

CROSS-NATIONAL CONFLICT SHIFTING: AN EXAMINATION OF THE DEEPWATER
HORIZON OIL SPILL

By

SARAH GRAVINA

A DISSERTATION PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS IN MASS COMMUNICATION

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

2011

© 2011 Sarah Gravina

To my parents and grandparents for their constant support, encouragement, and inspiration

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First I must offer my deepest thanks to my adviser, Dr. Juan-Carlos Molleda, because without his patience, guidance, and knowledge, this thesis would have never been completed. I would also like to thank my committee members, Dr. Kathleen Kelly and Dr. Sora Kim. I appreciate their expertise and encouragement throughout this process.

I must thank my family for they have offered me unconditional love and support throughout this long journey. My parents and grandparents have served as a constant source of inspiration to me throughout the years and have instilled within me the desire to achieve and the strength to overcome obstacles. I also appreciate the kindness, love and support offered to me by the Crittenden family over the years.

Finally I must offer gratitude to my friends. I appreciate the support provided by my fellow classmates in the department, specifically Tim Deardourff, Tamekia Massaline, Andreea Savu, Eric Schumacher, and Weiting Tao. They have played a role in shaping my experience in the program as well as in broadening my perspectives on public relations.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | <u>page</u> |
|---|-------------|
| ACKNOWLEDGMENTS..... | 4 |
| LIST OF FIGURES..... | 7 |
| ABSTRACT..... | 8 |
| CHAPTER | |
| 1 INTRODUCTION..... | 10 |
| International Public Relations..... | 10 |
| Cross-National Conflict Shifting Theory..... | 10 |
| Situational Crisis Communication Theory..... | 12 |
| Background..... | 12 |
| Relevance of Study..... | 14 |
| Purpose of Study..... | 14 |
| 2 LITERATURE REVIEW..... | 17 |
| Cross-National Conflict Shifting..... | 17 |
| Application of Propositions to the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill..... | 20 |
| Corporate Social Performance Issue..... | 20 |
| TNC Alerted the Audiences..... | 21 |
| Human Interest Focus..... | 22 |
| Direct Involvement of Transnational Corporation in Crisis..... | 22 |
| Boycottable, Tangible Products..... | 22 |
| Numbers of Actors Involved in Crisis..... | 23 |
| Transnational Corporation Headquarter Location..... | 24 |
| Situational Crisis Communication Theory..... | 25 |
| Corporate Apologia..... | 26 |
| Corporate Impression Management..... | 26 |
| Image Restoration Theory..... | 27 |
| Situational Crisis Communication Theory..... | 28 |
| Research Questions and Hypotheses..... | 31 |
| 3 METHODOLOGY..... | 34 |
| Quantitative Content Analysis of Media Coverage..... | 34 |
| Quantitative Content Analysis on News Releases..... | 36 |
| Coding Sheet Construction..... | 36 |
| Intercoder Reliability..... | 37 |

| | | |
|--------------|--|----|
| 4 | FINDINGS..... | 39 |
| | Case Study--The Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill..... | 39 |
| | Statistical Findings..... | 42 |
| | Hypothesis One..... | 42 |
| | Hypothesis Two..... | 43 |
| | Hypothesis Three..... | 45 |
| | Hypothesis Four..... | 46 |
| | Hypothesis Five..... | 48 |
| | Hypothesis Six..... | 49 |
| | Hypothesis Seven..... | 50 |
| 5 | DISCUSSION..... | 52 |
| | Summary and Interpretation of Findings..... | 52 |
| | Implications for Public Relations Practice..... | 55 |
| | Theoretical Implications..... | 56 |
| | Limitations and Further Research..... | 57 |
| APPENDIX | | |
| A | ARTICLE CODING SHEET..... | 59 |
| B | NEWS RELEASE CODING SHEET..... | 62 |
| | LIST OF REFERENCES..... | 63 |
| | BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH..... | 67 |

LIST OF FIGURES

| <u>Figure</u> | <u>page</u> |
|--|-------------|
| 4-1 Mean plot of word count and news source of article..... | 43 |
| 4-2 Frequency of actor in headlines..... | 44 |
| 4-3 Frequency of actor in lead paragraphs..... | 45 |
| 4-4 Frequency of article focus | 47 |
| 4-5 Frequency of crisis response strategies in media coverage..... | 49 |
| 4-6 Frequency of crisis response strategies in news releases..... | 51 |

Abstract of Dissertation Presented to the Graduate School
of the University of Florida in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Master of Mass Communication

CROSS-NATIONAL CONFLICT SHIFTING: AN EXAMINATION OF THE DEEPWATER
HORIZON OIL SPILL

By

Sarah Gravina

December 2011

Chair: Juan-Carlos Molleda
Major: Mass Communication

This study used the cross-national conflict shifting theory as well as the situational crisis communication theory to analyze the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill. The literature review included a thorough explanation of the cross-national conflict shifting and situational crisis communication theories, describing their foundations and evolution. The research included a case study and quantitative content analysis.

Research questions were answered by a case study. Seven hypotheses were developed based on the literature review. Statistical testing was used to test these hypotheses. Five of the seven hypotheses received full or partial support. Two of the hypotheses received no support.

The findings suggested that news sources in different countries covered a crisis with varying length, frequency and source use. The difference in length, frequency, and source use determined the depth of media coverage by each country. Difference in article foci between the two news sources was present. In this particular case, the crisis response messaging was consistent, but it was determined that the media may not cover the intended corporate response in its entirety.

This study contributed to the growing body of knowledge in global public relations and crisis communication. The study had implications for theory building and international public relations practice.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

International Public Relations

The increasing trend of globalization among various types of organizations has created several opportunities and challenges. The expansion of operations across the globe has had a significant impact on the communicative approaches taken by organizations. Geographic borders no longer provide distinct communication boundaries for globalized organizations. This phenomenon has allowed the flexibility and pace of communications between organizations and their publics to increase. Wang (2005) identified the key players controlling communication across borders as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), governments, and global media.

In order to gain an understanding of the impact that globalization has had on the public relations industry; one must examine the operations of various types of global organizations. The theories of cross-national conflict shifting and situational crisis communication are briefly discussed in Chapter 1 with a more thorough description provided in the literature review. The relevance and purpose of this study is also discussed in Chapter 1.

Cross-National Conflict Shifting Theory

The theory of cross-national conflict shifting was developed to interpret the shift of crises involving the transnational corporations from the country in which the crisis occurs to the country or countries where the transnational corporation is headquartered and operates (Molleda, 2011). This theory provides the opportunity to examine the operations of transnational corporations around the globe and assess the principles of the cross-national conflict shift including: characteristics of the conflict shift, the manner

in which the conflict reaches local stakeholders, and the key publics involved in the conflict (Molleda, 2011).

Molleda and Quinn (2004) developed 10 propositions that serve as the foundation of this theory and through several studies conducted by Wang (2005); Molleda, Connolly-Ahern, and Quinn (2005); Kim and Molleda (2005); Molleda (2011); and Molleda, Bravo, Davila, and Botero (2011) the propositions have been tested and the theory advanced.

The core elements of a cross-national conflict shift, indicated by the original 10 propositions, include: the incident involves a corporate social performance issue, the origination of the conflict, number of involved parties, commercial, tangible and boycottable products, corporation headquarter location, direct involvement of corporation, party that alerts the audience of conflict, and conflict has human interest focus (Molleda, Connolly-Ahern, & Quinn, 2005).

With the influx of crises involving transnational corporations in recent years, the crisis response literature focusing on transnational corporations' responses has grown dramatically from what was initially a dismal body of literature (Taylor, 2000; Wang, 2005; Harlow, Brantley & Harlow, 2011; Kim, Avery, & Lariscy, 2009). Theories from the crisis response literature have been used to complement studies incorporating the cross-national conflict shifting theory (Wang, 2005; Molleda, et al., 2011).

In the study conducted by Wang (2005), the author used the cross-national conflict shifting principles in conjunction with the typology of crisis responses developed by Coombs (2007) to examine the DuPont Teflon crisis. Molleda et al. (2011) conducted a case study and a content analysis to test the cross-national conflict shifting propositions

and determine the crisis response strategies used by the Chiquita Brand in the transnational crisis it faced in Colombia and the United States. In this study, Molleda et al. (2011) discussed the application of the cross-national conflict shifting propositions to the Chiquita Brand case and emphasized the importance of understanding the crisis response strategies used by a transnational corporation to further the understanding of global public relations.

Situational Crisis Communication Theory

The situational crisis communication theory, conceptualized by Coombs (1995) provides an option for determining the crisis responses disseminated by a transnational corporation. The core of the situational crisis communication theory is to connect the crisis type with the appropriate crisis response strategy (Coombs & Holladay, 2003). Coombs (2007) identified four groups of response postures including: denial, diminishment, rebuilding, and bolstering. Within these postures, lie several response strategies that can be used by a transnational corporation when facing a cross-national conflict shift.

