

THE EFFECTS OF ORGANIZATIONAL ETHICS ON RESPONSIBILITY, REPUTATION  
AND BEHAVIORAL INTENTION IN CRISIS MANAGEMENT

By

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To my family, professors and colleagues

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Abstract of Thesis Presented to the Graduate School  
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This study provides a test of organizational ethics in crisis management. The study concentrated on how organizational ethics, crisis type, and response strategy were associated with the attribution of crisis responsibility, organizational reputation, and supportive behavioral intention. The analyses also examined how the crisis responsibility, reputation, and behavioral intention varied according to the organizational ethics. This study conducted an experiment using online instruments. The study used a between-groups 2 x 2 x 2 factorial design in which ethics level (high vs. low), crisis type (rumor vs. transgression), and response strategy (mortification vs. denial) were manipulated to produce eight different conditions.

For the cases tested, the results supported the value and importance of organizational ethics in a crisis situation. First, the Pearson correlation coefficients revealed that the level of ethics of an organization was positively associated with the organizational reputation and supportive behavioral intention. And, there was a negative relationship between the level of ethics of an organization and crisis responsibility. Also, the results revealed that crisis responsibility was significantly negatively related to other variables, organizational reputation and supportive behavioral intention. This means that stakeholders' perception of organizational ethics level can play positive roles in crisis management and it is also important that the plan to lessen the degree

to which publics attribute crisis responsibility to the organization should be made at the first phase of crisis.

Third, the results of two-way ANOVA revealed that there was an interaction effect for ethics level by crisis type on organizational reputation. However, no interaction effect for ethics level by response strategy showed on any other dependent variables. The results indicated a significant main effect of the ethics level on crisis responsibility and supportive behavioral intention, while there was a main effect of crisis type only on crisis responsibility. Likewise, the results indicated a significant main effect of the response strategy on crisis responsibility and organizational reputation. The results confirm that the level of organizational ethics would be a very important moderate factor in crisis communication.

Finally, the results revealed that rumor type crisis yielded more favorable crisis responsibility, organizational reputation and supportive behavioral intention than transgression type crisis. Interestingly, unlike hypothetical expectation, subjects indicated that the company using mortification response strategy should be more responsible for the crisis than one using denial response strategy. This means that it is possible that mortification might not guarantee the halo and halo effects in crisis management and the previous suggestions insisting mortification is the best response strategy in crisis might be false.

The theoretical and practical implications of this study and suggestions for future research are discussed.

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

We know well the lesson from *The Shepherd's Boy and The Wolf*, one of the *Aesop's Fables*. A shepherd-boy, who was judged as a sincere boy, rushed down towards the village calling out "Wolf, Wolf," and the villagers came out to help him. However, it was his trick. A few days after, he tried the same thing for pleasure, and the neighbors came to help him again. Shortly after this event, a wolf truly came at last. The shepherd-boy cried out "Wolf, Wolf!" still louder than before. However, nobody lifted a finger to help him. This lesson tells us how important a person's trust is at an unusual time.

Can this moral be applied to business management? This simple question is the starting point of my thesis. This study concentrates on finding out how people's perceptions and attitudes differ in terms of the assets of an organization's ethical performance and image when the organization faces a crisis.

It is now over 10 years since crisis communication theories were developed for effective crisis management. Among crisis communication theories, Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) (Coombs & Holladay, 2002) and Image Repair Theory (IRT) (Benoit, 1995) are representative. These theories have developed effective strategies for crisis management based on the communication, social, and public relations theories, such as Attribution Theory (Weiner, 1985), Cognitive Dissonance Theory (Festinger, 1957), Contingency Theory (Cameron, 1997), Complexity Theory (Murphy, 1996, 2000), Game Theory (Murphy, 1989), and so forth.

SCCT and IRT suggest that the appropriate crisis response strategies should match the crisis type. According to these theories, the matched response strategies can affect the attribution of crisis responsibility, organizational reputation, and stakeholder's potential outcome. Recently, much attention has been given to other situational factors influencing the results of crisis

management. For example, identification of crisis type and the level of crisis responsibility can vary in terms of stakeholders' emotion toward an organization, crisis history, and relationship between an organization and stakeholders. In fact, consumers are likely to experience a diverse relationship with an organization that is significantly associated with a crisis responsibility, reputation of an organization, and behavioral intention (Cameron, Pang, & Jin, 2008; Coombs, 2007; Kim, Kim, & Cameron, 2009; Kim & Yang, 2009).

As society becomes more complex, the definition and identity of crisis have changed. First of all, crisis types have been more diverse and the range of damage from the crisis has also been enlarged. This means that the kinds of stakeholders whom organizations should communicate with have become increasingly diverse. Next, crises have become more unpredictable, which indicates the importance of pre-crisis management.

Due to the change of crisis environments, it is true that crisis management activities are not necessary only after a crisis is realized. Some studies on crisis communication have found situational factors, such as history of crisis or relationship, which can influence the effectiveness of crisis management (Cameron, Pang, & Jin, 2008; Coombs & Holladay, 1996, 2001). In the pre-crisis situation situational factors affects a public's perception and attitude toward an organization, which tells us that the perceptions and attitudes in a pre-crisis situation may play an important role in actual crisis management. It is necessary for crisis managers to make an effort not only for actual crisis management activities, such as environmental monitoring, but also for potential crisis management activities, such as organizational image building, reputation management, and relationship improvement with publics.

Thus, the purpose of this study is to explore the effects of ethical performance of an organization on the process of crisis management by examining whether the organizational ethics

plays a role as a buffer and halo attenuating the damage from a crisis. This study would contribute to the body of knowledge in crisis management as well as public relations communication by revealing the fact that the organizational ethics could be one of the situational factors affecting the effectiveness of organizational crisis management activities.

## CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### **Crisis Type and Responsibility in Situational Crisis Communication Theory**

#### **Relationship between Crisis Type and Crisis Responsibility**

One of theoretical frames of SCCT is Attribution theory explaining how people search for causes of issues or events (Weiner, 1985). By using Attribution theory, SCCT posits that people need to assign responsibility for a crisis to a specific organization. The notion of crisis responsibility is “the degree to which the organization is perceived to be responsible for the crisis events” (Coombs, 2008, p.265). The level of crisis responsibility can vary according to attribution of control, performance history (crisis history and relationship history), and damage seriousness (Coombs & Holladay, 1995).

SCCT also identifies crisis types in terms of the level of crisis responsibility perceived by stakeholders. The crisis types created by SCCT have a list of thirteen crisis situations which exist on a continuum from high crisis responsibility to low crisis responsibility. Coombs and Holladay (2008) divided these crisis types into three clusters referring to a preventable cluster, an accidental cluster, and a victim cluster (see Table 2-1). This categorization helps understand the relationship between crisis type and crisis responsibility because crisis types can be created based on crisis responsibility, and in turn, crisis responsibility can be predicted according to the crisis type. Thus, it can be said that the relationship between crisis type and crisis responsibility is considerably reciprocal. In other words, the crisis type not only can be identified by assessment of crisis responsibility but also can help assess the crisis responsibility to be attributed to an organization.

Attribution of crisis responsibility to an organization can be perceived as strongest when the organization has had many crisis histories, the crisis might be controlled by people inside the

organization, the crisis results in severe damage, and the organization's intentionality of the wrong doing is high (Coombs, 1998; Coombs & Holladay, 1996, 2001, 2002). For example, the crisis types in a preventable cluster including human error accidents, human error recalls, and organizational misdeeds are regarded as high attribution of crisis responsibility to the organization. On the other hand, the crisis types in a victim cluster including natural disaster, rumors, workplace violence, and product tampering are classified as low attributions of crisis responsibility to the organization.

Regarding the relationship between crisis type and crisis responsibility, Coombs and Holladay (1996) tested it by using two types of crisis – transgression and accident. The results revealed that transgression was perceived as having greater crisis responsibility than accident. Through more studies on the relationship between crisis type and responsibility, Coombs and his colleagues found that there was significantly different crisis responsibility that stakeholders perceived depending on different crisis types – human error accident, organizational misdeed, technical error accident, technical error recalls, workplace violence, and product tampering (Coombs, 1998, 1999; Coombs & Holladay, 2001, 2002; Coombs & Schmidt, 2000). The results reveal that there is a strong relationship between crisis type and attribution of crisis responsibility to an organization. Moreover, Cho and Gower (2006) found that the more intentional crisis type (i.e., transgression) led to more attribution of organizational crisis responsibility than the unintentional crisis type (i.e., rumor).

### **Situational Factors**

Previous studies on crisis responsibility examined other factors influencing attribution of responsibility for crisis (Coombs, 1998; Coombs & Holladay, 1996, 2001; Park & Len-Rios, 2008).

Coombs and Holladay (1996) suggest situational threat intensifier factors which can affect perceptions of crisis responsibility. There are three factors – severity, crisis history, and relationship history. First, severity refers to the amount of damage inflicted by a crisis including human lives lost and injuries, financial loss, and environmental destruction. Second, crisis history indicates how many times an organization has had similar crises in the past. The third factor, relationship history, is concerned with whether an organization has had good relationship with publics based on desirable performances and how it has treated its stakeholders in the past.

Coombs and Holladay (1996) hypothesized that the more severe the damage or the worse the crisis history and relationship history, the greater crisis responsibility stakeholders would attribute to the organization. These hypotheses were supported partially. In fact, the severity of damage did not affect crisis responsibility in the crisis types of technical error accident and organizational misdeed (Coombs, 1998). This means the effect of threat intensifier factors on attribution of crisis responsibility can differ in specific crisis types and situations. Crisis history was found to have an effect on crisis responsibility for some crisis types, such as organizational misdeed, human error crisis, technical error crisis, and workplace violence, but no effect for other crisis types including product tampering and technical error recall (Coombs, 1998, 2002; Coombs & Holladay, 2001).

The relationship history is particularly interesting regarding the results that an unfavorable relationship history was found to have a negative effect on crisis responsibility, while a favorable relationship history had no negative effect (Coombs & Holladay, 2001). Coombs and Holladay (2001) interpreted this results that people who have bad relationship with an organization tend to attribute stronger crisis responsibility to the organization than an organization with which they have a good relationship. Recently, Coombs (2007) posits that relationship history has a direct

and indirect effect on reputational damage posed by a crisis. For example, a negative relationship with stakeholders can affect indirect attribution of crisis responsibility to an organization by deteriorating the definition of the crisis type from victim crisis to accident crisis or from accident crisis to preventable crisis (Coombs & Holladay, 2001). Also, they found that the negative relationship with stakeholders can directly intensify the reputational damage (Coombs & Holladay, 2004). Kim and Yang (2009) found that the organizations keeping a bad relationship with stakeholders are likely to be perceived as having the high attribution of crisis responsibility.

Throughout the previous results, we might expect that, unlike the effect of negative relationship with stakeholders, the positive pre-crisis relationship may produce the positive impact, playing an important role in protecting and supporting an organization in crisis situation.

### **Crisis Response Strategy in Image Repair Theory (IRT)**

#### **Relationship between Crisis Type and Crisis Response Strategy**

A crisis might be one of the most serious events that threaten to damage the image and reputation of an organization. In a crisis, generally, using a compassion message can positively affect a public's perception more on the organizational reputation than using a simple instructing information message (Coombs, 1999). In fact, people tend to consider the organization that issued an apologetic response as more favorable, more prosocial, more ethical, and more likable than the organization that gave a defensive response (Lyon & Cameron, 2004).

Benoit and Pang (2008) identified five categories of crisis response strategies for organizational image restoration; they consist of denial, evasion of responsibility, reducing offensiveness of the event, corrective action, and mortification (see Table 2-2). IRT suggests that the appropriate crisis response strategies (from denial to mortification) should be matched to crisis types identified by the level of crisis responsibility in order to manage effectively the image and reputation of an organization in a crisis situation (Benoit, 1995). Mortification

response strategy admits wrong doing and asks for forgiveness indicating both acceptance of responsibility for the event and expression of direct apology, while denial response strategy uses either simple denial saying that the crisis is not relevant to the organization, or blame shift declaring that another organization is really responsible for the crisis event (Benoit & Pang, 2008).

Like SCCT, IRT has an emphasis on the responsibility of the organization for the crisis. Matching crisis response strategies to the specific crisis types should be on the mortification and denial continuum. This means an appropriate crisis response strategy should be selected based on evaluating the organizational crisis responsibility for crisis situations on the mortification-denial continuum. For example, mortification strategies are needed for the crisis types in the preventable cluster where the organization is recognized as highly responsible for a crisis, whereas denial strategies are appropriate for the crisis types in the victim cluster perceived as low crisis responsibility.

A well-matched crisis response to crisis type affects not only crisis responsibility but also organizational reputation, and stakeholders' behavioral intention during the crisis event (Benoit, 2000). A matched crisis response strategy can better protect an organization's reputation than other responses, such as no response, just providing information, or any randomly selected message (Allen & Caillouet, 1994). For example, the matched condition of transgression and mortification is related to more positive organizational reputation than the mismatched condition of transgression and evasion of responsibility (Coombs & Holladay, 1996). A similar pattern of result is found in the combination of accident crisis type with either mortification response or evasion of responsibility (Coombs & Holladay, 1996).

Racism crisis-type experimental research reveals that there are no significant differences among the effects of five different response strategies (shifting blame, bolstering, separation, corrective action, and mortification) on organizational image and reputation and stakeholders' behavioral intention (Coombs & Schmidt, 2000). However, if the variable of relationship with stakeholders is included in experimental conditions, the result changes. When corrective action response strategy is used, the organization having a good relationship with stakeholders is perceived as having significantly less crisis responsibility and a more positive organizational reputation than the organization having a bad relationship (Kim & Yang, 2009).

Moreover, story balance in media coverage is affected by the types of response strategies used during a crisis. In a sexual assault crisis, the response strategy of defeasibility that declares lack of information or ability causes news stories to be negative, while stories are positive when a bolstering strategy that reminds stakeholders of the organization's positive performances or aspects is used (Holtzhausen & Roberts, 2009).

### **Situational Factors**

Contingency theory supplements IRT with the factor-stance-strategy model for organizational image restoration in crisis by explaining the process in which an organization uses response strategies based on its stance and crisis factors (Cameron, Pang, & Jin, 2008).

