Overview of the Internal Communication Consulting Forms and Objectives within the Role Concepts in Public Relations and Communication Research

Internal communication consulting		
Consulting objective / Consulting form	**Communication-related issue**	**Task-related issue**
Enabling (Process consulting)	**Problem-solving Process Facilitator** Broom & Smith (1978) **Senior Advisor** Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier (2002) **Coaching** van Ruler & Verčič (2005) **Coach** Hamrefors (2009)	**Key Policy and Strategy Advisor** Moss, Newman, & DeSanto (2005) **Counseling** van Ruler & Verčič (2005) **Influencer** Hamrefors (2009)
Advising (Expert consulting)	**Expert Prescriber** Broom & Smith (1978) **Senior Advisor** Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier (2002) **Public Relations Practitioner** Moss, Warnaby, & Newman (2000) **Key Policy and Strategy Advisor** Moss, Newman, & DeSanto (2005)	**Public Relations Practitioner** Moss, Warnaby, & Newman (2000) **Key Policy and Strategy Advisor** Moss, Newman, & DeSanto (2005) **Counseling** van Ruler & Verčič (2005) **Mediator** Hamrefors (2009)

The literature review shows that the main consulting *forms* of expert consulting and process consulting are also applicable to internal communication consulting.

Regarding the *objectives*, communication professionals – unlike experts working in other departments – have to include the task-related issues of their clients in their consulting activities since other functional activities can also have an impact on or be impacted by the organization's environment. As outlined before, nearly every employee has touchpoints with some internal or external stakeholders within his job. Therefore, many decisions and activities that do not appear communication-related in the first place may have communicative consequences. There might be positive impacts, for example in customer relationships or innovation management, but also worse outcomes like a decrease in credibility, loss of trust, and therefore limitation of the "license to operate." This is not only true for decisions and activities that impact on external stakeholder groups. Internal stakeholders are quite sensitive to activities that contradict their values or corporate culture. Therefore, internal communication consulting needs to address communication-related as well as task-related (functional) issues. This dimension is also mentioned by Nothhaft (2010, pp. 131-134) as second-order management, describing the core function of communication management as interfering in the management of others by including the communicative dimension in their decision-making process (Heide & Simonsson, 2011, p. 213). Heide and Simonsson (2011) state that "[w]hen the board of directors is about to make an important decision, the members always discuss its economic consequences. Since communication is fundamental for an organization, the communication perspective should be as natural as the economic aspects when making decisions. And because communication professionals are an organization's communication expert, they must make clear that 'you cannot not communicate'" (p. 213).

A Framework for Internal Communication Consulting

The theoretical discussion has identified the main objectives and predominant forms of internal communication consulting. Consulting aiming at *communication-related issues* like agenda setting for a new technology or initiating dialogues with stakeholders on the social web has to be differentiated from consulting focusing on *task-related issues*, e.g. integrating knowledge on public opinion making and agenda building into strategic decision making as well as realizing the impact of operational activities on the communicative environment (like the closing down and relocation of a production line to another country or the changing of an internal incentive system). Both objectives can be addressed via either *expert consulting* or *process consulting* as well as via consulting activities in between this spectrum.

Combining these dimensions makes it possible to construct a framework that covers all the elements of the internal communication consulting process and puts them in relation to each other. The framework illustrated in figure 4 shows *four different specifications of the internal consultancy role*: a) recommending communication activities and techniques, b) providing and supporting communication competencies, structures, and processes, c) integrating communicative insights into task-related decision making, d) building and encouraging awareness of the communicative dimension of any management activities or task-related decisions.

Since consulting is often closely linked to the execution of proposed actions, these *subsequent activities* are captured in the framework as well. Communication professionals can support and execute core communication activities on behalf of the whole organization, specific

departments, or specific members (e.g. preparing CEO communication activities, running an employer branding campaign for human resources). However, they will usually not support or execute task-related activities for other functions (like defining corporate strategies, developing a remuneration system, conducting personnel searches).

Figure 4
Specifications of Consulting Forms and Consulting Objectives of Internal Communication Consulting

Internal communication consulting		
Consulting objective ⟍ Consulting form	Communication-related issue	Task-related issue
Enabling (Process consulting)	Providing communication competencies, processes, and structures	Building and encouraging awareness of the communicative dimension of task-related decisions
Advising (Expert consulting)	Recommending communication activities	Integrating communicative insights into task-related decision making
Subsequent activities:		
Supporting	Supporting the execution of communication activities	Not within the communication manager's area of responsibility
Executing	Executing communication activities	Not within the communication manager's area of responsibility