The purpose of this study is to examine the Deepwater Horizon oil spill through the combination of the cross-conflict shifting theory and situational crisis communication literature. A case study will be conducted to provide a thorough description of the case within the context of the cross-national conflict shifting theory. A quantitative content analysis will be conducted to test hypotheses concerning the cross-national conflict shifting theory and the situational crisis communication theory.

Background

On April 20, 2010, the British Petroleum (BP) oil rig, Deepwater Horizon operating in the Gulf of Mexico, exploded. The initial explosion killed 11 workers, injured 17, and

commenced one of the largest environmental crises in history. Throughout the summer of 2010, large amounts of oil leaked from the damaged well into the Gulf while workers attempted to mend the leak with several failed attempts, including several types of containment domes as well as a method known as a top kill. According to the Deepwater Horizon Incident Joint Information Center (2010), more than five million barrels of oil left the damaged well and entered the Gulf throughout the summer months.

During the crisis, BP was criticized for its crisis response and the criticisms flooded the news media in several countries. The news coverage varied in tone and content across the globe. The attribution of blame for the crisis was placed not only on the organization as a whole but also on several key actors, including the CEO at the time, Tony Hayward.

Throughout the summer of 2010, the shift of the crisis from the United States to the United Kingdom became apparent, as the United States was no longer the only country feeling the effects from the incident. Although the direct physical effects from the crisis, specifically damage to the environment and several industries, influenced the United States, issues began to arise in the United Kingdom and other world locations where BP has significant operations and business interests.

Not only was the transnational corporation facing financial and reputational consequences in both countries, but also the social influence in the United States began to specially affect the United Kingdom. Protesting in the United States began to not only attack the organization, but also contained anti-British sentiment (Leonard, 2010). The increase in opposition toward the British concerned U.K. government officials. Their

concern centered on the potential damage that could be done to the U.K. economy if the negative focus toward BP continued (Reuben, 2010).

Relevance of Study

This study holds relevance particularly due to the timely nature of the crisis and the breadth of the crisis' effects. Few studies have been done on the Deepwater Horizon spill to date and it is a crisis that will have implications for public relations practitioners and educators for a long while. Grant (2010) described the presence that this crisis will have in the field of public relations, "For better or worse, BP will be the topic of crisis communications and case studies in public relations textbooks for years to come" (¶ 13).

Purpose of Study

The purpose of the study is to incorporate the cross-national conflict shifting literature along with research from the crisis communication perspective to examine the transnational crisis faced by BP, known as the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. As previously mentioned, the BP crisis originated in the United States as primarily an environmental and financial crisis involving a corporate social performance issue. Growing dissatisfaction with the corporation allowed the conflict to shift to the United Kingdom as more of a financial, political, and reputational crisis.

The case study will illustrate the application of the original cross-national conflict shifting propositions to the BP case. This case study will also explain other components of the cross-national conflict shifting theory in relation to the case including the identification of key actors involved in the crisis.

A quantitative content analysis will be conducted to examine three aspects of the BP crisis including: components of the cross-national conflict shifting theory, the crisis

response disseminated by the TNC in news releases, and the crisis response strategies covered by newswire agencies in the countries selected for study. The countries selected for study include the United States, the host country of the corporation and the location in which the crisis originated, as well as the United Kingdom, the headquarters of the transnational corporation.

The components of the cross-national conflict shifting theory that will be analyzed in the content analysis include the actors identified in the headlines and lead paragraphs of the print media coverage, the key terms used in the headline and lead paragraph of the coverage, and the amount of space devoted to articles. The crisis responses disseminated BP and covered in the media will be determined based on the typology conceptualized by Coombs (1995) within the situational crisis communication theory.

Through the analysis of the BP case, the goal of this study is to further the understanding of global public relations and provide additional guidance to transnational corporations facing conflicts or crises in several world locations. Referring to the research on cross-national conflict shifts and crisis response, “[i]n an interconnected world, this knowledge is essential for TNOs to learn how to face cross national conflict shifts and how to serve their multiple publics all around the world” (Molleda et al., 2011, p. 1). In this quote, “TNO” refers to the transnational corporation.

Following Chapter 1, the literature review will provide a thorough description of the studies conducted by researchers concerning the cross-national conflict shifting and situational crisis communication theories. Research questions and hypotheses will also be presented in the Chapter 2. Chapter 3 will follow the literature review and will

describe the two methodologies selected for study: case study and quantitative content analysis.

Chapter 4 will present a case study of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill and statistical findings used to test the hypotheses. Chapter 5 of the thesis will discuss and interpret the findings. In Chapter 5, limitations of the study and suggestions for further research will also be made.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

The following literature review focuses on two main theories that will guide this study (a) cross-national conflict shifting and (b) situational crisis communication theory. The literature review on cross-national conflict shifting will include the conceptualization of the theory, the propositions that guide it, and the prior studies that have been conducted to examine it.

The literature reviewed on situational crisis communication theory centers on the theories that were utilized to develop the specific theory including corporate apologia, corporate impression management, and image repair theory. The discussion on situational crisis communication theory focuses on the core of theory lying in attribution theory, the typology of crisis responses, and the studies conducted that contributed to the evolution of the theory.

Cross-National Conflict Shifting

The cross-national conflict shifting theory, conceptualized by Molleda and Connolly-Ahern (2002), was first introduced at the 2002 Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication annual conference in Miami, Fla. The authors derived research from the international management perspective, specifically from German authors Welge, Holtbrugge, and Berg, to serve as the foundation for the theory. Molleda (2011) defined the process of a cross-national conflict shift:

Cross-national conflict shifting is the transfer of incidents or crises faced by a transnational corporation (TNC) from the country where the situation originates to another or multiple world countries where the TNC is headquartered or executes major operations. (p. 50)

The study conducted by Wang (2005) demonstrated a reverse cross-national conflict shift in that the conflict occurred in the home country of the corporation and transferred

to the host country. The home country of a corporation is the country in which the organization is headquartered and/or holds a main office; while the host country or countries serve as the multiple locations in which the organization executes operations on a smaller scale (Molleda, 2011).

The study conducted by Taylor (2000) revealed the effect of culture on the involving the Coca-Cola crisis that originated in Belgium. The author used the cultural dimensions outlined by Hofstede (2001) to illustrate the culture's involvement in publics' response to the crisis that spread across Europe. Molleda (2011) identified the study conducted by Taylor (2000) as a key part of the initial conceptualization of the cross-national conflict shifting theory. The study produced by Taylor (2000) served as a central role in the theory development due to its emphasis on the examination of communication processes across borders (Molleda, 2011).

To advance the development of the cross-national shifting theory Molleda and Quinn (2004) identified three main characteristics of the cross-national shift process: the characteristics of the issue, the ways a national conflict reaches transnational audiences, and the parties involved or affected by the conflict. These characteristics led to the development of 10 initial propositions by Molleda and Quinn (2004) and reconstructed by Molleda (2010). Seven of the original 10 propositions will be applied to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill later in this section to serve as justification for using the cross-national conflict shifting theory to guide this study.

Molleda, Connolly-Ahern, and Quinn (2005) advanced the research on the cross-national conflict shifting theory through a study centered on the examination of media coverage regarding the bribery scandal in Lesotho, Africa. The study supported the

initial 10 propositions of the cross-national conflict shift. The study found that governmental sources were prominent in news coverage and a large portion of the media coverage originated from the home country due to the local impact of the conflict. In this particular study, the home country was Canada and the host location was Africa.

Kim and Molleda (2005) developed three additional propositions to incorporate into the cross-national conflict shifting theory to reflect the study's focus on cross-national conflict shifting and crisis management theory. Kim and Molleda (2005) utilized the cross-national conflict shifting theory and the crisis communication response typology conceptualized by Coombs (2007) to analyze Halliburton's response to the Nigerian government's bribery case. These additional propositions will not be used in this study but, are important points in the discussion of the evolution of the cross-national conflict shifting theory.

As previously mentioned, the study conducted by Wang (2005) demonstrated a reversed cross-national conflict shift occurrence. Wang (2005) incorporated theories in crisis management along with the cross-national conflict shifting theory to analyze the DuPont Teflon crisis, the corporations' response and the resulting media coverage. The findings suggested that when a reverse cross-national conflict shift case is present it can be interpreted through three angles including: crisis management performance, level of media interest on the issues, and the social and cultural context of the involved country.