In the factor-stance-strategy model, first, the factors refer to the contingent factors, conditions within and without the organization, which facilitate the organization's stance. Like the situational threat intensifier factors affecting attribution of crisis responsibility in SCCT, the contingent factors influence the stance the organization takes in crisis. The contingent factors include five key factors – involvement of the dominant coalition, influence and autonomy of public relations, influence and role of legal practitioners, importance of publics to the organization, and the organization's perception of threat (Pang, 2006; Reber & Cameron, 2003).

Second, stance referring to the position an organization takes in decision-making moves along the continuum having two poles, advocacy and accommodation. The stance influences an organization's action as crisis response strategy, the third dimension of the factor-stance-strategy model. Thus, the fact-stance-strategy model assumes that the stance can be positioned in terms of the factors; in turn, the strategy that an organization uses during a crisis can be selected based on the stance continuum (Pang, 2006).

Therefore, Benoit's image repair continuum in IRT has been merged with the stance continuum in the factor-stance-strategy model of Contingency theory (Holtzhausen & Roberts, 2009). In other words, crisis response strategies suggested by IRT can be regarded as existing on a continuum in that denial strategy shares similar characteristics with advocacy, and mortification strategy shares similar characteristics with accommodation (Benoit, 2004). For example, when the cause of a crisis is external to the organization and less accommodation is required, the organization would be more likely to use denial response strategy to advocate the organization's interests. However, the organization would be more likely to use the mortification response strategy to accommodate stakeholders' interests when it has strong crisis responsibility (Holtzhausen & Roberts, 2009).

### **Organizational Ethics and Crisis**

Ethics has to do with moral standards defined as the principles of right and wrong and is related to what is good or bad (Anand & Rosen, 2008). Likewise, business ethics is considered as a organization's obligation to be honest with its stakeholders, to protect employee rights, to preserve the environment, and so on (Berenbeim, 1987; Drucker, 1981). Business ethics had begun gaining attention and been emphasized since 1970s when people witnessed miserable economic disasters (Cory, 2005).

Business ethics is a form of applied ethics so that it is regarded as playing an important role in creating not only visible assets, such as economic profits through causing consumers to purchase products and services, but also invisible assets, such as favorable image, reputation, and relationship with consumers (Nielsen, 2004, Schweiger, Sandberg, & Rechner, 1989). Business ethics has been evaluated by various constructs with the perspectives of economic, legal, or ethical dimensions (Epstein, 1998; Husted, 1998). Particularly, an ethical business is well related to corporate financial performance, which has been given a critical research interest by many scholars as an important issue since the 1960s (McGuire et al., 1988). In fact, a meta-analysis revealed that the relationship between organizational ethics and a firm's financial performance appeared positively (Orlitzky et al., 2003).

### **Ethics in Crisis Management**

The goal of crisis management is to reduce organizational reputation damage and to encourage stakeholders to accommodate the response messages and give their supportive behaviors (Benoit, 1995; Brinson & Benoit, 1999). It needs to investigate how business ethics can contribute to crisis management.

Unfortunately, few studies on the direct relationship between organizational ethics and crisis management or the role of its ethics in crisis communication are found. Recently, however, research on corporate social responsibility (CSR) has been given the attention the premise of an ethical organization (Logsdon & Wood, 2002; Mahon & Wartick, 2003; Siltaoja, 2006). Generally, CSR means operating the business of an organization in a manner that is based on ethical standards, social norms, legal policies, and so forth (Driver, 2006).

Many scholars insist that ethical corporate behaviors, including CSR activities, can influence an organization's reputation and image (Fombrun, 1998; Lewis, 2001; Schultz et al., 2001). Although there are few studies about the effectiveness of CSR activities on crisis

management, sound organizational reputation created by CSR activities is expected to protect an organization against potential crisis events (Baker, 2001).

There are some reports about CSR's effect on the attribution of crisis responsibility. An experimental finding on the effect of ethical response messages suggests that people are likely to attribute less crisis responsibility to an organization using a CSR-emphasized message than one using other messages, such as ability-oriented messages, in a transgression crisis event (Kim, Kim, & Cameron, 2009). This result, however, varies in terms of the crisis type. For example, the crisis responsibility is likely to be attributed less to the organization using a corporate ability message when an accident crisis type occurs (Kim, Kim, & Cameron, 2009). Moreover, although stakeholders' perception of organizational reputation and behavioral intention can vary in terms of its CSR levels in a crisis situation, the perception of crisis responsibility does not show a difference in terms of the CSR levels (Kim & Yang, 2009).

Organizational reputation has also been given interests to practitioners as well as scholars in the context of an organization's ethical behavior (Mahon & Wartick, 2003). Many scholars insist that an ethical organization's behaviors such as CSR can influence its reputation, in turn, the perception of reputation determined by CSR activity can be the premise of attraction to the organization (Logsdon & Wood, 2002; Mahon & Wartick, 2003). Thus, the perceived level of ethics of an organization can play an important role to construct favorable reputation with primary stakeholders.

As we know, it is difficult to simply identify the effect and role of organizational ethics and its CSR activities in a crisis situation because the notion of business ethics and CSR are composed of diverse constructs and dimensions that result in stakeholders having different ethics and CSR perspectives. However, there is little question that organizational ethics and CSR

activity has a strong correlation with stakeholders' perception toward the organization. Thus, it can be said that, like the earlier mentioned situational factors influencing attribution of crisis responsibility, organizational reputation, and behavioral intention, organizational ethics and CSR would moderate stakeholders' perception and attitude toward the organization in a crisis situation.

### **Buffering Effect and Halo Effect**

It has been acknowledged that it is easier for an organization having a positive relationship with stakeholders to maintain its positive image and reputation. People are likely to search for information that is consistent with their first judgment after an attribution is made (Bodenhausen & Wyer, 1985; Darley & Gross, 1983; Eisenberg, 1984). Pratkanis et al. (1988) explained the evidence of a sleeper effect, a potentially delayed increasing impact of a persuasive message. It means that an existing reputation can have the power of maintaining the public's perception, in turn, any response strategy in a crisis situation might work because a positive reputation is deeply established (Lyon & Cameron, 2004). Likewise, a good reputation combined with an apologetic response strategy may result in less damage from a crisis (Coombs, 2000).

When a crisis occurs, the "credits" accumulated in pre-crisis may buffer the negative impacts (Birch, 1994; Coombs, 1998). The buffering effect proposed by Barnett & Hyde (2001) refers to the ability of positive experience to alleviate or moderate the stress caused by a negative experience. When applying the effect to crisis management, a positive experience or judgment on an organization recognized as an ethical may act as a buffer against the attribution of organizational responsibility and reputation damage (Coombs & Holladay, 2001). In other words, a good relationship with stakeholders based on an ethical image may buffer the reputation damage and attribution of crisis responsibility.

Moreover, a favorable relationship also has a halo effect as a bank account of “goodwill” in a crisis situation (Coombs & Holladay, 2001; Payne, 2006). According to the halo effect, when an organization is perceived to have one desirable characteristic, then the organization is likely to be assumed to have many other desirable characteristics as well. Thus, in crisis, a highly ethical organization tends to be given credit for its trustworthiness so that stakeholders should be willing to accept more easily the crisis response messages communicated by the organization.

Research on the buffering effect and halo effect explain the impact of a favorable relationship between an organization and stakeholders (Balzer & Sulsky, 1992; Nisbett & Wilson, 1977). In a crisis, once a positive perception of an organization is established, people tend to ignore information against the favorable reputation and are likely to seek after messages supporting their beliefs toward the organization (Coombs, 1999).

Table 2-1. Crisis types (Coombs & Holladay, 2002)

Crisis Type	Definition
<b>Preventable Cluster</b>	
<b>(High Crisis Responsibility)</b>	
Human-error accidents	Human error causes an industrial accident
Human-error recalls	Human error caused a product to be recalled
Organizational misdeed with no injuries	Stakeholders are deceived without injury
Organizational misdeed management misconduct	Laws or regulations are violated by management
Organizational misdeed with injuries	Stakeholders are placed at risk by management and injuries
<b>Accidental Cluster</b>	
<b>(Moderate Crisis Responsibility)</b>	
Challenges	Stakeholders claim an organization acts in inappropriate manner
Megadamage	A technical accident where the focus is on the environmental damage from the accident
Technical-error accidents	A technology or equipment failure causes an industrial accident
Technical-error recalls	A technology or equipment failure causes a product to be recalled
<b>Victim Cluster</b>	
<b>(Low Crisis responsibility)</b>	
Natural disaster	Acts of nature that damage an organization, such as an earthquake
Rumors	False and damaging information about an organization is being circulated
Workplace violence	Current or former employee attacks current employees onsite
Product tampering/malevolence	External agent causes damage to an organization

Table 2-2. Crisis response strategies (Benoit & Pang, 2008)

Crisis Response Strategy	Definition
<b>Denial</b>	
Simple denial	Did not perform act
Shift the blame	Act performed by another
<b>Evasion of responsibility</b>	
Provocation	Responded to act of another
Defeasibility	Lack of information or ability
Accident	Act was a mishap
Good intentions	Meant well in act
<b>Reducing offensiveness of event</b>	
Bolstering	Stress good traits
Minimization	Act not serious
Differentiation	Act less offensive than similar ones
Transcendence	More important considerations
Attack accuser	Reduce credibility of accuse
Compensation	Reimburse victim
Corrective action	Plan to solve or prevent problem
Mortification	Apologize for act

## CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH QUESTION AND HYPOTHESES

### **Research Question**

Previous studies on crisis management reveal that there are strong correlations among crisis responsibility, organizational reputation, and potential supportive behavioral intention (Benoit & Pang, 2008; Cameron et. al., 2008; Coombs, 2008). Most crisis communication theories emphasize the relationship between an organization and stakeholders as an important situational factor which can affect the result of crisis management. The researcher assumed that one of the critical variables that stakeholders may use when they evaluate the relationship with an organization is the level of ethics of the organization.

Therefore, it can be expected that the organizational ethics must be relevant to other factors in crisis management. To assess the relationship between the level of organizational ethics and other factors in crisis management, the following research question was developed.

**RQ.** What correlations are there between organizational ethics, attribution of crisis responsibility, reputation of an organization, and stakeholders' supportive behavioral intention?

### **Research Hypotheses**

Identifying crisis type and matching appropriate crisis response strategy to the crisis type are very important in crisis management because a matched response message is more effective than the unmatched one. As mentioned earlier, there is also a strong reciprocal relationship between crisis type, response strategy, and crisis responsibility perceived by publics in that crisis response strategies can be matched by crisis types and the crisis types can be identified by crisis responsibility. In addition, according to SCCT and IRT, crisis responsibility is negatively correlated to organizational reputation; in turn, the organizational reputation is positively related to supportive behavioral intention.

The effect of crisis type and crisis response strategy on stakeholders' attitude (attribution of crisis responsibility to an organization, organizational reputation, and supportive behavioral intention) has been studied based on a linear approach, such as crisis type and response strategy → crisis responsibility → organizational reputation → behavioral intention. When an organization responded apologetically, people were likely to possess an attitude of a good reputation toward the company, and then were significantly more inclined to invest in the company (Lyon & Cameron, 2004). However, considering that crisis is the outcome of complicated environments and situations, a simple linear approach is not adequate to manage the crisis effectively. Thus, we need to examine both the direct effects of crisis type and response strategy on stakeholders' attitudes and the indirect effects of them.

In fact, assuming the effect of organizational ethics on reducing crisis responsibility and damage to organizational reputation and making stakeholders be willing to accommodate the response messages communicated by an organization, a three-way interaction between crisis type, crisis response strategy, and organizational ethics is entirely plausible. Specifically, the researcher would expect a mortification response strategy used by a high-ethical organization for a rumor crisis to have greater impact on the dependent variables than any other condition.

Thus, the interplay of the level of organizational ethics and other factors is addressed in Hypothesis 1.

**H1.** Subjects will show more positive attitudes (less attribution of crisis responsibility, better reputation of an organization, and higher supportive behavioral intention) when rumor and mortification condition are combined for a high-ethical organization than any other condition.

Figure 3-1 visualizes the expectation of this three-way interaction hypothesis 1.

Regarding the effect of organizational ethics, it can contribute to creating positive relationships with publics; in turn, it may cause stakeholders to keep their good perceptions and attitudes during a crisis situation. This assumption can be explained by the buffering effect and halo effect. In other words, organizational ethics variable also may act essentially as a moderator influencing the impact of crisis type and response strategy.

Previous studies confirmed that rumor type crisis is likely to yield more favorable stakeholders' attitudes (less attribution of crisis responsibility, better reputation of an organization, and higher supportive behavioral intention) than transgression type crisis. In this study the researcher assumed that a highly ethical organization might act as a buffer against the attribution of crisis responsibility, reputation damage, and the decline of supportive behavioral intention.

The results of the previous research also revealed that mortification response strategy tends to have more positive stakeholders' attitudes (less attribution of crisis responsibility, better reputation of an organization, and higher supportive behavioral intention) than denial response strategy. In this study, the researcher predicted that a highly ethical organization, under the conditions of rumor and mortification, will have a halo effect that causes stakeholders to give the highly ethical organization less attribution of crisis responsibility, better organizational reputation, and higher supportive behavioral intention.

This study also posits the following two-way interaction hypotheses to assess the two-way interactions of high versus low organizational ethics, transgression crisis versus rumor crisis, and denial versus mortification response strategy on crisis responsibility, reputation, and behavioral intention.

**H2.** Ethics and crisis types will have a two-way interaction effect on attribution of crisis responsibility, such that:

**H2a.** Subjects in a high-ethical organization and rumor type crisis will report less attribution of crisis responsibility to an organization than will those in a low-ethical organization and transgression type crisis.

Figure 3-2 visualizes the expectation of the H2.

**H3.** Ethics and response strategies will have a two-way interaction effect on attribution of crisis responsibility, such that:

**H3a.** Subjects in a high-ethical organization and mortification response will report less attribution of crisis responsibility to an organization than will those in a low-ethical organization and denial response crisis.

Figure 3-3 visualizes the expectation of the H3.

**H4.** Ethics and crisis types will have a two-way interaction effect on reputation of an organization, such that:

**H4a.** Subjects in a high-ethical organization and rumor type crisis will report better reputation of an organization than will those in a low-ethical organization and transgression type crisis.

Figure 3-4 visualizes the expectation of the H4.