The quadrants illustrate the four ideal dimensions of internal communication consulting, knowing that this is a conceptual differentiation. In reality consulting takes place in between these spectrums, and different types will be used depending on the situations and contexts. It seems to be more important to integrate these dimensions into every communication professional's role set than to differentiate them clearly empirically. Moreover, consulting needs to be understood as a common task for every communication professional and therefore not only

for managers, but for everyone regardless of his or her hierarchical position. While the amount and relevance of internal consulting will differ depending on the particular position, the task itself should be part of every communication professional's role. This is necessary to support the claim that communication professionals are experts on the communication dimension within the organization (Tench et al., 2009, p. 155; Heide & Simonsson, 2011, p. 214), just like in-house counsels are experts on any kind of juridical issues (and not only for writing contracts or filing suits), and like human resource managers are experts on personnel in a broad sense (and not only for hiring and firing people). The specifications of internal communication consulting can be described in more detail in the following way:

a) *Expert consulting for communication-related issues* advises organizational members how to communicate in specific situations by *recommending communication activities and techniques*. Communication professionals may support the decision-making process in other departments that need to address specific stakeholders, interact with the media, or improve their informal or formal communication processes. This includes, for example, advice on which messages should be communicated to different publics, at what time, and through which channel. These recommendations can refer to official or informal external communication situations as well as internal communication processes like team communication or management communication. The final decision on whether and how communication actually takes place remains the responsibility of the client. This type of consulting might also address more complex processes of communication management. An example is internal consulting on a communication challenge for the HR department, which wants to address potential employees. The consulting process may lead to the development of a public relations campaign. The decision about its execution and the execution itself are the responsibility of the HR department. However, the execution can be supported by or delegated to the communication department. This type of consulting is based on professional knowledge about the principles and effects of communication as well as on information about current developments within the media. Furthermore, observations from the organizational environment are gathered, evaluated, and interpreted for the organization itself and used as input for this advice (Hamrefors, 2009, p. 50).

b) *Process consulting for communication-related issues* enables clients to master communicative challenges themselves by *providing and supporting communicative structures, processes, and competencies ranging from* active communication competencies (outbound) and perceptual and interpretative competencies (inbound) to cooperative competencies (integrative) This form of consulting seems suitable if the communicative challenge at hand can be characterized as generic and long-term oriented, thus asking for a thorough enablement of the client. Process consulting provides orientation and reflectivity for clients and increases their capacities for problem solving. Hence, communication professionals initiate a formal and informal learning process, in which the client develops communicative competencies as well as the awareness of the communicative dimensions of his activities. Traditional methods of enablement are media training, business communication seminars, and coaching processes for single persons, teams, or groups of co-workers. Furthermore, process consulting might enable a whole department to communicate with its stakeholders through tailor-made messages and suitable channels. This requires detailed knowledge about communication processes, but also a broad awareness of the need for consistency, inbound and outbound communication, and its effects. Process consulting does not only focus on communication itself, but also helps to develop the basic structures, processes, and resources that enable organizational members to expand their communication abilities. Accordingly, process consulting develops authoritative

resources (communicative competencies) as well as allocative resources (communication tools, patterns, guidelines, sign-off processes, etc.) (for a discussion of these resources see Giddens, 1984, p. 33; Zerfass, 2010, pp. 189-192).

c) *Expert consulting for task-related issues* integrates communicative insights for decision-making processes within organizational functions. Along this line, communication professionals may not only be asked to announce decisions taken in other departments, but they can also *provide communicative insights, information, knowledge, and experience prior to those decisions*. While they will not be able to suggest an overall solution to specific challenges in other functions, they can help clients to decide more comprehensively by including knowledge about public opinion building as well as the communicative consequences of alternative actions. This helps organizations to understand stakeholders, their requirements, and their expectations better and act accordingly (Moss et al., 2000, p. 283; Heide & Simonsson, 2011, p. 213).

d) *Process consulting for task-related issues* enables co-workers to understand and meet stakeholders' expectations by *building and encouraging the awareness of the communicative dimension of any management or other task-related decision* throughout the organization (Hamrefors, 2009, p. 33; van Ruler & Verčič, 2005, pp. 263-264). Communication professionals may support the reflective capacity of co-workers by stimulating an external view and helping them to see other perspectives. Examples are the early reflection on the consequences for employer reputation when developing outsourcing strategies or the impacts on corporate culture when conceptualizing internal incentive programs. Obviously, the expertise and responsibility for the communicative dimension of organizational activities cannot be handed over from communications to other departments. However, every co-worker should be enabled to integrate this dimension into his or her daily routines. This again emphasizes the need for a shift of mindsets of communication professionals. Within the communicative organization, they are no longer responsible for all the communication activities, but for building the overall communicative capacity of the organization. This denotes new links between corporate and communication strategy and strengthens the importance of the communication function (Moss et al., 2005, p. 880; Cornelissen, 2008, p. 100; Zerfass, 2008, p. 91; Tench et al., 2009, pp. 157-158).

These four specifications build the overall concept of internal communication consulting. Every communication professional or at least every communication department should be able to cover all of these dimensions. However, not only personal abilities but also self-perception as well as acceptance by others are highly crucial for fulfilling the role of an internal communication consultant (Carqueville, 1991, p. 255; Röttger & Zielmann, 2009a, p. 44).