Lim and Molleda (2009) deviated from using the typical method of studying the cross-national conflict shifting propositions, content analysis, by applying an experimental research method to examine the attitude and behavior of host customers

when influenced by the cross-national conflict shift. Lim and Molleda (2009) found that a crisis from a transnational corporation would result in the formation of negative attitudes and behaviors when audience segments were exposed to media coverage resulting from the cross-national conflict shift. The results of the study conducted by Lim and Molleda (2009) also demonstrated the importance of the implementation of appropriate crisis response strategies by a transnational corporation in order to maintain a favorable reputation among key publics.

Molleda and Laskin (2010) identified the connection between the literature on the coordination and control of a transnational corporation and a cross-national conflict shift. The authors stated, "The strategies employed by a transnational organization to deal with the cross-national conflict shifts depend on and are largely determined by the coordination and control structure of the TNO," (Molleda & Laskin, 2010, p. 337). The connection between these two research areas highlights the importance of understanding transnational processes.

Application of Propositions to the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill

To serve as the justification of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill as a cross-national conflict shift as well the use of the theory to guide this study, seven of the original 10 propositions of the cross-national conflict shift theory are applied to the specific case. Three propositions have been excluded due to irrelevance to the case.

Corporate Social Performance Issue

Molleda (2010) highlighted the issue of corporate social performance as being a significant point in a cross-national conflict shift. Molleda and Quinn (2004) further illustrated that point, "National conflicts that attract the attention of a wide array of competing voices appear to be related to labor, the environment, human rights,

employee treatment and workplace safety issues, customer satisfaction, and product quality,” (p. 5).

The Deepwater Horizon oil spill is considered to be one of the worst environmental disasters in history. According to the Deepwater Horizon Incident Joint Information Center (2010), more than 6,000 birds, 600 turtles, and 100 mammals were found deceased near the oil spill location. The disaster had considerable influence on the fishing and restaurant industries with nearly 88,522 square miles of fisheries closed in the Gulf of Mexico at the peak of the spill (“Last fisheries,” 2010). The preventable crisis nature and the extensive damage it has caused to the environment, wildlife, related industries, and economy identifies it as a significant corporate social performance issue.

TNC Alerted the Audiences

The organizational actors involved in the cross-national conflict shift alerted the media and other audience segments regarding the initial explosion of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill prior to the onset of media coverage. Transocean, owner of the Deepwater Horizon oilrig, issued the first news release within 24 hours of the trigger event (Transocean, 2010). British Petroleum then followed suit with a news release confirming the validity of the initial statement by Transocean (British Petroleum, 2010).

Molleda (2011) identified one of the advantages of the transnational corporation being the first to issue an announcement as being a proactive measure in protecting the organization’s reputation. Unfortunately in this case, the organization at the focus of the media coverage was BP and they did little to alert audience segments beyond confirming the announcement of Transocean’s statement. Perhaps a more proactive approach from BP would have transformed the organization’s response from the onset of the crisis.

Human Interest Focus

Due to the enormity of the consequences of the oil spill and the industries affected, a large portion of the attention on the crisis encompassed the human interest angle. The human interest focus of a cross-national conflict shifting garners more attention from audience segments (Molleda & Quinn, 2004). Protestors across the United States brought negative attention to the response efforts of BP. Employees in several industries including tourism and fishing lost their jobs and failed to rebuild their organizations. The estimated cost to the fishing industry, calculated in September 2010, was estimated to be around \$2 billion (Jarvis, 2010).

Direct Involvement of Transnational Corporation in Crisis

As operators of the Deepwater Horizon oilrig, BP was directly involved in and partially to blame for the oil spill crisis. The organization not only faced a criminal investigation from the United States government but also became the focus of several lawsuits from those parties affected by the spill. In August 2010, BP reported that claims alone had cost the organization \$400 million (British Petroleum, 2010).

Boycottable, Tangible Products

The boycottable characteristic of the products produced by BP allowed for more intensity when it came to protests and boycotting. Products that are high profile and originate from an industry considered controversial will contribute to a shift in conflict (Molleda & Quinn, 2004). As previously mentioned, protests occurred throughout the United States during the months following the spill. The protests not only had negative implications for the potential economic revenue generated by BP in the United States, but also for the oil company in the United Kingdom (Leonard, 2010).

Numbers of Actors Involved in Crisis

The actors involved in the crisis are important considerations when discussing a cross-national conflict shift because it can determine the direction of the crisis shift, the communication methods needed from the transnational corporation, and predict the sources used in the media coverage (Molleda & Quinn, 2004). According to Molleda and Quinn (2004), “[a] greater number of involved parties will characterize a cross-national conflict shift in which a developed nations’ transnational corporation is the principal participant in the crisis” (p. 5). At the base level of this crisis there were three organizations involved, BP, Transocean, and Halliburton.

As previously mentioned, BP was the operator of the Deepwater Horizon oilrig leasing it from Transocean. Halliburton’s involvement in the crisis was defined by their responsibility in cementing the oilrig in place. According to the National Commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and Offshore Drilling (2011), Halliburton was to blame for using a cement mixture to secure the oilrig that was considered unstable and had failed Halliburton’s laboratory tests.

Once the trigger event occurred, a variety of actors became involved in the crisis. From a governmental perspective, the United States government was central to the investigation into the spill. Politicians from United Kingdom were also highly visible and involved in the aftermath of the spill including British Prime Minister David Cameron, London mayor Boris Johnson, and former Trade Minister Lord Norman Tebbit, (Assinder, 2010; “Experts double,” 2010).

Several conservationist groups were involved in the cleanup of the spill as well as in the public response to the crisis including the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration, Sierra Club, among many others. Media agencies worldwide, including

BBC, Reuters, Associated Press, and several others were highly involved in the crisis and generated an enormous amount of coverage regarding all facets of the crisis. The media covered the key actors in the crisis including BP, the governments of the countries involved and the response from those publics affected by the spill. Several prominent celebrities including film director James Cameron and actor Kevin Costner contributed to the recovery efforts and represented another audience segment generating public response (Gabbatt, 2010; Hinckley, 2010).

Transnational Corporation Headquarter Location

According to Molleda (2010), when the transnational corporation in the cross-national conflict shift is headquartered in a developed nation the organization is more likely to garner attention from several audience segments including global media, NGOs, and national governments. British Petroleum, as the transnational corporation that was most highly involved in the crisis, is headquartered in the United Kingdom and produced a crisis in the host country of the organization. The home country of a transnational corporation is the locations of its headquarters; the host country is a country in which the corporation holds operations.

With both the United States and United Kingdom being home to prominent international newswire agencies, Associated Press and Reuters respectively, it was clear that the attention from media alone would be considerable. The active nature of conservationist groups as well as governmental figures in both countries allowed for the global media coverage to increase throughout the months following the trigger event.

With the application of the majority of the cross-national conflict shifting's propositions to the Deepwater Horizon crisis, it is clear that this case is characterized as

a cross-national conflict shift. This justification establishes relevance for this study and serves as the reasoning for selecting this theory to guide the study.

Situational Crisis Communication Theory

This section of the literature review focuses on the research conducted on the topic of crisis response. This portion of the review also holds relevance to the topic of study and is a significant part of this study. The focus of this section centers on the development and evolution of situational crisis communication theory, conceptualized by Coombs (1995).

The examination of the research on this theory must first begin with the identification of its origin and foundation. Coombs (2007) defined the term crisis as, “The perception of an unpredictable event that threatens important expectancies of stakeholders and can seriously impact an organization’s performance and generate negative outcomes” (p. 2). According to Coombs (2007), the foundation of situational crisis communication theory lies within the theories of corporation apologia, corporate impression management, and image restoration. Corporate apologia and corporate impression management will be briefly discussed later in Chapter 2, with a more thorough description regarding image restoration theory and its connection to situational crisis communication theory following.

Situational crisis communication theory is linked to attribution theory, its derivation from social psychology, in that the attribution of responsibility to the organization involved in the crisis is the core of situational crisis communication theory. Coombs (1995) identified three dimensions of attribution that publics assess before attributing responsibility to an organization in a crisis including: locus, stability, and controllability. The locus of the crisis reflects the location of the cause of the crisis either upon the

actor involved or the situation itself. The stability of the crisis acknowledges the previous history of the organization and whether a crisis has happened prior to the current one. The controllability of the crisis refers to whether the cause of the crisis is controllable or not (Coombs & Holladay, 2003).

Corporate Apologia

Hearit (1996) defined the term apology as “[n]ot an apology (although it may contain one), but a defense that seeks to present a compelling, counter description of organizational actions” (p. 234). This response is often used when an organization is facing some sort of ethical offense during a crisis. Several authors have contributed to the research on apologia, defined their stances and have expanded its core concepts (Benoit, 1997; Hearit, 1999). Three stances of corporate apologia have been developed and these stances have contributed to the development of the response typology in situational crisis communication theory (Hearit & Brown, 2004).