**H5.** Ethics and response strategies will have a two-way interaction effect on reputation of an organization, such that:

**H5a.** Subjects in a high-ethical organization and mortification response will report better reputation of an organization than will those in a low-ethical organization and denial response.

Figure 3-5 visualizes the expectation of the H5.

**H6.** Ethics and crisis types will have a two-way interaction effect on supportive behavioral intention, such that:

**H6a.** Subjects in a high-ethical organization and rumor type crisis will report higher supportive behavioral intention than will those in a low-ethical organization and transgression type crisis.

Figure 3-6 visualizes the expectation of the H6.

**H7.** Ethics and response strategies will have a two-way interaction effect on supportive behavioral intention, such that:

**H7a.** Subjects in a high-ethical organization and mortification response will report higher supportive behavioral intention than will those in a low-ethical organization and denial response will report the lowest supportive behavioral intention.

Figure 3-7 visualizes the expectation of the H7.

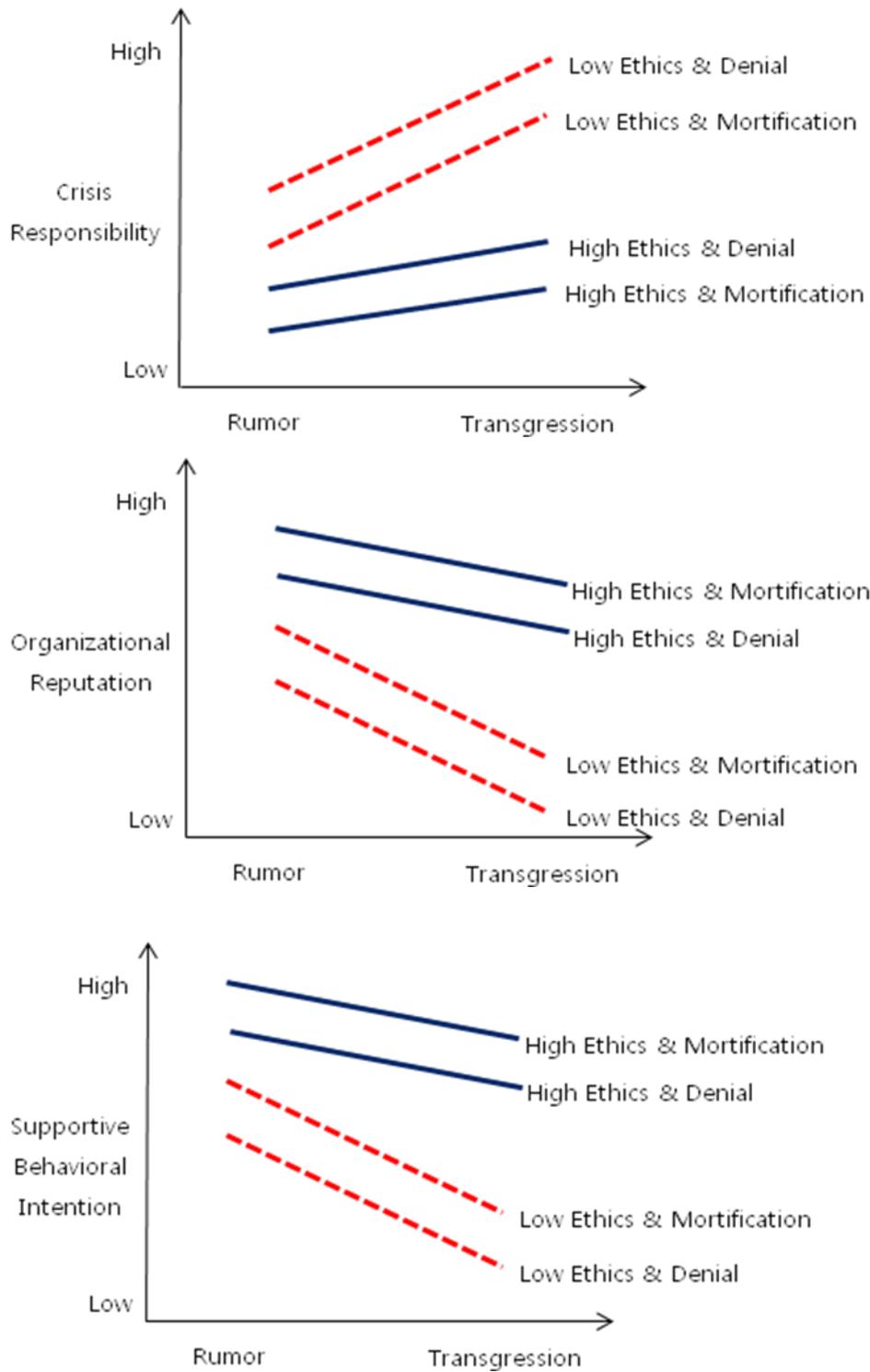


Figure 3-1. Expectation of hypothesis one.

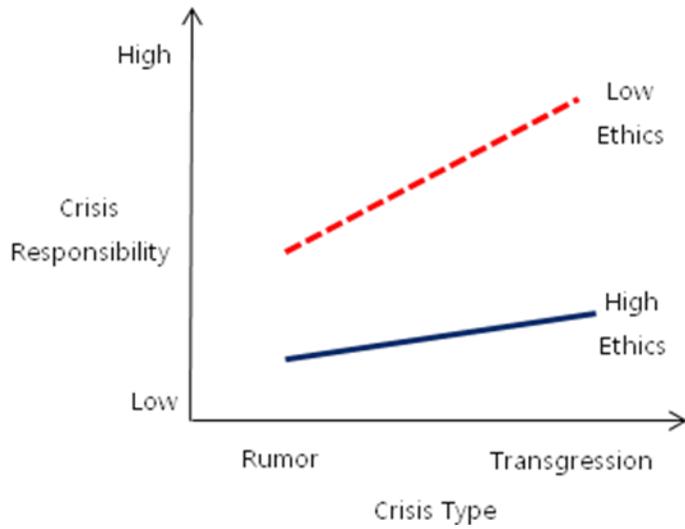


Figure 3-2. Expectation of hypothesis two.

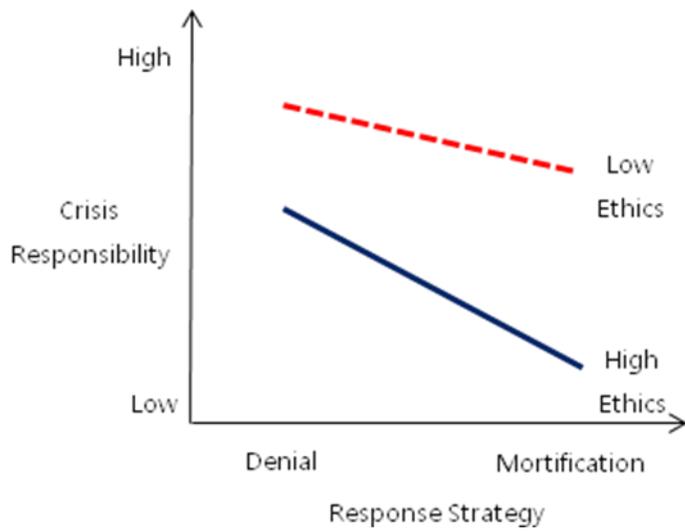


Figure 3-3. Expectation of hypotheses three.

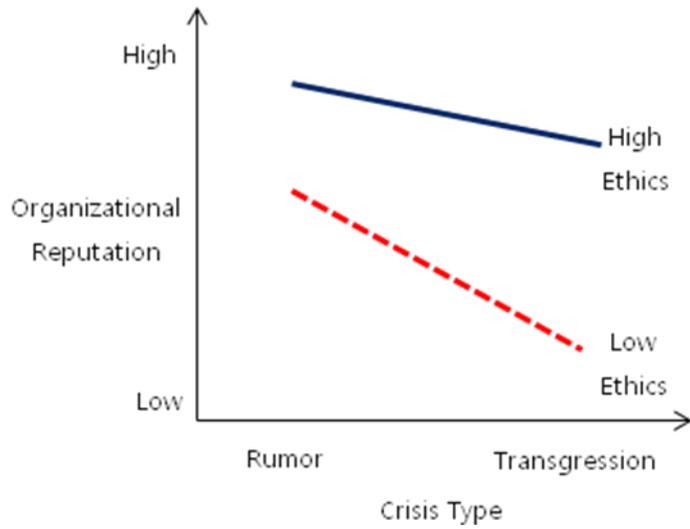


Figure 3-4. Expectation of hypotheses four.

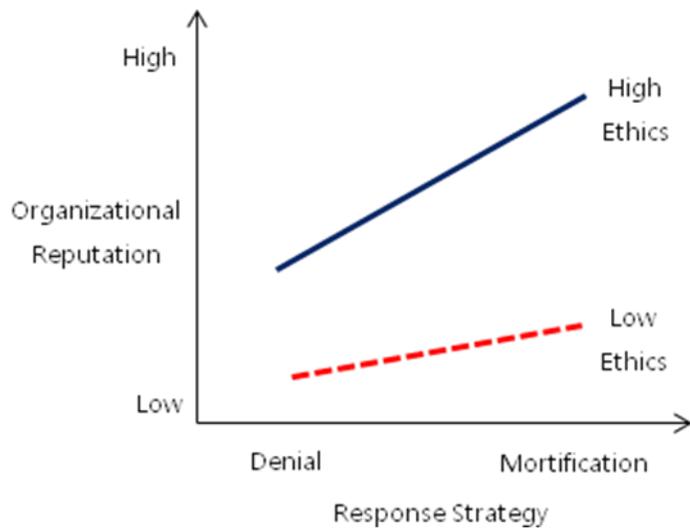


Figure 3-5. Expectation of hypotheses five.

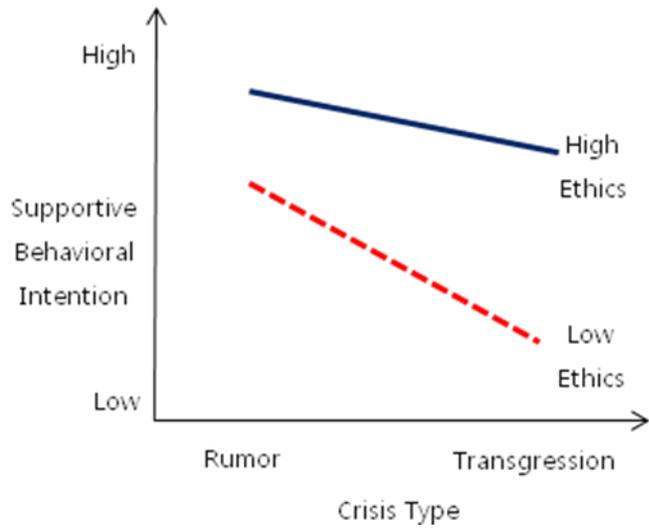


Figure 3-6. Expectation of hypotheses six.

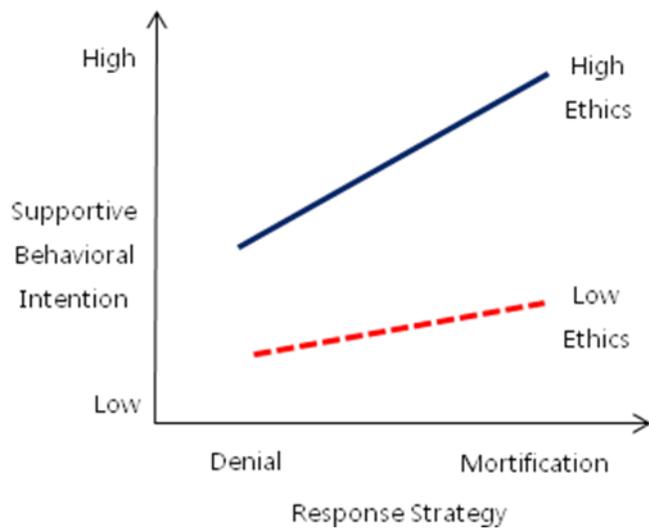


Figure 3-7. Expectation of hypotheses seven.

## CHAPTER 4 METHOD

This study concentrates on the role of organizational ethics in crisis management. An experimental design is used to examine how the level of organizational ethics is associated with crisis responsibility, organizational reputation, and behavioral intention. Additional analyses explore how the effectiveness of crisis types and response strategies varied according to the level of organizational ethics.

### **Design**

A 2 x 2 x 2 between-groups design is employed, meaning that each subject received only one of the eight conditions. The experimental design includes the manipulation of three factors: 1) crisis type (rumor vs. transgression), 2) response strategy (denial vs. mortification), and 3) organizational ethics (high vs. low). Dependent variables include attribution of crisis responsibility, reputation of an organization, and stakeholders' supportive behavioral intention.

First, two types of crisis are used. One is *transgression* which is thought to lead to a high responsible crisis event attribution, and the other is *rumor* which is thought to lead to a low responsible crisis event attribution. In other words, according to SCCT, transgression is one of the crisis types of the preventable cluster that produces high attributions of crisis responsibility. Meanwhile, rumor is one of victim cluster crises that produce low attributions of crisis responsibility. Rumor evokes stakeholders' sympathy for an organization because of their perception that the organization might be a victim of the crisis along with them (Coombs, 2002).

Second, in the scenarios, each crisis type is matched to a crisis response strategies enlisted in IRT. According to IRT, the mortification strategy is appropriate for a high responsibility crisis type, which indicates that an organization is willing to accept responsibility for the crisis event and offer a direct apology. The denial strategy is appropriate for a low responsibility crisis type,

which denies the crisis event itself or declares that other people or organizations are really responsible for the wrongful act. However, in this study, each crisis response strategy is matched to all crisis types because the purpose of this study is not to compare the effects of matched versus unmatched messages; our purpose is to examine the moderating effect of organizational ethics among the crisis types, response strategies, and dependent variables, the stakeholders' attitudes. The scenarios are based on real and lesser known events, but the information was manipulated to fit the needs of this study.

Next, each crisis is presented as if the crisis occurred in a high-ethical organization or a low-ethical one. Thus, each of the four cases has two ethical level options, resulting in a total of eight crisis scenarios. These eight scenarios were randomly assigned to subjects in each group. The subjects were also assigned to groups randomly by giving them one of eight website addresses that were created for each condition.