The choice of specific consulting forms will depend on the objectives, the situations, and the client's needs. In practice, the top management and heads of departments are the primary target group for internal communication consulting. Nevertheless, the potential of the communicative organization can only be exploited if every employee is recognized as a potential client (Belasen, 2008, p. 164; Heide & Simonsson, 2011, p. 214).

Validation of the Concept: Qualitative Interviews with Communication Managers

Testing a theoretical framework that identifies dimensions and activities that are obvious, but not commonly known and unequally distributed in public relations practice causes several problems. A number of surveys focusing on the role and self-perception of communication professionals have already shown an increasing importance of the consultant role (Bentele, Großkurth, & Seidenglanz, 2009, pp. 88-89; Zerfass et al., 2010: 74). A more detailed quantitative study would have to explain the specifications in detail and rely on the commemoration of various types of internal consulting among respondents. It was not possible to conduct such a survey in the course of this research project. Instead, a qualitative approach has been used to verify the practical comprehensiveness and plausibility of the theoretical framework. Ten in-depth interviews (Gubrium, Holstein, Marvasti, & McKinney, 2012) with male and female communication managers of major European organizations (Boehringer, Bosch, BP, Daimler, Henkel, Merck, etc.) were conducted. The interviewees were either the head of communications/public relations or leading the communication strategy unit.

The empirical study confirmed internal consulting to be a relevant part of the communication manager's role. By focusing on and differentiating between the different dimensions it became clear that all the dimensions outlined above are part of the role set of today's communication professionals in large organizations. However, the actual application differs quite widely.

All the respondents rated communication-related issues highest. They think it is their natural responsibility to help organizational members to communicate. However, they restricted this to corporate communication activities in a traditional sense and did not mention communication within teams or leadership relations. Typical examples mentioned in the interviews were the development of Q&A material and presentations as well as summaries and interpretations of social events. These services and products can be interpreted as support for the execution of communication activities as well as the development of communicative competencies.

While every respondent declared *communication-related expert consulting* (advising on how to communicate) as part of the daily work in his or her department, the self-conception concerning the three other dimensions in the framework was not consistent.

Communication-related process consulting was rated highly important by only two of the ten experts. The supporters of this specification emphasized the growing complexity of their organizations, which has led to increasing challenges for communication professionals. The interviewees claimed that they can no longer handle corporate communications on their own but they need to rely on an organization in which everybody is able to communicate in a proper way. This is necessary to meet stakeholders' expectations and include relevant information in organizational decision making. In contrast to this, the majority of respondents stressed the importance of consistency and control by the communication department. In their view, enabling others to communicate would undermine these goals. Obviously, the fear of losing power and responsibility is prevalent. Both the framework of internal communication consulting explained above and the overarching theories of corporate communications (Christensen, Morsing, & Cheney, 2008) challenge this traditional idea of the communication department as the exclusive locus of professional communication within the organization.

The participation within other department's decisions is also viewed quite diversely. Half of the experts interviewed stated that *task-related expert consulting* participation is part of their role, sometimes even their very own capability. The other respondents said that communication

departments are only integrated into those processes in crisis situations. They rated this specification of internal communication consulting as interference in other realms of the organization.

The last quadrant of the framework, *task-related process consulting*, which aims to develop overall communicative awareness, was rated as absolutely necessary by all the respondents. According to the experts from global corporations, this needs to be developed through training but also through the daily collaboration between line managers and communication professionals.

Overall, the dimensions of the framework were validated as existent forms and objectives of internal communication consulting. The actual execution of each specification differs according to personal experience and organizational settings. As mentioned before, quantitative research would be necessary to shed more light on these aspects.

Outlook and Practical Implications

This study lays the ground for quantitative research identifying the utilization of the four specifications of internal communication consulting. The different forms of process consulting as well as task-related issues as objectives of communication consulting need more detailed investigation. Further research may also focus on individual, departmental, and organizational prerequisites and conditions for the different specifications. Moving further, it could be interesting to identify the links and correlations between consulting tasks on the one hand and organizational structures, environmental conditions, and acceptance of the communication function within the organization on the other hand. The results might serve as indicators of the institutionalization of the internal consultant role.

Thinking of public relations education, the framework of internal communication consulting opens new dimensions for students by providing a broader picture of their prospective profession. It might also encourage them to prepare for these requirements. The framework also challenges the idea of the communicative organization proposed by academics and professional bodies. This concept will remain a pipe dream until communication professionals develop differentiated role models and day-to-day routines that make the enabling function and task-related communication consulting come true.

This leads directly to the paper's implications for the practice of public relations and communication management. The framework outlined above stresses the need for differentiated role models including the consulting role and for a variety of consulting dimensions within the latter. The self-perception of communication professionals as experts who are able to give valuable advice and enable others and therewith the whole organization is crucial for building a strong identity as communication experts. The consultant role is not meant to relieve other core roles. It should complement the overall role set of communication managers. In addition, it shows how communication professionals can accept the broad challenge of leading communication within communicative organizations in a very practical sense.

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