Corporate Impression Management

Corporate impression management is another theory that served as the foundation for situational crisis communication theory. Conceptualized by Allen and Caillouet (1994), this theory focused on the connection between crises and legitimacy and incorporated the concept of perception in managing impressions of an organization. Allen and Caillouet identified six impression management strategies to guide the process of corporate impression management including: excuse, justification, ingratiation, intimidation, denouncement, and factual distortion. Several of these strategies have been incorporated in the response typology of situational crisis communication theory, including excuse, justification, and ingratiation.

Image Restoration Theory

The central concept of image restoration theory, conceptualized by Benoit (1997), is perception. Perception is considered more important than reality and this emphasis is continued by Coombs (2007) in situational crisis communication theory. Benoit (1997) identified five general response strategies for image restoration with each including several response types that complement them. Similarities can be drawn between the response strategies in image restoration theory and the response postures in situational crisis communication theory.

Benoit and Brinson (1999) conducted a study on the Queen of England's use of image repair strategies during her speech following the death of Princess Diana. The Queen used four image repair strategies throughout the speech including: denial, bolstering, defeasibility, and transcendence (Benoit & Brinson, 1999).

Benoit and Henson (2009) analyzed the image repair discourse strategies used by President Bush during a speech in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. The authors found that the speech was considered ineffective due to the improper or minimal use of the image repair strategies (Benoit & Henson, 2009).

One of the more recent studies on image repair theory, conducted by Harlow, Brantley and Harlow (2011), analyzed the image repair strategies used during the initial aftermath of the BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill. The findings of the study revealed that the organization used the image repair strategies of compensation and corrective action most frequently in the news releases disseminated. The authors identified that one of the main limitations of the study that not all of the news releases fit under the image restoration theory. This study provides justification for the use of the situational crisis

communication theory for the analysis of the news releases from the crisis as well as the response strategies covered in the media.

Situational Crisis Communication Theory

As previously mentioned, attribution theory lies at the core of situational crisis communication theory and provides the foundation for the assessment of the perceived responsibility of the organization in the crisis. Once the assessment of perceived responsibility and potential threat to the organization's reputation is completed, situational crisis communication theory then prescribes response strategies based on that potential reputational threat (Coombs, 2007).

The main objective of situational crisis communication theory is to connect the crisis type with the appropriate crisis response strategy. The bridge that connects crisis type with crisis response is the amount of responsibility the publics assign to the organization facing the crisis (Coombs & Holladay, 2003). Coombs (2007) identified three clusters that crisis types are grouped within including: victim cluster, accidental cluster, and the preventable or intentional cluster. Each cluster contains varying degrees of organizational responsibility.

To connect with the various crisis types, Coombs (2007) identified four groups of response postures including: denial, diminishment, rebuilding, and bolstering. These four groups of responses seek to reduce the attributions associated with organizational responsibility and to reduce the negative feeling generated by those attributions (Coombs & Holladay, 2003).

The denial category of response intends to completely separate the organization from the crisis and resulting blame. The strategies included in the denial posture are attack the accuser, denial, and scapegoating (Coombs, 2007). According to Coombs

(2007), the attack the accuser strategy seeks to “confront the person or group that claims the crisis exist” (p. 140). The denial strategy simply denies that a crisis exists. The scapegoating strategy evades responsibility of the crisis by placing on the blame on an external party (Coombs, 2007).

The diminishment group of strategies seeks to reduce attribution of blame to the organization. Excusing and justification are the communicative strategies including in the diminishment posture (Coombs, 2007). The main objective of the excusing strategy is to diminish the perceived attribution of organizational responsibility. The purpose of the justification strategy is to minimize the perceived damage of the crisis (Coombs, 2007).

The rebuilding and bolstering postures focus on improving the organization’s reputation and its relationship with stakeholders (Coombs, 2007). The response strategies included in this posture are compensation and apology. Compensation strategy simply offers some form of compensation to the victims of the crisis. The apology strategy forces the organization to publicly take responsibility for the crisis and ask forgiveness (Coombs, 2007).

Reminding, ingratiation, and victimage are the response strategies included in the bolstering posture. The reminding strategy, sometimes referred to as bolstering (Kim & Liu, in press), promotes the good deeds that the organization has done in the past. The ingratiation strategy compliments the involved publics of the organization (Coombs, 2007). The utilization of the victimage strategy allows the organization to take the role of victim in the crisis (Coombs, 2007).

Since the conceptualization of situational crisis communication theory, several authors have conducted studies to analyze the original response typology and expand on it (Jeong, 2009; Kim & Liu, in press). Jeong (2009) conducted a study on publics' responses to an oil spill in South Korea using situational crisis communication theory. The results of the study revealed that when past poor management history was present, people tended to have higher internal attributions, or more intense feelings toward the actors involved in the crisis rather than the organization as a whole (Jeong, 2009). The study provides important implications for practice because not only does it demonstrate the type of information that elicits negative attitudes from stakeholders but it provides relevant research for this study due to the similarities in case type.

Kim and Liu (in press) conducted a study on organizations' responses to the H1N1 influenza pandemic which allowed for expansion of the original response strategies in situational crisis communication theory. The authors' findings suggested that contrary to the recommendations made by Coombs (2007), when there is little attribution to the organization facing a crisis the bolstering posture can be used alone with supplementation from other postures (Kim & Liu, in press).

The authors identified two response strategies used by organizations during the pandemic crisis that were not previously a part of the situational crisis communication theory. These response strategies are enhancing and transferring. The enhancing strategy focuses on the good deeds an organization is currently doing (Kim & Liu, in press). It is distinguished from Coombs' reminding strategy because the enhancing strategy looks only at the present. The transferring strategy is used when organizations

incorporate third party support in hopes of transferring the credibility of the third party on to the organization facing the crisis (Kim & Liu, in press).

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The goals of this study include: advancing the cross-national conflict shifting theory through the examination of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill crisis, identifying the crisis response strategies covered in the media, and the crisis response strategies disseminated by British Petroleum in news releases. Based on the review of literature above and borrowed from the hypothesis development by Molleda et al. (2011), the following research questions and hypotheses have been developed to guide this study. An explanation for hypotheses will be provided to further clarify its development.

RQ1: What were the main events following the initial trigger event of the explosion that characterized this crisis as a cross-national conflict shift?

RQ2: Who were the actors/publics involved in the cross-national conflict shift and what were their roles in the crisis?

These research questions will guide the case study. Seven hypotheses will be tested through a quantitative content analysis of the news coverage produced by the Associated Press and Reuters as well as of the news releases disseminated by British Petroleum.

H1: The international newswire agency from the host country of the conflict (the Associated Press) will produce a great number of stories and publish stories in greater length regarding the crisis.

Initially, Molleda et al., (2005) found that a cross-national conflict shift is more frequently reported by the home country involved in a conflict because of the impact that the crisis has on that location. Contrary to this finding, Molleda et al. (2011) found that

due to the proximity of the crisis and the significant effects it had on the host country, the host country produced more stories on the crisis. Based on this finding, hypothesis one was developed.

H2: The headline and lead paragraphs of the news coverage will feature corporate and government responses most frequently in the cross-national conflict shift.

Molleda et al. (2005) found that government officials and transnational corporation's spokespeople were the most used sources in a cross-national conflict shifting. The study conducted by Molleda (2011) confirmed this finding revealing that the international newswire agencies reporting on the Mattel crisis favored corporate and governmental responses.

H3: Associations between countries of origin and new sources cited will be significant which may indicate that the international newswire agencies analyzed favor different voices in coverage.

Molleda et al. (2011) found that there was a significant difference in the sources cited by the Colombian media versus the United States media. The host country (Colombia) favored governmental sources, while the home country (United States) favored corporate sources.

H4: International newswire agencies analyzed (the Associated Press and Reuters) will make different emphasis on story focus (financial, legal, corporation accusation, recovery, consumer impact, and government).

In the examination of the DuPont Teflon crisis within the context of the cross-national conflict shifting theory, Wang (2005) found that story focus differed between the media coverage in China versus the United States. Molleda (2011) found that in the

Mattel crisis, international newswire agencies highlighted particular aspects of the cross-national conflict shift.

H5: Compensation and apology will be the crisis response strategies most frequently covered in the media coverage.

H6: Association between news sources and crisis response strategies will be significant which may indicate that news sources from different countries favor different types of corporate response.

H7: Compensation and enhancing will be the crisis response strategies most frequently used in the corporate response from BP.