### **Stimulus Materials**

Mock newspaper reports of eight different crisis scenarios are created with different combinations of ethical levels, crisis types, and crisis response strategies. The eight news stories were written by a journalist who has over 20 years news writing experience. Stories were written in newswire style, headlines were also included to easily identify crisis types and response strategies.

*Ethics level.* Two stories introducing two companies were written. The introduction story for a high-ethical company emphasizes good relationship with stakeholders, efforts for ethical management, and ethical award performances. On the other hand, the introduction story for a low-ethical company includes business scandals, such as raising a slush fund and political lobbying (see Appendix A).

*Crisis type.* A news story about tax evasion, insider trading, and bribery was chosen as a sample of a transgression crisis event. Business rumor scenario about financial problems and layoffs was selected as a sample of a rumor crisis event (see Appendix A).

*Crisis response strategy.* Two crisis response variables were chosen based on strategy continuum suggested by Benoit (1995). Mortification response involved forgiveness and a direct apology. Denial response included defensive actions such as shifting the blame and attacking the accuser. For example, mortification response stimuli included “we sincerely apologize for all troubles...” or “we think it is due to our company’s carelessness”, while denial response included “there is no reason...and it is groundless...” or “we are going to take all possible legal actions against people who spread the false reports” (see Appendix A).

### **Questionnaire**

*Crisis responsibility* were obtained by using a six-items scale adapted from Griffin, Babin, and Darden’s (1992), McAuley, Duncan, and Russell’s (1992), Cho and Gower’s (2006), and Lee’s (2005) measure of responsibility and blame. The items include: “I think the company should be blamed,” “I think the company should bear the responsibility for the event,” “I think the blame for the crisis lies with the company,” “I think the cause of the event is beyond the company’s control,” “I think circumstances are responsible for the crisis, not the company,” and “I think the blame for the crisis lies in the circumstances.” Each item was measured by a 7-point likelihood scale ranging 1 (very strongly disagree) to 7 (very strongly agree). Among these six items, two items – “I think circumstances are responsible for the crisis, not the company” and “I think the blame for the crisis lies in the circumstances” were reverse coded.

*Organizational reputation* was assessed using the six scales developed by McCroskey (1966), Fombrun (1996) and Winkleman (1999). The reputation quotient was used to measure organizational reputation on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (very strongly disagree) to 7 (very

strongly agree). The items include: “I admire and respect the company,” “I have a good feeling about the company,” “I trust this company to tell the truth about the incident,” “The company maintains high standards in the way it treats people,” “The company is basically honest,” and “The company looks like a good company to work for.”

*Supportive behavioral intention* was evaluated by the six items tested in previous crisis research on potential supportive behavior (Coombs, 1999; Lyon & Cameron, 2004; Zeithaml et al., 1996). The scale includes: “I would purchase the company’s products/services,” “I would recommend the company’s products/services to a friend,” “I would invest in the company,” “I would complain to other customers if I experience a problem with the company’s service,” “I would say negative things about the company to people,” and “I would switch to a competitor if I experience a problem with the company’s service.” Each item was measured by a 7-point likelihood scale ranging 1 (very strongly disagree) to 7 (very strongly agree). Among these six items, the researcher reverse coded subjects’ responses to the two items – “I would say negative things about the company to people,” and “I would switch to a competitor if I experience a problem with the company’s service.” To assure a response consistency check, the questionnaires contained four reverse-coded items. If respondents were too discrepant in their response to the reversed items, the subjects are discarded. For example, the question, “I think the blame for the crisis lies in the circumstances” is a reversed item for the question of “I think the blame for the crisis lies with the company.” Generally, the reversed item score is supposed to be given oppositely to the other item. Thus, when a subject gives these two questions the same scores, the subject was considered as to be inconsistent. In this study, if subjects responded like that to all four reversed items, the subjects’ data were discarded.

In addition, for a manipulation check, *the level of ethics of an organization* was measured with a six-item scale on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (very strongly disagree) to 7 (very strongly agree) adopted from Bendixen and Abratt's Scale (2007) measuring ethical standards and relationship as well as the Hansen's Scale (1992) developing the results of Reidenbach and Robin's (1988, 1990) works. The organizational ethics used in this study was defined as the public's perception on the ethics of an organization based on its ethical performance in business. The question items include: "I can trust the company," "The company is concerned with what is legal," "The company is concerned with what is morally right," "The company is highly regarded as far as business ethics is concerned," "The company treats its public with respect," and "The company is socially responsible."

The manipulation check for *crisis types*, the two types of crises were compared on six-items. The items include: The type rumor was measured by two items including "The news story is a rumor" and "The news story is false information." The transgression type crisis was measured by four items – "The news story is true," "The company is the main cause of this event," "The company deceived the public," and "The company violated the law."

Last, for the manipulation check of *crisis response strategies*, six items that Cameron et al. (2008) and Coombs and Schmidt (2000) developed were used. The items include: Two questions of "The company blamed others" and "The company denied doing the event" were used in measuring the manipulation check for the denial strategy, and four questions of "After the crisis, the company took responsibility," "The company said it accepted responsibility for the wrongdoing," "The company expressed apology for the incident to the public," and "The company was very sorry for what it did" were for the mortification strategy.

## **Participants**

The subjects in this study are graduate and undergraduate students in the United States. One hundred sixty-four students in this study were enrolled in the graduate or undergraduate course of the University of Florida. Twenty-eight participants were undergraduate students at State University of New York at Oswego. Although students are not typical targets for crisis situations, previous studies on crisis management have found no difference in responses between students and non-student populations, which means that student samples are a good substitute when real-world samples are unavailable (Coombs, 1999). Moreover, considering that students are and will be potential stakeholders for many companies' products and services, selecting college students for this study is an appropriate choice. Participants' responses to this study were recorded and stored electronically in a data base for analyses.

## **Data Collection Procedure**

The experiment was conducted exclusively on the Web. An experimental website for this study was created by using Web platform program, Qualtrics. Subjects who agreed to participate in this study were asked to sign up for the experiment by writing their email addresses. Each participant received an email invitation which was linked to a randomly assigned experimental condition on the Web. Students in the sample were contacted via e-mail three times. Contacts included a pre-notification, a request for participation, and a reminder notice. All students who participated in this online experiment were given some extra-credit by their instructors. Subjects were asked to read the stimulus assigned to them and answer the questionnaires. The stimulus contained the following: First, an ethics summary for either a high- or low-ethical organization was presented, followed by a news wire story with either a mortification or denial response to either a transgression or rumor crisis. Next, subjects received questionnaires testing for their attitudes – attribution of crisis responsibility, organizational reputation, and supportive

behavioral intention. A pre-test also was conducted prior to data collection. The manipulation checks for the level of ethics of an organization, types of crisis, and types of crisis response strategy were conducted in the pre-test. The pre-test was conducted by an undergraduate class in which there were over 40 students. All students in the class were informed about the experiment by the researcher. They received one Internet website address among the eight ones, then subjects were asked to access to it and conduct the online experiment according to the researcher's instruction.

### **Data Analyses**

All statistical analyses were completed using the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) 17.0. Descriptive statistics was used to identify the characteristics of the participants. Exploratory factor analysis was conducted to ensure whether the constructs measuring each variable were composed with one factor of items. Also, an independent sample *t*-test was employed for the manipulation checks. As main statistical analysis methods, two-way and three-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and correlation analysis were used for the research question and hypothesis testing.

## CHAPTER 5 RESULTS

### **Descriptive Statistics**

Of the total collected data, as reported above five students' responses were identified as inconsistent and discarded because the subjects were too discrepant in their response to the reversed items versus the non-reversed items. This resulted in a subject pool of 192.

In this study, 56% were female and 44% were male. About 67% of the participants said they were majoring in communication, 22% were majoring in sports management, with the rest in marketing (5%), engineering (3%), and others (3%). Nineteen percent reported they were enrolled in graduate program and 80% in undergraduate. Of the undergraduate students, juniors accounted for 77 responses, seniors for 66 responses, and sophomores for 12 responses. The age of participants ranged from 19-years old to 59-years old. Regarding ethnicity, 117 (61%) reported their race as White, 28 (15%) as Hispanic/Non-White, 19 (10%) as Black/African-American, 12 (6%) as Asian, 1 (1%) as Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Island, and 15 (7%) were not specified. Table 5-1 summarized the descriptive statistics for demographics of subjects.

This study used a 2 (ethics level: high or low) X 2 (crisis type: transgression or rumor) X 2 (crisis response strategy: denial or mortification) between-groups design, which means all the 192 participants read only one of the eight conditions. Thirty (15.6%) were exposed to the first condition that consisted of high-ethical company, transgression type crisis, and denial response strategy. Twenty-four (12.5%) were exposed to the second condition composed of high-ethical company, transgression type crisis, and mortification response strategy. Twenty-two (11.5%) were exposed to the third condition made up of high-ethical company, rumor type crisis, and denial response strategy. Twenty (10.4) were exposed to the fourth condition comprising high-ethical company, rumor type crisis, and mortification response strategy. Twenty-five (13%) were

exposed to the fifth condition consisted of low-ethical company, transgression type crisis, and denial response strategy. Twenty-five (13%) were exposed to the sixth condition composed of low-ethical company, transgression type crisis, and mortification response strategy. Twenty-four (12.5%) were exposed to the seventh condition comprised of low-ethical company, rumor type crisis, and denial response strategy. Last, twenty-two (11.5%) were exposed to the eighth condition combined low-ethical company, rumor type crisis, and mortification response strategy. Table 5-2 summarized the number of subjects for each condition. In other words, 96 participants (50%) read the introduction story about high-ethical company and 96 (50%) read the introduction story about a low-ethical company. One hundred four subjects (54.2%) were given the news story of transgression type crisis and 88 (45.8%) were given the news story of rumor type crisis. Also, 101 participants (52.6%) were exposed to the denial response strategy and 91 (47.4%) were exposed to the mortification response strategy.

However, because of the imbalance in the number of subjects in each cell, a weighting function was applied to the score of subjects when the data was analyzed. The number of subjects per group ranged from 20 to 30 so using the weighting function in SPSS, the researcher equalized the number of each group to get the same score of 24, which was yielded by dividing the total number of subject, 192, by the number of groups, 8.

To test whether subjects were randomly assigned to each group, one-way ANOVA was conducted by using subject's age as a dependent variable. The results revealed that there was no significant difference of subjects' age for each group ( $F(7, 184) = 1.14, p > .05$ ). Thus, it can be assumed that the subjects in this study were assigned randomly. Table 5-3 provides the subjects' average age per condition.

## Reliability

A principal axis factor analysis with an oblique rotation was employed to confirm that each scale measured a single dimension. Also, the measurement reliability was examined through the value of Cronbach's alpha. The questionnaire contained some reversed items in order to assure the response consistency check (i.e., "Circumstances are responsible for the crisis, not the company" and "The blame for the crisis lies in the circumstances").

The factor analysis for the items of the first dependent variable, crisis responsibility, showed one factor accounting for 70.1% of the variance when the item of "I think the cause of the event is beyond the company's control" was excluded. If the item was included, the factors were divided into two dimensions. The value of Cronbach's  $\alpha$  for the construct was .89.

The factor analysis for the items of organizational reputation indicated one factor accounting for 84.9% of the variance when all the initial items were included. The value of Cronbach's  $\alpha$  for the construct was .96.

The factor analysis for the items of supportive behavioral intention showed one factor accounting for 78.5% of the variance when three items – "I would complain to other customers if I experience a problem with the company's service," "I would say negative things about the company to people," and "I would switch to a competitor if I experience a problem with the company's service" – were removed from the initial six items. The value of Cronbach's  $\alpha$  for the three-item index was .86. If the three dropped items had been included, the factors were divided into two dimensions and the value of Cronbach's  $\alpha$  was also low (.76).

Regarding the factor analyses for each independent variable, all six items for the construct of ethics loaded on one factor, which accounted for 91.7% of the item variance and Cronbach's  $\alpha$  was .98. Also, all items for each construct of rumor type, denial response, and mortification response loaded on one factor, which accounted for 85.5% for rumor type, 85.6% for denial

response, and 84.1% for mortification response. The reliability analysis produced an internal consistency of .85 (Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient) for rumor type, .83 for denial response, and .94 for mortification response.

The factor analysis for the items of the construct of transgression showed one factor which accounted for 70.3% of the variance and had a .78 Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient when the item of "The news story is true" was excluded. The score of factor loading if the item had not been deleted was very low ( $\alpha = .40$ ).

Thus, all reliability scores fell within the acceptable range of the value of Cronbach's  $\alpha$ , .70 (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006). The results of the factor and reliability analyses are displayed in Table 5-4.

### **Manipulation Check**

To validly manipulate three independent variables, as mentioned in the methods part, the manipulation check was conducted two times both on the pretest and on the main test. The results of the main test were consistent with those of the pretest. The pilot test was conducted with 40 subjects under the two groups having perfectly opposite conditions – high vs. low ethics, rumor vs. transgression crisis types, and denial vs. mortification response strategies. An independent sample *t*-test was used to assess the effectiveness of the experimental manipulations.

The level of ethics of an organization was manipulated using either high or low versions of background information about the company accompanying each introduction story. Participants were asked to rate, using a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (very strongly disagree) to 7 (very strongly agree), the perceived level of ethics of the company in the study. An independent sample *t*-test found a significant difference between the high- and low-ethical companies (a high-ethical company  $M = 6.1$ , S.D. = .87, a low-ethical company  $M = 1.9$ , S.D. = .64,  $t(38) = 17.16$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Similarly, in the main test, there was also a significant difference between high- and

low-ethical companies (a high-ethical company  $M = 5.7$ ,  $S.D. = 1.06$ , a low-ethical company  $M = 2.1$ ,  $S.D. = 1.0$ ,  $t(190) = 24.17$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Table 5-5 provides of the pretest result of  $t$ -test for the ethics level.

To assess perceptions of the crisis type, two news stories about transgression and rumor crises were compared on the items for both transgression index and rumor index. The results indicated significant differences in the items,  $t(38) = 2.79$ ,  $p < .01$  for the transgression type and  $t(38) = 6.04$ ,  $p < .001$  for the rumor type. Participants rate the news story of transgression ( $M = 4.8$ ,  $S.D. = 1.35$ ) as more transgression type crisis than the news story of rumor ( $M = 3.9$ ,  $S.D. = .68$ ) when they were asked for the transgression questionnaires. On the other hand, participants rate the news story of rumor ( $M = 4.6$ ,  $S.D. = 1.12$ ) as more rumor type crisis than the news story of transgression ( $M = 2.8$ ,  $S.D. = .78$ ) when they were asked for the rumor questionnaires. These results were consistent with those of the main tests (rumor index: transgression  $M = 3.2$ ,  $S.D. = 1.07$ , rumor  $M = 4.0$ ,  $S.D. = .92$ ,  $t(190) = 5.36$ ,  $p < .001$ ; transgression index: transgression  $M = 4.9$ ,  $S.D. = 1.04$ , rumor  $M = 4.2$ ,  $S.D. = .86$ ,  $t(190) = 4.98$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Table 5-6 provides of the pretest result of  $t$ -test for the crisis type.

Finally, to assess perceptions of the crisis response strategy, two news stories about denial and mortification crises response strategies were compared on the items for both denial index and mortification index. The results indicated significant differences in the items for the denial response ( $t(38) = 9.73$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and for the mortification response ( $t(38) = 8.71$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Participants rate the news story of denial ( $M = 5.5$ ,  $S.D. = .91$ ) as more denial response strategy than the news story of mortification ( $M = 2.7$ ,  $S.D. = .89$ ) when they were asked for the transgression questionnaires. On the other hand, participants rate the news story of mortification ( $M = 4.9$ ,  $S.D. = 1.08$ ) as more mortification response strategy than the news story of denial ( $M =$

2.0, S.D. = .95) when they were asked for the mortification questionnaires. These results were consistent with those of the main tests (denial index: denial  $M = 5.0$ , S.D. = 1.07, mortification  $M = 2.9$ , S.D. = 1.10,  $t(190) = 13.62$ ,  $p < .001$ ; mortification index: denial  $M = 2.6$ , S.D. = 1.02, mortification  $M = 4.9$ , S.D. = .96,  $t(190) = 16.09$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Table 5-7 provides the pretest result of  $t$ -tests for the response strategy.

### **Hypothesis Testing**

To answer the research question, Pearson correlation analysis was conducted among ethics level variable and dependent variables. Also, a series of analyses of variance (ANOVAs) and simple mean tests were performed in order to test each hypothesis.

#### **The Relationships among the Level of Ethics of an Organization and Three Dependent Variables.**

The research question asked what correlation there would be between organizational ethics, attribution of crisis responsibility, reputation of an organization, and stakeholders' supportive behavioral intention. The Pearson correlation coefficients revealed that the level of ethics of an organization was significantly positively related to the organizational reputation ( $r = .71$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and supportive behavioral intention ( $r = .59$ ,  $p < .01$ ). As expected, there was a negative relationship between the level of ethics of an organization and crisis responsibility ( $r = -.35$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Also, the results revealed that crisis responsibility was significantly negatively related to other variables, organizational reputation ( $r = -.57$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and supportive behavioral intention ( $r = -.52$ ,  $p < .01$ ). In regard to the relationship between organizational reputation and supportive behavioral intention, they were highly positively related each other ( $r = .79$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The results of the RQ are displayed in Table 5-8.

### **The Three-way Effect of the Ethics Level, Crisis Type, and Response Strategy on Three Dependent Variables.**

Hypothesis 1 expected that subjects would show more positive attitudes (less attribution of crisis responsibility, better reputation of an organization, and higher supportive behavioral intention) when rumor and mortification condition are combined by a high-ethical organization than any other condition. To examine H1, three dependent variables were analyzed using a 2 (ethics level: high vs. low) X 2 (crisis type: rumor vs. transgression) X 2 (response strategy: mortification vs. denial) ANOVA.

The results of a three-way ANOVA revealed that there was no significant three-way effect for ethics by crisis type by response strategy on any of the dependent variables. Table 5-9 summarizes the three-way ANOVA results. Figure 5-1 shows the results of the H1.

### **The Buffer Effect of the Organizational Ethics on Three Dependent Variables.**

Hypothesis two, four, and six predicted that high-organizational ethics would show more buffering effect on subjects' attitudes toward the organization in terms of crisis types. A two-way analysis of variance was used to test the above hypotheses. The effects of difference of ethics levels and crisis types were tested using 2 X 2 factorial between-subject design based on two levels of ethics (high or low) and two types of crisis (transgression or rumor).

First, hypothesis 2 stated that the level of organizational ethics and crisis types will have a two-way interaction effect on attribution of crisis responsibility: subjects in a high-ethical organization and rumor type crisis will report less attribution of crisis responsibility to an organization than will those in a low-ethical organization and transgression type crisis (H2a). The results of two-way ANOVA revealed that there was no significant interaction effect of the ethics level, with crisis type variable on crisis responsibility ( $F(1, 192) = .46, p > .05$ ). However, there were significant main effects of the ethics level and crisis type variables. The results

indicated a significant main effect of the ethics level on the dependent variable, crisis responsibility ( $F(1, 192) = 28.28, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .131$ ). Subjects in the high-ethical company condition expressed weaker crisis responsibility ( $M = 4.4, S.D. = .81$ ) than those in the low-ethical company condition ( $M = 5.1, S.D. = .95$ ). Also, the crisis type variable had a significant main effect on crisis responsibility ( $F(1, 192) = 8.29, p < .01, \eta_p^2 = .042$ ). Subjects in the rumor type crisis condition rated less crisis responsibility ( $M = 4.5, S.D. = 1.0$ ) than those in the transgression crisis condition ( $M = 4.9, S.D. = .96$ ). Thus, H2 was not supported. The results of the H2 are displayed in Table 5-10 and 5-13. Also, Figure 5-2 presents the results of H2.

Second, hypothesis 4 stated that the level of organizational ethics and crisis types will have a two-way interaction effect on reputation of an organization: subjects in a high-ethical organization and rumor type crisis will report better reputation of an organization than will those in a low-ethical organization and transgression type crisis (H4a). The results of two-way ANOVA revealed that there was a significant interaction effect between the ethics level and crisis type variables on organizational reputation ( $F(1, 192) = 4.41, p < .05, \eta_p^2 = .023$ ). It should be noted that the difference of organizational reputation can be stemmed from the interaction effect of ethics level and crisis type, not from the main effect of ethics level or crisis type, because there was the significant interaction effect of the two variables. Also, the means showed that high ethics and rumor condition generated the best reputation of an organization ( $M = 4.5, S.D. = .80$ ) and the combination of low ethics and transgression generated the worst reputation of an organization ( $M = 2.3, S.D. = .95$ ). Thus, H4a and H4b were supported. The results of the H4 are displayed in Table 5-11 and 5-13. Also, Figure 5-2 presents the results of H4.

Third, hypothesis 6 stated that the level of organizational ethics and crisis types will have a two-way interaction effect on supportive behavioral intention: subjects in a high-ethical organization and rumor type crisis will report higher supportive behavioral intention than will those in a low-ethical organization and transgression type crisis (H6a). There was no significant interaction effect of the two variables, the ethics level and crisis type, on supportive behavioral intention ( $F(1, 192) = .01, p > .05$ ). The results indicated a significant main effect of the ethics level on supportive behavioral intention ( $F(1, 192) = 60.14, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .242$ ). Subjects in the high-ethical company condition expressed stronger supportive behavioral intention ( $M = 3.9, S.D. = .93$ ) than those in the low-ethical company condition ( $M = 2.7, S.D. = 1.18$ ). However, the crisis type variable did not have a significant main effect on supportive behavioral intention ( $F(1, 192) = 1.29, p > .05$ ). Thus, H6a was not supported. The results of H6 are displayed in Tables 5-12 and 5-13. Also, Figure 5-2 presents the results of H6.

### **The Halo Effect of the Organizational Ethics on three Dependent Variables.**

Hypothesis three, five, and seven predicted that high-organizational ethics would show more halo effect on subjects' attitudes toward the organization in terms of crisis response strategies. The hypotheses were analyzed using a 2 (high-ethical company and low-ethical company) X 2 (denial response and mortification response).

First, hypothesis 3 posited that the level of organizational ethics and response strategies will have a two-way interaction effect on attribution of crisis responsibility: subjects in a high-ethical organization and mortification response will report less attribution of crisis responsibility to an organization than will those in a low-ethical organization and denial response crisis (H3a). According to the results of two-way ANOVA, the interaction effect of ethics level and response strategies was not significant ( $F(1, 192) = .85, p > .05$ ). However, the results revealed a significant main effect of ethics variable on the dependent variable, crisis responsibility ( $F(1,$

192) = 25.83,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .121$ ). The attribution of crisis responsibility was less in the high-ethical company condition ( $M = 4.4$ , S.D. = .89) than in the low-ethical company condition ( $M = 5.1$ , S.D. = S.D. = .97). Also, there was a statistically significant main effect for crisis response strategies on crisis responsibility,  $F(1, 192) = 15.53$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .076$ . Subjects thought stakeholders would be less likely to attribute crisis responsibility to the denial response condition ( $M = 4.5$ , S.D. = 1.0) than to the mortification condition ( $M = 5.0$ , S.D. = .91). This result is opposite to previous studies on the effects of crisis response strategy. The finding is examined in the discussion section. Thus, H3 did not receive support. Table 5-14 and 5-17 presents the results of the H3. Also, Figure 5-3 presents the results of H3.

Second, hypothesis 5 posited that the level of organizational ethics and response strategy will have a two-way interaction effect on reputation of an organization: subjects in a high-ethical organization and mortification will report better reputation of an organization than will those in a low-ethical organization and denial response (H5a). The results of two-way ANOVA revealed that there was no significant interaction effect of the ethics level and response strategies on organizational reputation ( $F(1, 192) = .60$ ,  $192$ ,  $p > .05$ ). Also, the results revealed that there were significant main effects of the ethics level and response strategy variables. The results indicated a significant main effect of the ethics level on the dependent variable, organizational reputation ( $F(1, 192) = 148.90$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .442$ ). The perceptions of organizational reputation was more favorable in the high-ethical company condition ( $M = 4.1$ , S.D. = 1.0) than in the low-ethical company condition ( $M = 2.3$ , S.D. = 1.04). Also, response strategy variable had a significant main effect on organizational reputation variable ( $F(1, 192) = 5.07$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .026$ ). Respondents thought stakeholders would be more likely to show high organizational reputation in the mortification condition ( $M = 3.4$ , S.D. = 1.37) than in the denial response

condition ( $M = 3.1$ ,  $S.D. = 1.33$ ). H5 was not supported. Table 5-15 and 5-17 presents the results of the H5. Also, Figure 5-3 provides the results of H5.

Third, hypothesis 7 posited that the level of organizational ethics and response strategies will have an interaction effect on supportive behavioral intention: subjects in a high-ethical organization and mortification response will report higher supportive behavioral intention than will those in a low-ethical organization and denial response (H7a). There was no significant interaction effect of the two variables, the ethics level and response strategy, on supportive behavioral intention ( $F(1, 192) = .08$ ,  $p > .05$ ). The results revealed a significant main effect of ethics variable on the dependent variable, supportive behavioral intention ( $F(1, 192) = 58.98$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .590$ ). The perceptions of supportive behavioral intention was more favorable in the high-ethical company condition ( $M = 3.9$ ,  $S.D. = .93$ ) than in the low-ethical company condition ( $M = 2.7$ ,  $S.D. = 1.18$ ). However, there was no significant main effect of response strategies on supportive behavioral intention ( $F(1, 192) = .29$ ,  $p > .05$ ). Thus, H7 was not supported. Table 5-16 and 5-17 presents the results of the H7. Figure 5-3 presents the results of H7.

Table 5-1. Descriptive statistics for demographics of subjects.

Item	n	%
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	108	56
Male	84	44
<b>Age</b>		
19 years	13	7
20 years	42	22
21 years	62	31
22 years	20	10
23 years	13	7
24-30 years	28	15
Over than 30 years	14	8
<b>Education Level</b>		
Graduate	37	19
Undergraduate	155	81
<b>Major</b>		
Communication	128	67
Sports Management	42	22
Marketing	10	5
Engineering	6	3
Others	6	3
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
White	117	61
Hispanic / Non-White	28	15
Black / African-American	19	10
Asian	12	6
Native Hawaiian / Other Pacific Island	1	1
Not Specified	15	7

Table 5-2. The number of subjects for each condition.

	Transgression (%)		Rumor (%)	
	Denial	Mortification	Denial	Mortification
High-Ethics	30 (15.6)	24 (12.5)	22 (11.5)	20 (10.4)
Low-Ethics	25 (13)	25 (13)	24 (12.5)	22 (11.5)

Table 5-3. Subjects' average age per condition.

	Transgression (S.D.)		Rumor (S.D.)		F-value	Significance
	Denial	Mortification	Denial	Mortification		
High-Ethics	21 (1.3)	24 (6.0)	22 (3.0)	22 (3.1)	1.14	.342
Low-Ethics	23 (5.7)	22 (4.4)	24 (8.5)	24 (8.6)		

df = 7 / 184

Table 5-4. Factor analysis and reliability analysis for indices.

Item	Factor Loadings	Cronbach's $\alpha$
<b>Crisis Responsibility</b>		
The company should be blamed.	.877	
The company should bear the responsibility for the event.	.853	
The blame for the crisis lies with the company.	.816	.89
Circumstances are responsible for the crisis, not the company.†	.832	
The blame for the crisis lies in the circumstances.†	.806	
<b>Organizational Reputation</b>		
I admire and respect the company.	.946	
I have a good feeling about the company.	.940	
I trust this company to tell the truth about the incident.	.933	.96
The company maintains high standards in the way it treats people.	.928	
The company is basically honest.	.906	
The company looks like a good company to work for.	.878	
<b>Supportive Behavioral Intention</b>		
I would purchase the company's products/services.	.943	
I would recommend the company's products/services to a friend.	.935	.86
I would invest in the company.	.769	
<b>Ethics</b>		
I can trust the company.	.968	
The company is concerned with what is legal.	.944	
The company is concerned with what is morally right.	.976	
The company is highly regarded as far as business ethics is concerned.	.953	.98
The company treats its public with respect.	.942	
The company is socially responsible.	.963	
<b>Crisis Type</b>		
<b>Transgression</b>		
The company is the main cause of this event.	.750	
The company deceived the public.	.914	.78
The company violated the law.	.844	
<b>Rumor</b>		
The news story is a rumor.	.936	.85
The news story is false information.	.936	

Table 5-4. Continued

Item	Factor Loadings	Cronbach's $\alpha$
Response Strategy		
Denial		
The company blamed others.	.926	.83
The company denied doing the event.	.926	
Mortification		
After the crisis, the company took responsibility.	.905	.94
The company said it accepted responsibility for the wrongdoing.	.934	
The company expressed apology for the incident to the public.	.943	
The company was very sorry for what it did.	.886	

Note. † Reversed items

Table 5-5. Manipulation check for ethics level.