As previously mentioned, based on the crisis types provided by Coombs (2007), the Deepwater Horizon oil spill is identified as a preventable crisis. For this crisis type, the prescribed response strategies include: compensation and apology (Coombs, 2007). As a supplementary response, the author recommends strategies from the bolstering posture to be used including: reminding, victimage, and ingratiation. Enhancing is an additional strategy identified by Kim & Liu (in press), which can be included in the bolstering posture.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

This study includes a qualitative case study of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, a quantitative content analysis of the news coverage generated by the international newswire agencies in the home and host country of the crisis, and a quantitative content analysis of the news releases disseminated by British Petroleum during the crisis. The case study methodology was selected to provide a thorough description of the crisis as well as to answer research questions regarding the case within the context of the cross-national conflict shifting theory. According to Wimmer and Dominick (2006), “[c]ase studies are conducted when a researcher needs to understand or explain a phenomenon” (p. 136).

Quantitative Content Analysis of Media Coverage

To test the first six hypotheses a quantitative content analysis is performed on the media coverage following the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the United Kingdom and the United States. The content analysis methodology was selected to describe the content of the media coverage. The content analysis methodology is defined by Riffe, Lacy, and Fico (2005) as:

Quantitative content analysis is the systematic and replicable examination of symbols of communication, which have been assigned numeric values according to valid measurement rules and analysis of relationships involving those values using statistical methods, to describe the communication draw inferences about its meaning, or infer from communication to its context, both of production and consumption. (p. 25)

Due to the global scope of the crisis, international newswire agencies were selected as the outlets that coverage would be obtained from. Based on the countries involved in the conflict, the international newswire agencies selected were the Associated Press and Reuters. These particular agencies were selected based on the justification that the

Associated Press is headquartered in the United States and Reuters in the United Kingdom, allowing representation from each country involved in the conflict.

The Lexis-Nexis and Factiva databases were used to collect stories from each newswire agency. On both databases the search terms used were “BP” and “oil spill”. The time frame used in both searches was from April 20, 2010 to October 1, 2010. This time frame was selected based on the first date marking the trigger event of the crisis, the initial rig explosion. The last date marked the significant organization structural change in the CEO position with the resignation of Tony Hayward and the ascension of Bob Dudley.

Additional criterion for selecting the sample involved tagging the latest edition of each article as well as excluding those that were deemed irrelevant. An example of an article that was excluded based on irrelevancy focused on British Petroleum’s involvement in the Lockerbie controversy. Following the final exclusions, the search from both the Associated Press and Reuters resulted in a sample of 123 articles. The sample from the Associated Press accounted for 75 articles, while there were 48 articles from Reuters.

The statistical procedures that were used to test the first six hypotheses include descriptive statistic methods: frequency, one-way ANOVA, cross-tabulations, and chi square tests. The one-way ANOVA test is used to test the relationship between variables measured at the nominal and ratio levels. An example of that specific type of relationship as it applies to this study is the relationship between the word count of article and the news source. Cross-tabulation methods can be used to examine the relationship between variables measured at the nominal level. Examples of that type of

relationship within the context of this study are the relationship between news source and sources cited in headline.

Quantitative Content Analysis on News Releases

To test the final hypothesis, a quantitative content analysis was performed on the news releases disseminated by British Petroleum. This content analysis focused on crisis response strategies used by British Petroleum.

The news releases were obtained from the British Petroleum press website and were filtered through the selection of the themes “Gulf of Mexico response” as well as the year “2010.” The theme selections were provided by British Petroleum. The news releases were further filtered through the time frame of April 21, 2010 to October 1, 2010. This time frame coincided with the time frame in the media coverage sampling and was selected for the same reasons. The sampling process resulted in a total of 80 news releases collected for analysis.

Coding Sheet Construction

The coding sheet was constructed to include the variables selected for study based on the hypotheses developed. The unit of analysis for each news story included the headline, the lead paragraph, and the source in headline, and the sources in the lead paragraphs. Overall, the coding sheet included nine variables: date published, length (word count), country of origin, international newswire agency, focus of story, type of source cited in headline, type of source cited in lead paragraph, type of corporate response in story, and the type of corporate response in news releases. The variables selected for the coding sheet were based on the hypotheses developed and the literature review.

The story focus was defined by six coding options including: financial, legal, British Petroleum accusation, recovery, consumer impact, and government involvement. These options were coded through a quantification system of numbers one to seven, with each number identifying a certain type of focus. The coding options for sources cited in both the headline and lead paragraph included: transnational corporation (BP), U.S. government, U.S government official, U.K. government, U.K. government official, Non-governmental organization (NGO), industry member, citizen, investor, and expert. The coding decisions on sources cited were based on values of “0” meaning “no” and “1” meaning “yes”.

For the type of corporate response, the typology of crisis response strategies in situational crisis communication theory, defined by Coombs (2007), was used. The coding options included: attack the accuser, denial, scapegoating, excusing, justification, compensation, apology, reminding, enhancing, ingratiation, victimage, and transferring. These coding decisions were made based on values of “0” meaning “no” and “1” meaning “yes”.

Intercoder Reliability

Intercoder reliability was conducted to test the internal validity of the coding sheet constructed for this study. The intercoder reliability tests were divided into two sections, a reliability test was done on the media coverage and separate one completed for the news releases. Ten percent of the news articles (N = 12) were randomly selected for the reliability test. The reliability sample was coded independently by two coders, the author and a public relations professional.

To calculate the reliability coefficient, the formula conceptualized by Holsti (1969) was used. The formula is $2M$ divided by $N1+N2$ with M equivalent to the number of

coding decisions agreed upon by the two coders and $N1+N2$ accounting for the total number of coding decisions made. Based on this formula, the reliability coefficient was 0.94 with 438 coding decisions in agreement out of 468 total decisions. According to Wimmer and Dominick (2006), “most published content analyses typically report a minimum reliability coefficient of about 90% or above when using Holsti’s formula,” (p. 169). Based on this assumption, the coefficient of 0.94 is a suitable indicator of the reliability of this test and allows the research to move forward.

To conduct the reliability test on the news releases, 10 % of the news releases were collected for testing ($N = 8$). This reliability sample was independently coded by the same two coders. The formula conceptualized by Holsti (1969) was again used to test this sample’s reliability. Based on that formula, there were 97 coding decisions agreed upon out of a total of 104 coding decisions, resulting in a reliability coefficient of 0.93. This coefficient was within the appropriate range outlined by Wimmer and Dominick (2006) and serves as a suitable indicator of reliability for this test.

CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS

The case of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill is presented to provide a description of the main events and actors of the transnational crisis as they relate to the research questions developed. This case study places the crisis in context of the cross-national conflict shifting theory. Following the case study, the statistical findings are presented. News articles collected for the content analysis were used for the case study, as well as additional stories from *The Guardian*, *The Telegraph*, *BBC News*, and *Bloomberg Businessweek*.

Case Study--The Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill

On April 20, 2010, the oilrig Deepwater Horizon, licensed by BP, exploded killing 11 employees and injuring 17. In the days that followed, the rig began to sink into the Gulf of Mexico, continuing to spew oil into the ocean, resulting in one of the worst environmental disasters on record. On April 30, BP CEO Tony Hayward acknowledged the responsibility of the organization in the crisis and promised compensation to those affected (Cutler, 2010)

In the first few weeks of May 2010, the enormity of the consequences created by the spill began to be realized. The first major developments included the Coast Guard announcement that oil would reach the shores of the Gulf of Mexico and the fishing industry began to be affected by the initial restrictions imposed on fishing areas in the Gulf ("BP oil," 2010). The efforts to mitigate the leak during this month included several types of containment domes as well as a method known as a top kill. All strategies failed to control the oil leaking into the ocean.

The month of May 2010 not only included the initial attempts to reduce the damage from the oil spill, but also was the first month in which CEO Tony Hayward made several responses regarding the organization and its involvement in the spill. On May 6, 2010, Hayward made a statement that attempted to shift the blame of the crisis from BP to Transocean, the owner of the rig. Later in May 2010, Hayward made two infamous statements sparking the public relations controversy that surrounded the CEO and the organization throughout the summer. The statements included one comment regarding the small size of the spill in comparison to the size of the Gulf of Mexico, and in the second Hayward expressed his desire to have “his life back” (Webb, 2010, ¶ 11).

The first day of June 2010, marked the commencement of a criminal investigation into the spill conducted by the U.S. government. On June 3, 2010, BP launched an advertising campaign showcasing the organization’s efforts in the recovery of the spill and featuring CEO Hayward prominently. As part of the continuing effort to reduce the effects of the spill, another containment cap was placed on the well but failed. On June, 8, 2010, the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration made its first confirmation of undersea oil coming from the damaged well. Hayward vehemently denied the presence of plumes coming from the well (Baltimore, 2010).