	High (n=20)	Low (n=20)	t-value	df	Significance
	M (S.D.)	M (S.D.)			
Ethics Level	6.1 (.87)	1.9 (.64)	17.16	38	p < .001

Table 5-6. Manipulation check for crisis type.

	Transgression Index		t-value	df	Significance
	Transgression (n=20)	Rumor (n=20)			
	M (S.D.)	M (S.D.)			
Crisis Type	4.8 (1.35)	3.9 (.68)	2.79	38	p < .01
	Rumor Index		t-value	df	Significance
	Transgression (n=20)	Rumor (n=20)			
	M (S.D.)	M (S.D.)			
Crisis Type	2.8 (.78)	4.6 (1.12)	6.04	38	p < .001

Table 5-7. Manipulation check for response strategy.

	Denial Index		t-value	df	Significance
	Denial (n=20)	Mortification (n=20)			
	M (S.D.)	M (S.D.)			
Response Strategy	5.5 (.91)	2.7 (.89)	9.73	38	p < .001

	Mortification Index		t-value	df	Significance
	Denial (n=20)	Mortification (n=20)			
	M (S.D.)	M (S.D.)			
Response Strategy	2.0 (.95)	4.9 (1.08)	8.71	38	p < .001

Table 5-8. Correlation between the level of ethics, crisis responsibility, organizational reputation, and supportive behavioral intention.

	Ethics	Responsibility	Reputation	Behavioral Intention
Ethics	-	-.35**	.71**	.59**
Responsibility		-	-.57**	-.52**
Reputation			-	.79**

\*\* p < .01

Table 5-9. Univariate f-values for the dependent variables.

Source	Crisis Responsibility	Organizational Reputation	Supportive Behavioral Intention
Ethics (A)	28.62***	161.48***	58.73***
Crisis Type (B)	8.89**	6.57*	1.25
Response Strategy (C)	16.80***	4.92*	.33
A by B	.61	4.41*	.00
A by C	1.17	.64	.08
B by C	.46	.41	.43
A by B by C	.20	1.32	.23

df = 7 / 184

\* p < .05 \*\* p < .01 \*\*\* p < .001

Table 5-10. Univariate analysis of variance for crisis responsibility by ethics and crisis type.

Source	SS	df	F	p	ns
Total	4495.52	192	-	-	-
Ethics	24.06	1	28.28	< .001	
Crisis Type	7.05	1	8.29	< .01	
Ethics by Crisis Type	.40	1	.46		.496

Table 5-11. Univariate analysis of variance for organizational reputation by ethics and crisis type.

Source	SS	df	F	p	ns
Total	2357.61	192	-	-	-
Ethics	159.17	1	158.27	< .001	
Crisis Type	6.45	1	6.42	< .05	
Ethics by Crisis Type	4.44	1	4.41	< .05	

Table 5-12. Univariate analysis of variance for supportive behavioral intention by ethics and crisis type.

Source	SS	df	F	p	ns
Total	2342.56	192	-	-	-
Ethics	69.08	1	60.14	< .001	
Crisis Type	1.49	1	1.29		.257
Ethics by Crisis Type	.01	1	.01		.976

Table 5-13. Means and standard deviations for crisis responsibility, organizational reputation, and supportive behavioral intention by ethics level and crisis type.

Dependent Variable	Ethics Level		Transgression	Rumor	Total	
Crisis Responsibility	High	Mean	4.6	4.1	4.4	
		S.D.	.84	.89	.81	
	Low	Mean	5.2	4.9	5.1	
		S.D.	.99	.95	.95	
	Total	Mean	4.9	4.5	4.7	
		S.D.	.96	1.00	.99	
				(104)	(88)	(192)
	Organizational Reputation	High	Mean	3.8	4.5	4.1
			S.D.	1.05	.80	1.00
Low		Mean	2.3	2.4	2.3	
		S.D.	.95	1.14	1.04	
Total		Mean	3.1	3.4	3.2	
		S.D.	1.26	1.45	1.36	
				(104)	(88)	(192)
Behavioral Intention		High	Mean	3.8	4.0	3.9
			S.D.	.99	.86	.93
	Low	Mean	2.6	2.8	2.7	
		S.D.	.98	1.37	1.18	
	Total	Mean	3.2	3.3	3.3	
		S.D.	1.15	1.30	1.22	
				(104)	(88)	(192)

Table 5-14. Univariate analysis of variance for crisis responsibility by ethics and response strategy.

Source	SS	df	F	p	ns
Total	4495.52	192	-	-	-
Ethics	21.16	1	25.83	< .001	
Response Strategy	12.72	1	15.53	< .001	
Ethics by Response Strategy	.70	1	.85		.358

Table 5-15. Univariate analysis of variance for organizational reputation by ethics and response strategy.

Source	SS	df	F	p	ns
Total	2357.61	192	-	-	-
Ethics	153.67	1	148.90	< .001	
Response Strategy	5.23	1	5.07	< .05	
Ethics by Response Strategy	.62	1	.60		.439

Table 5-16. Univariate analysis of variance for supportive behavioral intention by ethics and response strategy.

Source	SS	df	F	p	ns
Total	2342.56	192	-	-	-
Ethics	68.07	1	58.98	< .001	
Response Strategy	.34	1	.29		.590
Ethics by Response Strategy	.09	1	.08		.785

Table 5-17. Means and standard deviations for crisis responsibility, organizational reputation, and supportive behavioral intention by ethics level and response strategy.

Dependent Variable	Ethics Level		Denial	Mortification	Total
Crisis Responsibility	High	Mean	4.1	4.7	4.4
		S.D.	.78	.90	.89
			(52)	(44)	(96)
	Low	Mean	4.9	5.3	5.1
		S.D.	1.05	.85	.97
			(49)	(47)	(96)
	Total	Mean	4.5	5.0	4.7
		S.D.	1.00	.91	.99
			(101)	(91)	(192)
Organizational Reputation	High	Mean	4.0	4.2	4.1
		S.D.	.88	1.13	1.00
			(52)	(44)	(96)
	Low	Mean	2.1	2.6	2.3
		S.D.	.99	1.05	1.04
			(49)	(47)	(96)
	Total	Mean	3.1	3.4	3.2
		S.D.	1.33	1.37	1.36
			(101)	(91)	(192)
Behavioral Intention	High	Mean	3.9	3.8	3.9
		S.D.	.81	1.07	.93
			(52)	(44)	(96)
	Low	Mean	2.7	2.7	2.7
		S.D.	1.20	1.17	1.18
			(49)	(47)	(96)
	Total	Mean	3.3	3.2	3.3
		S.D.	1.19	1.26	1.22
			(101)	(91)	(192)

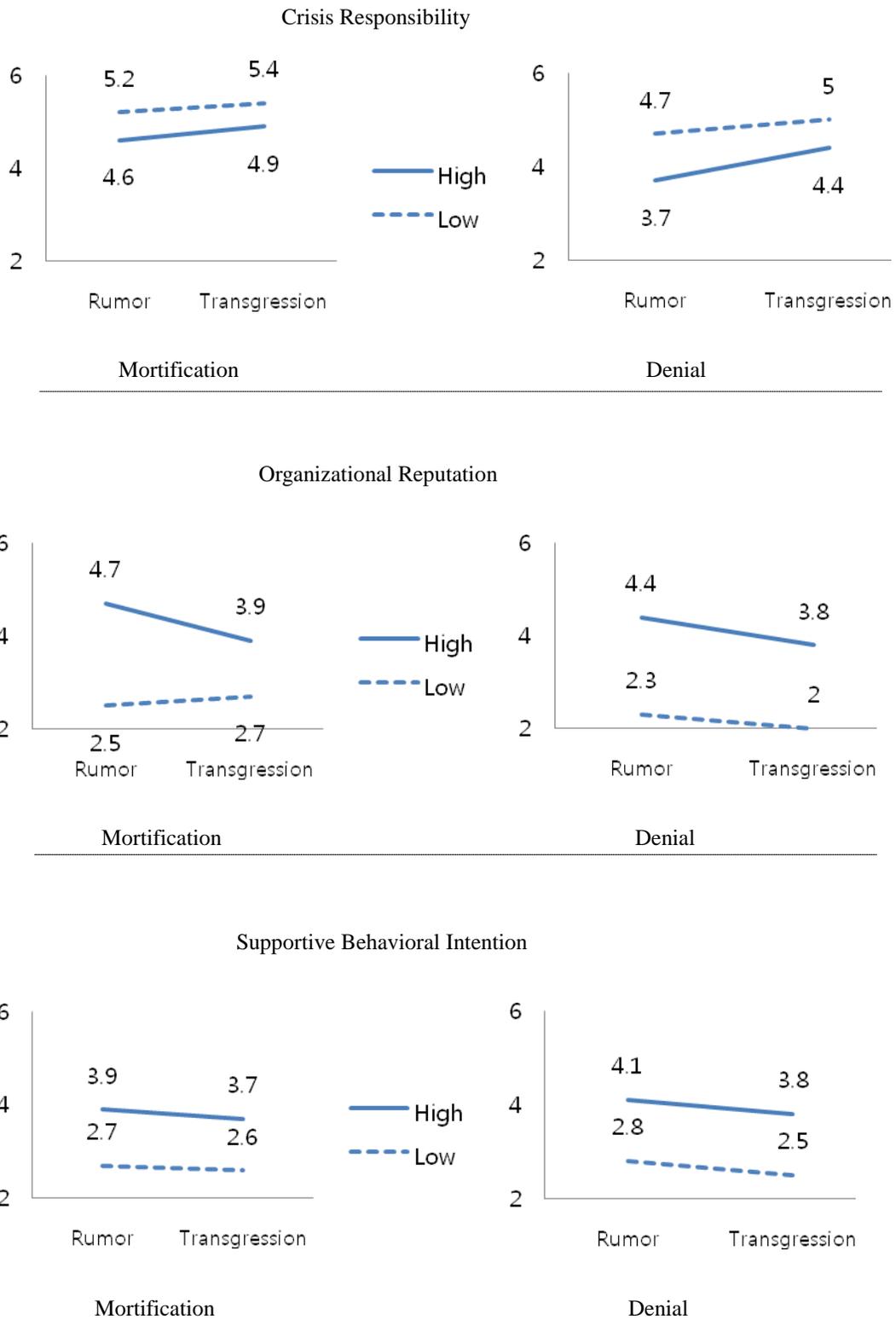


Figure 5-1. Ethics by crisis type by response strategy three-way interactions.

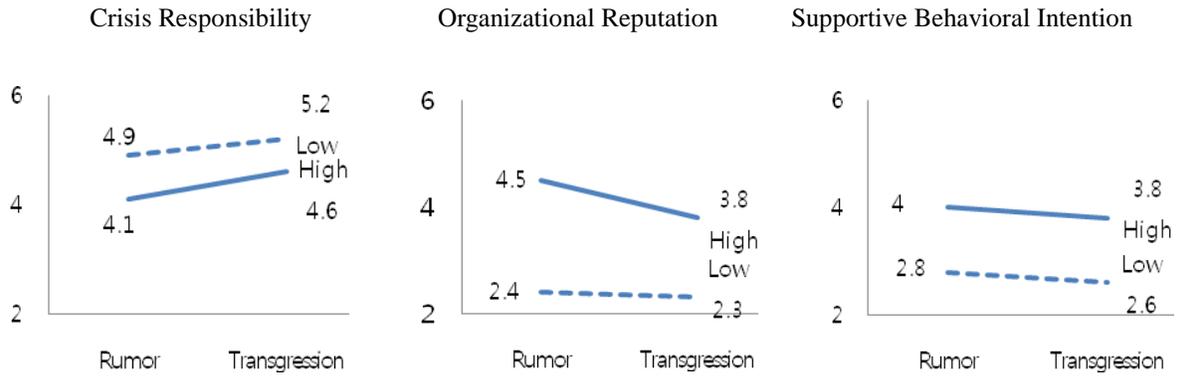


Figure 5-2. Ethics by crisis type.

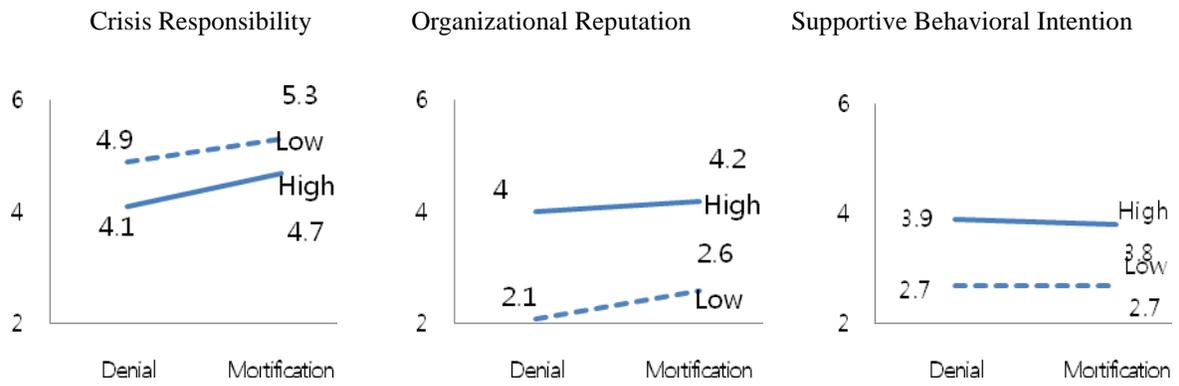


Figure 5-3. Ethics by response strategy.

## CHAPTER 6 DISCUSSION

### **Summary of Key Findings**

The results of this study of organizational ethics in crisis communication have not only extended our understanding of the role and value of organizational ethics, but also demonstrated their effects and importance in crisis communication.

This study yielded some critical results. The level of organizational ethic had significantly positive relationship with organizational reputation ( $r = .71$ ) and supportive behavioral intention ( $r = .59$ ) and a negative relationship with attribution of crisis responsibility ( $r = -.35$ ). In regard to a three-way effect, this study did not show the significant effect of ethics level by crisis type by response strategy on the attribution of crisis responsibility, organizational reputation, or supportive behavioral intention. However, there was the interaction effect of ethics level by crisis type on the organizational reputation. Another result in this study is that the ethics level variable had main effects on all three dependent variables, while crisis type and response strategy variables did not have the main effect on the supportive behavioral intention variable.

First, the answers to the research question indicated that the level of ethics of an organization has positive relationships with organizational reputation and supportive behavioral intention and a negative relationship with attribution of crisis responsibility. This finding can be explained in the context that stakeholders' perceptions of the level of organizational ethics can play a positive role in crisis management. The results revealed that subjects were more likely to attribute a better reputation and less crisis responsibility to a highly ethical company when the company faced a rumor crisis than when it faced a transgression crisis. However, these findings were not found regardless of the types of crises that a less ethical company faced. Thus, it is

possible that the ethics an organization possesses could change the effects of its crisis communication and management.

Likewise, according to the results of each two-way ANOVA, between ethics level and crisis type and between ethics level and response strategy, the ethics level variable had main effects on all dependent variables. Meanwhile, the variables of crisis type and response strategy had main effects on only two dependent variables. For example, with regard to supportive behavioral intention, there was no significant difference according to crisis type and response strategy variables. Only the ethics level variable had a main effect on the supportive behavioral intention variable. This result indicates the importance of understanding the moderating influence of the ethics level variable on organizational crisis management.

Second, an interaction effect was found only in the combination of ethics level and crisis type to organizational reputation. This finding strengthens crisis communication scholars' suggestions about organizational reputation. Many scholars have argued that organizational reputation is one of the most susceptible organizational assets in a crisis (Allen & Caillouet, 1994; Benoit, 1995; Benoit & Pang, 2008; Brinson & Benoit, 1999). Thus, they defined the ultimate goal of crisis management as the reduction or elimination of organizational reputation damage from a crisis. For example, Benoit and Pang (2008) said that organizational reputation is so strongly associated with a company's business activities, such as the consumer's willingness to purchase its goods and services, the government's regulation of its actions, or the price of its stocks, that organizational reputation can not only influence them, but also be influenced by them.

Third, in regard to the three-way interaction effect, the researcher expected a mortification response to a rumor crisis communicated by a highly ethical organization to have more favorable influence on attributed crisis responsibility, organizational reputation, and supportive behavioral

intention than any other condition. Although the three-way interaction effect was not found, an important fact that can be gleaned from the results is that it is possible that the previous suggestion insisting that a mortification response is the panacea in crisis might be false. In fact, it is interesting to note that unlike the expectations of hypotheses 3, the denial response strategy let stakeholders attribute the least crisis responsibility to an organization regardless of which level of ethics and which type of crisis were considered. Recently, some crisis scholars have raised questions about the effectiveness of apology or mortification response strategy (Coombs & Holladay, 2008). This finding will be discussed further in the implication section.

The above results of this study have both academic and practical implications for those who are interested in the topic of organizational ethics management and crisis dynamics.

### **Theoretical Implications**

The results of the research questions were consistent with past research examining the relationships between attribution of crisis responsibility, organizational reputation, and behavioral intention. The findings of this study supported the results of SCCT (Coombs, 2008) that “the stronger the attributions of crisis responsibility, the more the crisis can damage the organizational reputation and, in turn, affect future interactions with the organization” and that “a negative reputation should result in less supportive behavior from stakeholders, while a positive reputation should engender more” (pp. 268). The findings of this study extended previous results by revealing the direct relationship between attributed crisis responsibility and supportive behavioral intention. It confirmed that attributed crisis responsibility is negatively related to all variables – the ethics level of an organization, organizational reputation, and supportive behavioral intention. More theoretical research is needed to determine the antecedent factors that may affect stakeholders’ perception of crisis responsibility in order to identify the role of crisis responsibility attribution in the process of crisis management.

The findings of the role of organizational ethics in a crisis have theoretical implications for researchers in the field of crisis communication. For example, the analysis found no main effect of crisis type and response strategy on supportive behavioral intention. However, the difference of supportive behavioral intention was found for the level of ethics variable. Persuasion theories such as the Theory of Reasoned Action (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975), the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991), and the Accessibility Theory (Fazio & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 1994) explain the process in which the final aspect, behavioral intention or actual behavior, is controlled by many antecedent indicators or factors such as beliefs, motivation, attitude, subjective norms, and so on.

We may conclude that stakeholders' supportive behavioral intentions in crisis situations can be controlled by their perception of organizational ethics, not by crisis type and response strategy, which means that supportive behavioral intention in crisis environments may be affected more by long-term relationships with stakeholders or their perceptions and evaluations of an organization than by other short-term based factors such as crisis type or response strategy. From a theoretical viewpoint, this conclusion may emphasize not only the importance of long-term relationship with stakeholders through organization's ethical business performances and CSR activities, but also the needs of systematical crisis management, and in turn, result in expanding the range of crisis research in terms of pre-, during-, and post-levels.

In regard to the effectiveness of response strategy, people are likely to think that an organization using a mortification response is more responsible for a crisis than an organization using a denial response. In other words, stakeholders may act more favorably towards the company denying crisis responsibility than the company apologizing for the crisis. It is possible that, in comparison to the denial response strategy, mortification might not guarantee a halo or

buffer effect in crisis management. This suggestion is along the same lines as recent study results. Some recent research denied apology as the best response strategy and pointed out that the value of an apology has been overestimated in crisis communication (Coombs & Holladay, 2008). Moreover, the results of different response strategies provide more questions than answers when considering that the denial response caused subjects to have more a favorable attitude in regardless of the ethical level of the organization. Thus, we can assume that the effectiveness of response strategy would not differ according to the endogenous factors of an organization such as its ethics or image, but rather, according to exogenous factors such as the victims, crisis type, crisis development phase, and so forth. Such factors should be considered in order to examine and test the crisis response strategy effect.

### **Practical Implications**

Experimental research in crisis communication can help crisis managers make better informed decisions (Coombs & Holladay, 2008; Hwang & Cameron, 2009; Jin & Cameron, 2007; Kim & Yang, 2009; Lyon & Cameron, 2004; Payne, 2006). This study provides valuable insights into how important organizational ethics are, what factors can affect stakeholders' perceptions and attitudes, and how effects can differ in crisis management.

One practical implication of this study for crisis management practitioners is that the level of organizational ethics is one of very important factors in crisis communication. As the perception of an organization's ethics cannot be created in a day, it is important for all persons in charge of an organization including crisis managers to keep ethical policies in mind whenever they interact with the public and foster relationships with stakeholders. Such critical, pre-crisis management activities may lead to people considering the organization as a highly ethical one.

To this end, an organization needs to issue and announce the code of ethics that can help its employees conduct their tasks in accordance with the ethical standards. The code of ethics

usually includes honesty, transparency, openness, responsible publication, social responsibility, legality, human subject protection, and so on (Davis, 2002). In addition, public relations and crisis managers may follow the universal ethical principles suggested by Gert (1988), Kohlberg (1981, 1984), and Piaget (1965). Baker and Martinson (2001) also listed five criteria to evaluate the ethics levels of public relations activities: authenticity, respect, truthfulness, equity, and social responsibility. In fact, Coleman and Wilkins (2009) evaluated the moral development scores of professionals using these five criteria. Public relations professionals ranked fourth highest in moral development, along with journalists and nurses. Seminarians and philosophers ranked highest, followed by physicians.

The findings of this study also reflect a better sense of crisis management in terms of which crisis strategies should be implemented first and which should be developed most cautiously. Since attribution of crisis responsibility is negatively related to organizational ethics, reputation, and behavioral intention, people are likely to have negative attitudes toward an organization facing a crisis when they think that the organization is responsible for the crisis. Thus, in the first phase of a crisis, the crisis manager should make plans to lessen the degree to which publics attribute crisis responsibility to the organization. Crisis management practitioners should also develop crisis strategies for protecting the organization's reputation from the crisis. The results of this study reveal that organizational reputation can be more easily affected by crisis than any other attributes. Druckenmiller (1993) noted that organizational reputation should be given continual attention because it is the sum of many parts of an organization's assets including its products or services, years of recognition equity, a well-known CEO, sponsorship, and advertising. Hence, the crisis manager must strategize for organizational reputation because

it is considered not only the most important asset that should be protected in crisis, but also the most susceptible asset that can be damaged in crisis.

Lastly, crisis practitioners must exercise utmost care in choosing the right response to a crisis situation. As discussed, the results of this study indicated that stakeholders tend to think that a company with a mortification response is more responsible for a crisis than a company with a denial response is, but it would be naïve for practitioners to believe that a denial response always has better results than a mortification response. Crisis managers should focus on the other results of this study, in which the worst attitude was also shown in denial response for organizational reputation. Therefore, crisis practitioners need to choose the best response strategy by considering organizational ethics level and crisis type as well as the goal of crisis management.

### **Limitations and Future Studies**

This study has identified the importance of organizational ethics and provided answers to questions about its dynamics in a crisis situation. However, many limitations and questions remain. One limitation of this study is the subjects. Although previous research reports that there is no difference in response between students and non-student populations (Coombs, 1999), it is difficult to generalize the results of this study using student subjects only. Moreover, this study was based not on random sampling, but convenience sampling, which may have resulted in a pool dominated by students in specific majors (i.e., communications or sports management). Therefore, the results should not be generalized to all stakeholders in crises.

A second limitation is that only a small set of conditions was tested in the present research. SCCT (Coombs & Holladay, 2002) and IRT (Benoit, 1995) suggest thirteen types of crisis and fourteen kinds of response strategy. This study examined organizational ethics in only transgression and rumor crises combined with denial and mortification responses. Other crisis

types and crisis response strategies were not tested in this study. Thus, the results are restricted to limited crisis situations and should not be generalized to other crisis types or response strategies.

It should be also noted that an online experiment has the problems of either internal or external validity, which may have an impact on its results in that not only may online experiments attract only highly motivated subjects, but also lead to more subjects dropping out in the process (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006). Thus, as Wimmer & Dominick (2006) suggested, an online experiment would be an appropriate alternative method when it desires to study “a population segment other than college students” or when “tight control of experimental setting is not a crucial element of the study” (pp. 252).

In addition, this study did not examine the causes and effects among the variables of attributed crisis responsibility, organizational reputation, and behavioral intention, but rather found out the relationships among them through correlation analysis. However, these factors may be intermediate or moderating variables. Therefore, it is hoped that this study will inspire further research into the examination of the factors that affect stakeholders’ attitudes towards organizations facing crisis, using path analyses through methods like Structural Equation Modeling. Moreover, although this study contributes to a general understanding of the relationship between organizational ethics and crisis communication through controlled experimental research, future studies should seek to observe the effectiveness of organizational ethics in crisis through in-depth interviews with public relations and crisis practitioners as well as case studies in a variety of crisis contexts and participant observation.

This study is an initial study that examined organizational ethics’ role in crisis management. The concept of ethics may be one of the factors indicating the degree to which an organization has relationships with its stakeholders. Thus, future study is necessary to extend to

the concept of relationships with publics by focusing on how stakeholders use their emotions and images to attribute crisis responsibility to an organization. A relational approach to crisis management will provide insights into how stakeholders perceive crisis situations, help crisis managers determine which strategies are best to rebuild relationships between an organization and stakeholders, and protect organizational reputations (Coombs, 2000; Lyon & Cameron, 2004).

This study used traditional, newspaper-style response materials. Further research is needed to understand the use of new media in crisis communication. Considering that crisis situations require timely, mediated responses addressing targeted stakeholders, new media may play a critical role in communicating with stakeholders because, unlike traditional media, new media have some dynamic features such as fast distribution of information, two-way communication, and customized messages. Therefore, future studies using new media response stimuli could yield different findings and insights.

Finally, from the standpoint of public relations, future research is necessary to examine the function and importance of public relations leadership in crisis management by comparing it to those of legal and financial departments. Despite the importance of the relationship between an organization and its stakeholders in a crisis situation, most crisis managers have dealt with crises by using legal or financial viewpoints. Thus, legal and financial departments have been given priority in resolving crises. However, it is possible for public relations communication and leadership to contribute to handling crises and conflicts. In fact, previous studies have already confirmed that public relations leadership can affect the effectiveness of persuasive tasks and organizational problem solving (Werder & Holtzhausen, 2009). It would be interesting to explore

how public relations leadership affects conflict resolution and what types of public relations leadership can influence the strategic decision making process in a crisis situation.

APPENDIX A  
STIMULUS MATERIALS

**Introduction Stories of a High-Ethical and Low-Ethical Company**

**A High-Ethical Company, Jack & Hill.**

Jack & Hill (J&H), the leading health and hygiene company that makes diapers, feminine care products, facial tissue and bathroom tissue, is famous for its more than 25 years of social contribution that have had an impact on business performance. Its high-profile environmental campaign, Keep U.S. Green, has played a crucial role in enhancing the company's reputation and building consumer trust.

This consumer trust has helped the J&H achieve economic growth, despite the backdrop of the global economic downturn in 2008 and 2009. Their economic growth stemmed from continued efforts to build an innovative corporate culture with life-long learning programs and family-friendly management and to fulfill its corporate social responsibilities by conducting ethical management and environmental management.

As a result of such efforts, in 2008, this company received the highest grade in American Business Ethics Index (ABEX) from the Institute for Industry Policy Studies and in 2007, the most socially responsible. In addition, J&H was the first to be certified as a family-friendly company by the U.S. government and according to a 2008 survey conducted by Incruit, an online job portal site, the company was selected as one of the best companies to work for by U.S. university students. Most of all, in 2009, the J&H was named the most admired company for a sixth consecutive year by International Management Association Consulting.

### **A Low-Ethical Company, Jack & Hill.**

Jack & Hill (J&H), founded in 1952, has diversified its business portfolio to become the Nation's 10th largest conglomerate in terms of assets. It has 34 domestic affiliates and a global network of 43 branches and subsidiaries in three core business sectors: Manufacturing & Construction, Finance, and Services & Leisure.

Despite its huge business size, J&H has never been listed among ethical or admirable companies. Instead, the company has been accused of unethical and illegal business scandals several times over the past decades. For example, in 2009, this company was indicted for illegal political donations in 2008 and for illegally lobbying lawmakers. The company developed a slush fund through unscrupulous accounting and used the slush fund to finance millions of dollars in illegal political donations to the two presidential campaign camps. The company's chairman was sentenced to three years in prison for putting together the huge sum of money and sliding it under the table to political benefactors.