The month of June 2010 witnessed more public relations stumbles by the CEO. In Hayward’s first appearance in front of Congress he refused to answer questions regarding the spill and was accused of “stonewalling” (Efstathiou & Plungis, 2010). Soon after the CEO’s testimony in front of Congress, Hayward was photographed attending a yacht race on the Isle of Wight. His attendance at the race furthered the outrage against him.

During June 2010, the first signs of the conflict shift became evident in media coverage. Protests in the United States over the spill began to not only include the organization, but also expressed anti-British sentiments and suggested boycotts of BP's products. "The demonstrations may be primarily anti-corporate and anti-oil but occasionally nationality of the corporation slips out," Leonard said (2010, ¶ 3). Because of the significant involvement of government in the crisis, the potential conflict shift to the United Kingdom had serious implications. "With UK industry increasingly uneasy at what they feel are attempts to label Britain as the villain, the blame game risks turning into a diplomatic row," Hotten stated (2010, ¶ 2).

July 2010 proved to be a significant month during the aftermath of the spill for several reasons. The leaking containment cap was removed and replaced and on July 15, 2010, the oil flow was stopped completely for the first time since the initial explosion. On July 27, 2010, BP announced the resignation of CEO Tony Hayward and the appointment of his successor, U.S. Bob Dudley.

In the fall and winter months of 2010, several significant steps were made in efforts to permanently stop the oil flow and minimize the damage created by the spill. BP issued a report in September 2010 claiming a portion of the responsibility in the spill while also identifying the organizations that shared the remaining portion of blame. On September 19, 2010, the damaged well was declared dead. The company saw a shift in leadership on October 1, 2010, when Bob Dudley officially took over as CEO.

In November 2010, the former CEO Hayward admitted that the crisis response from BP was problematic during the spill: "When the crisis hit, BP was forced to make up its oil spill disaster response as it went along..." (as cited in Macalister, 2010, ¶ 2).

Although the repercussions of the oil spill will be felt for years to come, the initial crisis finally came to an end in January 2011 when the White House oil commission announced that the three actors to blame for the spill were BP, Transocean, and Halliburton.

Statistical Findings

A quantitative content analysis was conducted to test the following hypotheses. The sample included articles from two international newswire agencies, the Associated Press and Reuters. The total sample size was 123 articles. The Associated Press published 75 articles and Reuters published 48 articles. The following findings presented by each hypothesis tested.

Hypothesis One

It was predicted that the international newswire agency from the host country of the cross-national conflict shift, the Associated Press, would produce a greater number of stories and produce stories greater in length based on word count. This hypothesis was partially supported. The Associated Press published more stories regarding the crisis (N = 75) than Reuters (N = 48).

However, based on the word count, the articles published by Reuters were longer than those published by the Associated Press. The mean word count of articles produced by Reuters (M = 542.98, SD = 239.62) was larger than that of the Associated Press (M = 186.89, SD = 137.09). The difference in mean length was statistically significant (df = 1, F = 109.80, p = .000). The crisis was given more coverage, based on number of stories, in the host country of the conflict, the United States. The crisis was given more coverage, based on word length of stories, in the home country of the conflict, the United Kingdom. Figure 4-1 illustrates the difference in mean plots.

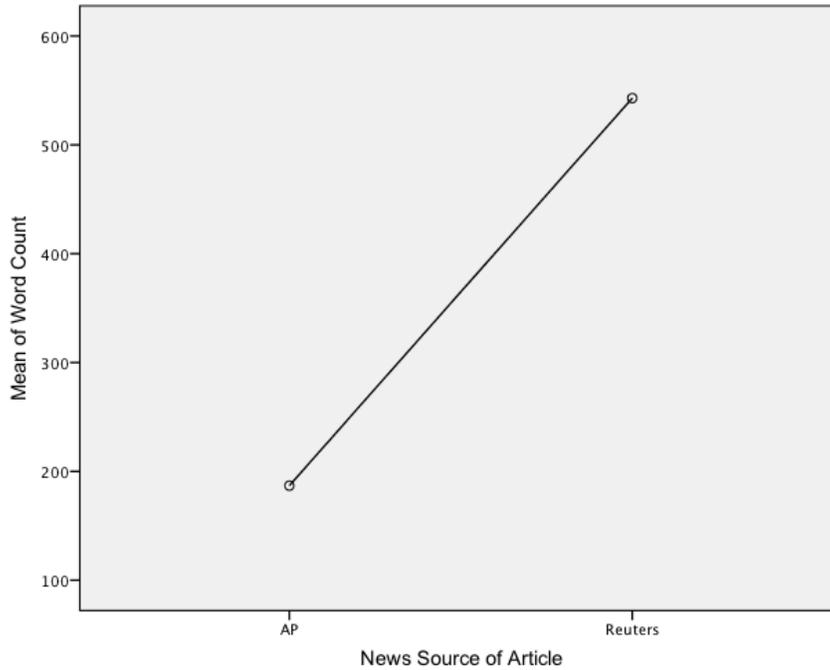


Figure 4-1. Mean plot of word count and news source of article

Hypothesis Two

It was predicted that the headline and lead paragraphs of the media coverage would feature corporate and government actors most frequently in the crisis. This hypothesis was supported. In the total headlines, the corporate actors were most frequently mentioned, accounting for 58 % of headlines (N = 71) followed by the U.S. government with 17 % (N = 21).

U.S. government officials were used as sources in 11 % of headlines (N = 13), followed by BP executives (7%, N = 9). Sources from NGOs were used in 4 % of headlines (N = 5) as well as oil industry members (4%, N = 5). The United Kingdom was used as a source in 2 % of headlines (N = 3) equaling the source frequency of U.S. citizens (2%, N = 3). The least sources mentioned in headlines were investors and

experts, each accounting for 2 % (N = 2). Figure 4-2 illustrates the frequency of actors in headlines below.

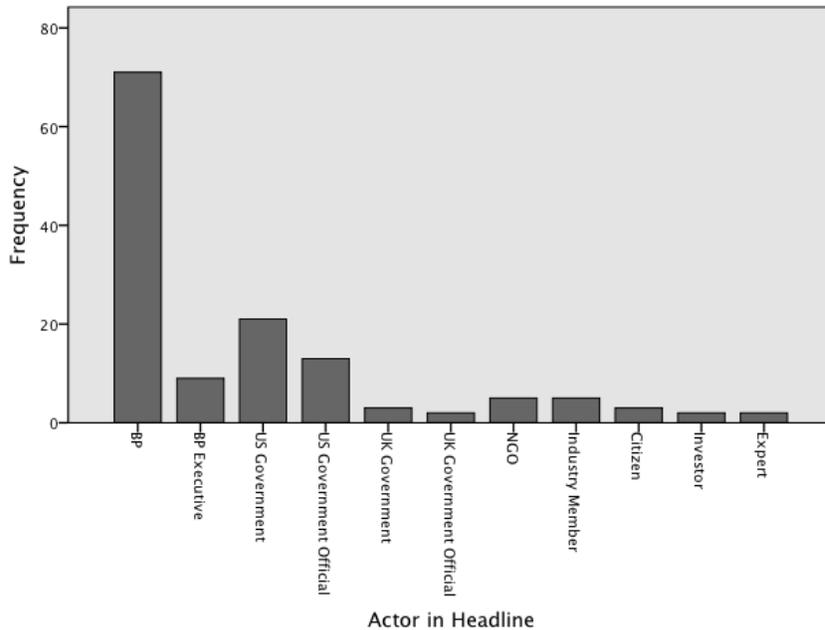


Figure 4-2. Frequency of actor in headlines

In the total leads, corporate response was the most frequent of mentions accounting for 76 % (N = 94), followed by the U.S. government officials accounting for 22 % (N = 27). The source of the U.S. government was used in 20 % of leads (N = 24). British Petroleum executives were mentioned in 7 % of the leads (N = 9). NGO sources as well as sources from the oil industry were used equally, each in 5 % of the leads (N = 6).

The U.K. government was used in 3 % of the leads (N = 4), while U.S. citizens were used as a source the same amount (3%, N = 4). Experts were mentioned in 2 % of the leads (N = 3). United Kingdom officials were mentioned in 2 % of the leads (N = 2), equaling the source frequency of investors (2%, N = 2). Figure 4-3 illustrates the frequency of actor in lead paragraphs below.