This is not the first run-in with the law. J&H's chairman was arrested in 2000 on charge of violating foreign currency rules. Recently, the chairman beat bar employees in revenge for an attack on his son at a downtown saloon and at a construction site. The Court gave him a three-year suspended sentence, and ordered him to do 200 hours of community service.

## **Copies of News Stories**

### **Transgression and Denial**

#### **Jack & Hill Denies All Allegations**

CHICAGO (AP) - The Jack & Hill (J&H) chairman was arrested on allegations of tax evasion, insider trading and bribery. The company is suspected of evading twenty-nine million dollars in capital gains taxes, pocketing twenty million dollars in profits from insider trading and giving two million dollars in bribes to a former chief of the Ministry for Health, Welfare and Family Affairs (MHWF) in a bid to acquire an MHWF affiliate at a price cheaper than that offered by another bidder, all between 2008 and 2009.

J&H denied the allegation today and released an official statement. "We cannot but think that there are whistle blowers with harmful intentions against our company, because it is so groundless," said the spokesperson for J&H. The lawyer of J&H said it is going to take all possible legal actions against people who spread the false reports and is seeking legal recourse against Internet users who have distributed the false reports.

### **Rumor and Denial**

#### **Jack & Hill Denies Biz Rumors**

CHICAGO (AP) - There have been rumors that Jack & Hill (J&H) may sell some of its biggest affiliates, as the chairman decided to convert up to \$25 billion of its preferred stock into common stock. This would increase the stake in the firm from 8 percent to 36 percent. Among stockholders, there is a speculation that J&H is so suffering from serious financial troubles that it would have to carry out massive layoffs before selling some affiliates.

However, J&H reiterated yesterday that it will not put some of the biggest affiliates up for sale. "The affiliates are markets where J&H enjoys stable, continued growth and is profitable. There is no reason to sell the business units," the chairman said in a press conference. "We cannot but think that there are people spreading the rumor with harmful intentions against our company, because it is so groundless and we have been constantly saying so," said the spokesperson for J&H.

## **Transgression and Mortification**

### **Jack & Hill Apologizes All Allegations**

CHICAGO (AP) - The Jack & Hill (J&H) chairman was arrested on allegations of tax evasion, insider trading and bribery. The company is suspected of evading twenty-nine million dollars in capital gains taxes, pocketing twenty million dollars in profits from insider trading and giving two million dollars in bribes to a former chief of the Ministry for Health, Welfare and Family Affairs (MHWF) in a bid to acquire an MHWF affiliate at a price cheaper than that offered by another bidder, all between 2008 and 2009.

J&H issued a statement that the company will admit all wrongdoing in an ongoing investigation into corruption allegations. "We sincerely apologize for all the troubles we caused you with regard to the special investigation. We will assume all legal and moral responsibility. We will accept the special counsel's investigation results and do our best to prevent such things from happening again" said the spokesperson for J&H.

## **Rumor and Mortification**

### **Jack & Hill Apologizes Biz Rumors**

CHICAGO (AP) - There have been rumors that Jack & Hill (J&H) may sell some of its biggest affiliates, as the chairman decided to convert up to \$25 billion of its preferred stock into common stock. This would increase the stake in the firm from 8 percent to 36 percent. Among stockholders, there is a speculation that J&H is so suffering from serious financial troubles that it would have to carry out massive layoffs before selling some affiliates.

The company's chairman apologized for causing social trouble and released an official statement. "I think it is due to our company's carelessness," said the chairman. He pledged that, despite the appearance of the financial troubles at the company, J&H is financially sound so that he would do his utmost to transform the problem into an organizational plan that can win the trust and love from the citizens.

APPENDIX B  
QUESTIONNAIRE

THANKS FOR AGREEING TO PARTICIPATE  
IN THE EXPERIMENTAL RESEARCH SURVEY!

The questionnaire should take only about 15 minutes to complete. This survey is not designed to figure out your knowledge about crisis management. Thus, there is no right or wrong answer. Just answer the questions according to your thoughts and feelings. Your answers will be used only for statistical purposes and will remain strictly confidential.

Once you begin the survey, please do not leave the survey website for the validity of the study.

Please read **the introduction story of a company** and **the news wire story about the company** carefully and answer all questions.

**Present two stimuli**

→ After reading the materials, **how would you think about the responsibility of this event?**  
 Please circle the number that best represents your response on the 7-point scale provided, where  
*1 equals “Very Strongly Disagree” and 7 equals “Very Strongly Agree.”*

		Very Strongly Disagree						Very Strongly Agree
1	I think the company should be blamed.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2	I think the company should bear the responsibility for the event.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3	I think the blame for the crisis lies with the company.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4	I think the cause of the event is beyond the company’s control.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5	I think circumstances are responsible for the crisis, not the company.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6	I think the blame for the crisis lies in the circumstances.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

→ After reading the materials, **how would you evaluate the reputation of the company?**  
 Please circle the number that best represents your response on the 7-point scale provided, where  
*1 equals “Very Strongly Disagree” and 7 equals “Very Strongly Agree.”*

		Very Strongly Disagree						Very Strongly Agree
1	I admire and respect the company.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2	I have a good feeling about the company.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3	I trust this company to tell the truth about the incident.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4	The company maintains high standards in the way it treats people.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5	The company is basically honest.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6	The company looks like a good company to work for.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

→ After reading the materials, **how would you support the company?**

Please circle the number that best represents your response on the 7-point scale provided, where *1 equals “Very Strongly Disagree” and 7 equals “Very Strongly Agree.”*

		Very Strongly Disagree						Very Strongly Agree
1	I would purchase the company’s products/services.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2	I would recommend the company’s products/services to a friend.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3	I would invest in the company.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4	I would complain to other customers if I experience a problem with the company’s service.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5	I would say negative things about the company to people.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6	I would switch to a competitor if I experience a problem with the company’s service.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

→ Please check the extent to which you agree with the following statement about **the company?**

Please circle the number that best represents your response on the 7-point scale provided, where *1 equals “Very Strongly Disagree” and 7 equals “Very Strongly Agree.”*

		Very Strongly Disagree						Very Strongly Agree
1	I can trust the company.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2	The company is concerned with what is legal.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3	The company is concerned with what is morally right.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4	The company is highly regarded as far as business ethics is concerned.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5	The company treats its public with respect.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6	The company is socially responsible.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

→ Please check the extent to which you agree with the following statement about **the company?**

Please circle the number that best represents your response on the 7-point scale provided, where *1 equals “Very Strongly Disagree” and 7 equals “Very Strongly Agree.”*

		Very Strongly Disagree						Very Strongly Agree
1	The news story is a rumor.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2	The news story is false information.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3	The news story is true.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4	The company is the main cause of this event.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5	The company deceived the public.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6	The company violated the law.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

➔ Please check the extent to which you agree with the following statement about **the company’s response to the event?**

Please circle the number that best represents your response on the 7-point scale provided, where *1 equals “Very Strongly Disagree” and 7 equals “Very Strongly Agree.”*

		Very Strongly Disagree						Very Strongly Agree
1	The company blamed others.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2	The company denied doing the event.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3	After the crisis, the company took responsibility.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4	The company said it accepted responsibility for the wrongdoing.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5	The company expressed apology for the incident to the public.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6	The company was very sorry for what it did.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

**YOU ARE NEARLY THROUGH!**

However, I need some data to help me analyze the results of this survey, so please answer the questions below. The following questions include some basic biographical data about you. You cannot be identified from your responses.

1. Gender?
  - ① Male
  - ② Female
  
2. How old are you? \_\_\_\_\_ years old
  
3. What is your current level of education?
  - ① Freshmen
  - ② Sophomore
  - ③ Junior
  - ④ Senior
  - ⑤ Graduate student
  - ⑥ Other
  
4. What is your major?
  
5. What is your ethnic background?
  - ① American Indian / Alaska Native
  - ② Black / African-American
  - ③ White
  - ④ Hispanic / Non-White
  - ⑤ Asian
  - ⑥ Native Hawaiian / Oth Pac Island
  - ⑦ Not specified
  
6. For the extra credit assignment, please put your Gator ID (e.g., 1234-5678)
  - \* This question is for only UF undergraduate students who are asked to participate in this survey by their class instructor.  
( \_\_\_\_\_ )

**Notice!**

This message contained in the stimulus materials was manipulated for this study.

**Thank you for your participation! ☺**

APPENDIX C  
UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD INFORMED CONSENT  
APPROVAL

**Protocol Submission Form**

<b>UFIRB 02 – Social &amp; Behavioral Research</b>			
<b>Protocol Submission Form</b>			
<i>This form must be typed. Send this form and the supporting documents to IRB02, PO Box 112250, Gainesville, FL 32611. Should you have questions about completing this form, call 352-392-0433.</i>			
<b>Title of Protocol:</b>	The effects of organizational ethics on responsibility, reputation, and behavioral intention in crisis management.		
<b>Principal Investigator:</b>	<b>Jin Hong Ha</b>	<b>UFID #: 0185-2967</b>	
<b>Degree / Title:</b>	<b>M.A. / M.A. student</b>	<b>Mailing Address:</b> (If on campus include PO Box address):	<b>Email:</b> <b>Jinhong.ha@ufl.edu</b>
<b>Department:</b>	<b>Public Relations</b>	<b>PO Box 118400, Gainesville, FL 32611</b>	<b>Telephone #:</b> <b>352-682-7692</b>
<b>Co-Investigator(s):</b>			<b>Email:</b>
<b>Supervisor (If PI is student):</b>	<b>Mary Ann Ferguson, Ph. D.</b>	<b>UFID#:</b>	
<b>Degree / Title:</b>	Ph.D./Professor	<b>Mailing Address:</b> (If on campus include PO Box address):	<b>Email :</b> <b>maferguson@jou.ufl.edu</b>
<b>Department:</b>	<b>Public Relations</b>	<b>PO Box 118400, Gainesville, FL 32611</b>	<b>Telephone #:</b> <b>352-392-6660</b>
<b>Date of Proposed Research:</b>	12/20/2009 ~ 8/31/2010		
<b>Source of Funding (A copy of the grant proposal must be submitted with this protocol if funding is involved):</b>			
<b>Scientific Purpose of the Study:</b>			
This study concentrates on the role of organizational ethics in crisis management. The purpose of this study is to find how people’s perceptions differ in terms of organization’s ethical performances when the organization faces a crisis event.			

<p><b>Describe the Research Methodology in Non-Technical Language:</b> <i>(Explain what will be done with or to the research participant.)</i></p> <p>Web-based experimental research will be used to examine how the level of organizational ethics is associated with crisis responsibility, organizational reputation, and behavioral intention. The experimental design includes the manipulation of three factors: 1) crisis type (rumor vs. transgression), 2) response strategy (denial vs. mortification), and 3) organizational ethics (high vs. low).</p>					
<p><b>Describe Potential Benefits:</b></p> <p>Students participated in the experiment may receive extra credit points (based on instructor's decision).</p>					
<p><b>Describe Potential Risks:</b> <i>(If risk of physical, psychological or economic harm may be involved, describe the steps taken to protect participant.)</i></p> <p>The project should not create any physical, psychological or economic risks. Most of the scales used in the questionnaire are routinely used by communication scholars in their survey research. Further, the researchers cannot track down the participants' identity in any way</p>					
<p><b>Describe How Participant(s) Will Be Recruited:</b></p> <p>Participants will be volunteers who are involved in academic education.</p>					
<p><b>Maximum Number of Participants (to be approached with consent)</b></p>	200	<p><b>Age Range of Participants:</b></p>	18 and older	<p><b>Amount of Compensation/course credit:</b></p>	Depending on instructor's decision
<p><b>Describe the Informed Consent Process.</b> (Attach a Copy of the Informed Consent Document. See <a href="http://irb.ufl.edu/irb02/samples.html">http://irb.ufl.edu/irb02/samples.html</a> for examples of consent.)</p>					
<p><b>(SIGNATURE SECTION)</b></p>					
<p><b>Principal Investigator(s) Signature:</b></p>					<p><b>Date:</b></p>
<p><b>Co-Investigator(s) Signature(s):</b></p>					<p><b>Date:</b></p>
<p><b>Supervisor's Signature (if PI is a student):</b></p>					<p><b>Date:</b></p>
<p><b>Department Chair Signature:</b></p>					<p><b>Date:</b></p>

## **Statement of Informed Consent**

**Protocol Title:** The effects of organizational ethics on responsibility, reputation, and behavioral intention in crisis management.

**Please read this consent document before you decide to participate in this study.**

**Purpose of this study:**

The purpose of this study is to find how people's perceptions differ in terms of organization's ethical performances when the organization faces a crisis event.

**What you will be asked to do in the study:**

You will be asked to answer the questions about the perceptions toward the organization that faces a crisis event.

**Time required:** 15 minutes

**Risks and Benefits:** There are no anticipated risks and no direct benefits to you as a participant in this study, other than extra course credit

**Compensation:** extra credit depending on instructor's decision. If you choose not to participate in this survey, you will be given a time/effort equivalent academic extra credit opportunity.

**Confidentiality and Voluntary participation:**

Please read each question carefully and respond to the questions as thoughtfully and candidly as you can. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. Your identity will be confidential to the extent provided by law. You must be at least 18 years old to participate in the study. There is no penalty for not participating. You do not have to answer any question(s) you do not want to answer.

**Voluntary participation:** Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. There is no penalty for not participating.

**Right to withdraw from the study:**

You have the right to withdraw from the study at anytime without consequence.

**Whom to contact if you have questions about the study:**

Jin Hong Ha, Master student, Weimer Hall, College of Journalism and Mass Communications,  
E-mail: jinhong.ha@ufl.edu

Dr. Mary Ann Ferguson, the supervisor at E-mail: maferguson@jou.ufl.edu

**Whom to contact about your rights as a research participant in the study:**

UFIRB Office, Box 112250, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611-2250, 392-0433.

**Agreement:**

I have read the procedure described above. I voluntarily agree to participate in the procedure and I have received a copy of this description.

Participant's Name (Please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Principal Investigator's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Approved by  
University of Florida  
Institutional Review Board 02  
Protocol # 2009-U-1276  
For Use Through 12/15/2010

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