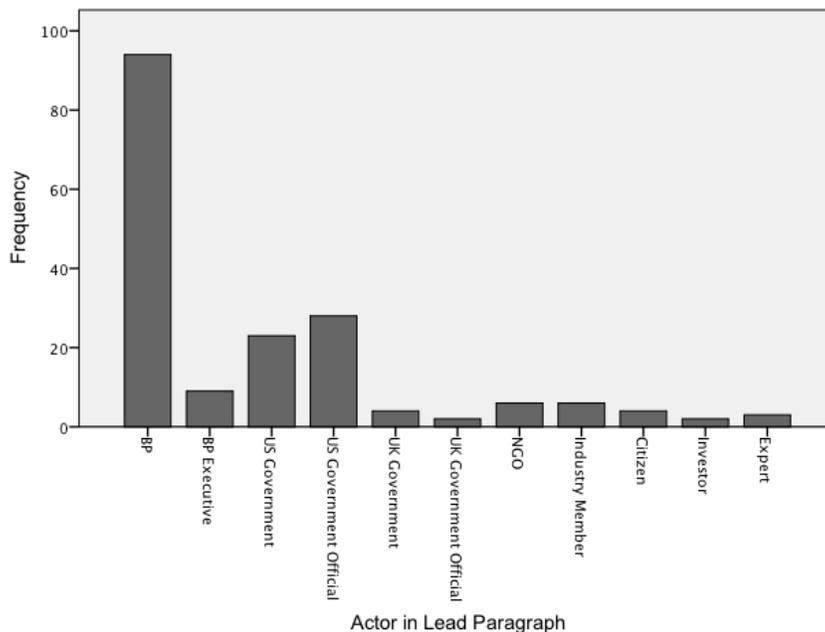


Figure 4-3. Frequency of actor in lead paragraphs

Hypothesis Three

It was predicted that the association between news source and source used would be statistically significant, indicating that news sources would favor different voices in headlines and leads. This hypothesis was not supported. Although, cross-tabulation showed some differences in sources used in headlines and leads, chi-square tests deemed these associations non-significant.

For the stories published by the Associated Press, the dominant sources used in headlines were BP in 37 % of headlines (N = 46), the U.S. government (11%, N = 14), and U.S. government officials (8%, N = 10). British Petroleum executives were used as sources in 7 % of headlines (N = 8). NGO sources as well as members of the oil industry were used equally, each mentioned in 2 % of headlines (N = 2). The source of U.S. citizens was mentioned in 0.8 % of headlines (N = 1). Three categories of sources

were not mentioned in the headlines produced by the Associated Press including: the U.K. government, U.K. government officials, and experts.

For the stories published by Reuters, BP was mentioned most frequently in headlines accounting for 20 % of headlines (N = 25), followed by the U.S. government (6%, N = 7). The U.K. government was used as a source in 2 % of headlines (N = 3), equally the frequency of the use of U.S. government officials (2%, N = 3).

Sources from NGOs and the oil industry members were used equally in headlines, each mentioned in 2 % of headlines (N = 3). The source of U.K. government officials was used in 2 % of headlines (N = 2). U.S. citizens and experts were each also used in the same amount of headlines (2%, N = 2). The least frequently used sources in headlines by Reuters were British Petroleum executives and investors, each in 0.8 % of headlines (N = 1).

The Associated Press and Reuters were similar in their use of BP, the U.S. government, and U.S. government officials in headlines. One main difference was the lack of mention by the Associated Press of the U.K. government or officials. Also, the Associated Press used BP executives more frequently than Reuters. Sources from NGOs, the oil industry, or experts were used more often in headlines produced by Reuters.

Hypothesis Four

It was predicted that the international news agencies analyzed would make different emphasis on story focus. This hypothesis was partially supported. For the total articles in the sample, the financial story focus was the most frequent (N = 43), followed by government (N = 24), recovery, (N = 22), British Petroleum accusation (N = 19),

consumer impact (N = 11), and legal (N = 4). Figure 4-4, shown below, illustrates the frequency of article focus among the sample.

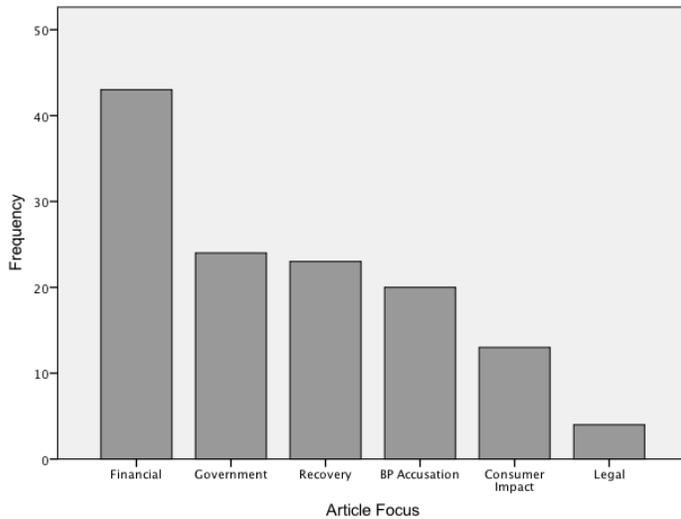


Figure 4-4. Frequency of article focus

For stories published by the Associated Press, the financial focus was used in 20 % of the total articles (N = 25), followed by the recovery and BP accusation foci, each in 11 % of total articles (N = 14). The government focus was used in 9 % of articles (N = 11). Consumer impact was the focus in 6 % of articles (N = 7). The least frequent article focus used by the Associated Press was legal (3%, N = 4).

For articles published by Reuters, the financial focus was again most dominant, used in 15 % of stories (N = 18). The government focus was used in 11 % of articles (N = 13), followed by the recovery focus (7%, N = 8). The least frequently used story foci in articles published by Reuters was consumer impact (3%, N = 4) and legal, which was used in zero articles.

The rankings of story foci between the two news sources were rather similar. The main difference lied in the heavier use of the government focus by Reuters.

Proportionally, Reuters used the British Petroleum accusation less than the Associated Press. This could be attributed to the proximity of the crisis being farther away from the home country of British Petroleum, so less blame is placed on the corporation.

Hypothesis Five

It was predicted that the compensation and apology crisis response strategies would be the most prominent strategies covered in the media by the international newswire agencies selected for analysis. This hypothesis was supported. In the total articles, the most frequent crisis response strategy covered was enhancing, covered in 33 % of the articles (N = 41). The compensation strategy was covered in 29 % of articles (N = 35). These two strategies were covered much more frequently than any of the other strategies.

The excusing strategy was covered in 5 % of articles (N = 6), followed by the justification strategy (4%, N = 5). The scapegoating and transferring strategies were each covered in 2 % of the articles (N = 3). The attack the accuser, denial, and ingratiation strategies were each used in 0.8 % of the articles (N = 1). The reminding strategy was not covered in any of the articles. Figure 4-5, shown below, illustrates the frequency of crisis response strategies covered by the two international newswire agencies.

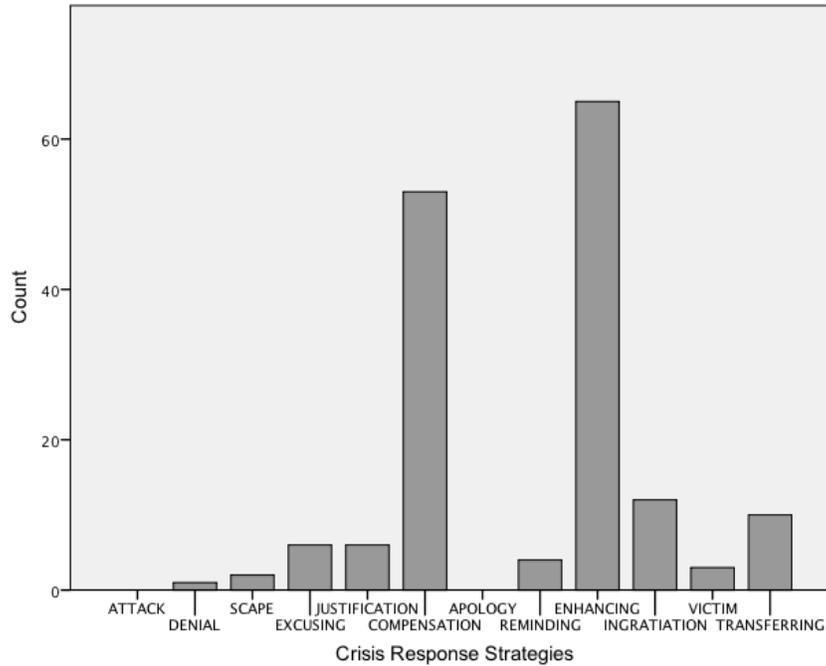


Figure 4-5. Frequency of crisis response strategies in media coverage

Hypothesis Six

It was predicted that the association between news source and crisis response strategy would be significant, indicating that the news sources preferred to cover different strategies in its coverage. This hypothesis was not supported. Chi-square tests deemed the association between news source and crisis response strategy non-significant. Although there was no statistically significant association, there was a slight difference between the crisis response strategies used by the two news sources.

For the Associated Press, enhancing strategy was covered most frequently in 24 % of the articles (N = 29), followed by the compensation strategy (21%, N = 26). The excusing strategy was covered in 4 % of the articles (N = 5), followed by the justification strategy (3%, N = 4). The scapegoating (N = 3) and victimage strategies (N = 2) were each covered in 2 % of the articles. The transferring and ingratiation strategies were

each covered in 0.8 % of articles (N = 1). The attack the accuser, denial, apology, and reminding strategies were not covered by the Associated Press.

For Reuters, the enhancing strategy was covered in 10 % of the articles (N = 12), followed by the compensation strategy (7%, N = 9). The transferring strategy was covered in 2 % of the articles (N = 2). The attack the accuser, denial, excusing, and justification strategies were each covered in 0.8 % of articles (N = 1).

Both the Associated Press and Reuters covered the enhancing and compensation strategies most frequently. Reuters covered the attack the accuser, denial, and transferring strategies more frequently than the Associated Press. The scapegoating strategy was covered more frequently by the Associated Press rather than Reuters.

Hypothesis Seven

It was predicted that BP would most often use the compensation and enhancing strategies in their corporate response to crisis. This hypothesis was supported. The crisis response strategies used by the corporation were identified through the news releases published on the corporate website.

The enhancing strategy was used in 81 % of news releases disseminated by BP (N = 65), followed by the compensation strategy (65%, N = 52). The ingratiation strategy was present in 15 % of the news releases (N = 12), followed by the transferring strategy (13%, N = 10). The excusing strategy and the justification strategy were equally used in the news releases, each being found in 8 % of news releases (N = 6).

The reminding strategy was used in 5 % of the news releases (N = 4), followed by the victimage strategy (4%, N = 3). The scapegoating strategy was found in 3 % of articles (N = 2), followed by the denial strategy (1%, N = 1). The attack the accuser and apology strategies were not used by the organization in its news releases. Figure 4-6,

shown below, illustrates the frequency of crisis response strategies used in news releases disseminated by British Petroleum.

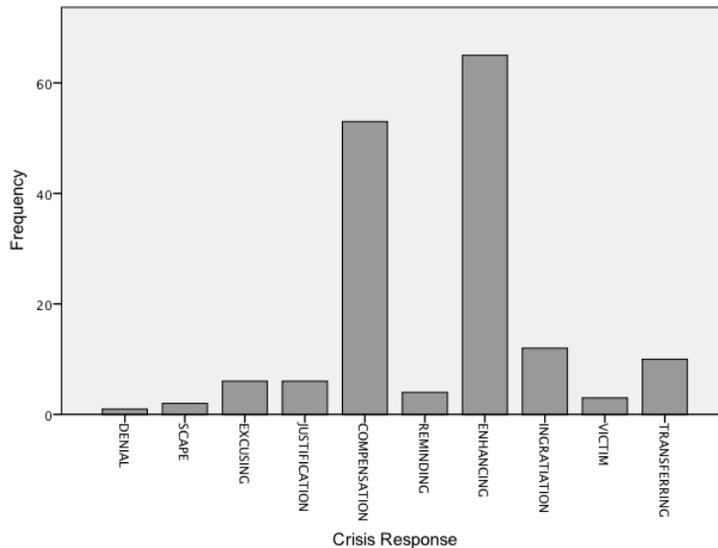


Figure 4-6. Frequency of crisis response strategies in news releases

When the crisis response strategies used by the organization in news releases was compared to the crisis response strategies covered by the media, there were some similarities and differences. The attack the accuser strategy was covered by the media but was not used by the organization in its corporate. The reminding strategy was used by the organization but was not covered in the media. The ingratiation strategy was used by the organization, but was minimally covered in the media. The apology strategy was not present in the corporate response or in the media coverage.

In Chapter 5, the findings will be discussed and interpreted. The implications of this study to practice as well as to theory building will be discussed. The limitations of this study and suggestions for further research will also be made in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION

Summary and Interpretation of Findings

The case of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill has been described within the context of the cross-national conflict shifting theory and it has been shown that the crisis faced by British Petroleum started in the United States and spread to the United Kingdom. There were similarities and differences in the media coverage disseminated by the two countries through the newswire agencies selected for analysis, the Associated Press and Reuters. The Associated Press published a greater number of stories, although Reuters published stories in greater length. ANOVA testing showed significant differences in mean word length between the two news sources.

Reuters also used a greater variety of sources in both its headlines and lead paragraphs of its articles. The Associated Press and Reuters both focused its headlines and leads on government and corporate sources. Reuters featured a variety of source use in its coverage through the heavier incorporation of sources from NGOs, industry members, experts, investors, and U.S. citizens. The greater length of articles and the variety of sources used indicated that Reuters published stories in more detail on the crisis.

There was a minimal U.K. government source presence in the headlines and leads of the articles published by both the Associated Press and Reuters. This minimal presence indicated that the government of the host country, the United States, garnered more media coverage. The difference in government media presence could be attributed to the proximity of the crisis to the host country and the government intervention into the crisis by the host country. The U.S. government was under great

pressure to defend its citizens and industries during this crisis due to the breadth of the crisis's effects.

Although government and corporate sources were the most widely used by the two news sources there were some differences in source use. The differences were made evident by the variety of sources used by Reuters as compared to the sources used by the Associated Press. These differences were congruent with previous findings in studies conducted on cross-national conflict shifts and indicated that different news sources may favor different voices. Unlike previous studies, statistical testing deemed this differences to be non-significant as they were slight differences. The non-significant results of testing could be attributed to the smaller sample size used for analysis and the similarities in media coverage between the two news sources.

Regarding article focus, there were differences in the article foci used by the news sources. The most prominent article focus used by both news sources was the financial focus. The main differences in focus use centered on the foci of British Petroleum accusation and consumer impact. The Associated Press focused more on the article foci of British Petroleum and consumer impact than Reuters. Once again, this difference could be attributed to the proximity of the crisis to the host country. Overall, consumers in the United States felt a greater impact than those in the United Kingdom as the crisis affected a multitude of industries in the host country.

In regards to the corporate crisis response, crisis response strategies were analyzed in the media coverage as well as in the news releases disseminated by British Petroleum. There were slight differences in the coverage of crisis response strategies in the media between the two news sources. The Associated Press and Reuters focused

the media coverage on the enhancing and compensation strategies used by British Petroleum. Reuters covered the transferring, attack the accuser, denial, and ingratiation strategies more heavily than the Associated Press. In stories published by the Associated Press, the excusing, justification, scapegoating, and victimage strategies were covered more heavily as compared to the stories published by Reuters.

The corporate response through news releases disseminated by the corporation was analyzed for crisis response strategies. British Petroleum was consistent with crisis response messaging utilizing most frequently the enhancing and compensation strategies in their response. This finding was congruent with the recommendations made by Coombs (2007), suggesting that compensation strategy along with rebuilding strategies be used for preventable crises. In this case, the most frequently used strategy was enhancing which Kim & Liu (in press) identified as an additional strategy to the rebuilding category of response. The ingratiation and transferring strategies followed in frequency of usage.

There were similarities and differences between the strategies disseminated by the organization and those covered by the media. The media coverage published by both news sources was congruent with the corporate response in covering the enhancing and compensation strategies most frequently.

British Petroleum did not use the attack the accuser strategy and minimally used the denial strategy in its corporate response. However, the media covered the use of these strategies by the corporation. British Petroleum used the ingratiation strategy more frequently than it was covered in the media. These findings indicated that the

media may cover the corporate response in a crisis differently than intended by the organization thus, posing a threat to the reputation of the organization.

Implications for Public Relations Practice

This study provided reinforcement for public relations practitioners of transnational corporations to develop communication strategies and messages that cater to different cultures and countries. Additionally, a common communication objective between countries should be followed. The findings of this study illustrated the differences in media coverage that can arise between two countries when covering a cross-national conflict shift including: frequency of articles, article length, article focus, and sources used.

Primary and secondary sources used in the media coverage differed between countries, indicating that media have different preferences when it comes to source use in coverage. In this particular case, both newswire agencies used the same primary sources but the secondary sources differed in variety and frequency between the agencies. Public relations practitioners must be aware of this potential difference in coverage and identify the key publics to the organization.

The focus of media coverage is another consideration to be made in the practice of international public relations as it may differ across borders. In this study, findings showed that the host country focused more on potentially negative foci related to the organization. This was attributed to the proximity of the crisis to the host country. Public relations practitioners need to consider the potential difference in article focus as it may influence the reputation of the organization and increase the need for follow-up strategies to mitigate potential reputational damage.

In this particular case, the response disseminated directly from the corporation was consistent. The media covered the dominant strategies used by the organization but also covered strategies that were used minimally or not used at all by the organization. These findings indicated that the media may not necessarily cover the response disseminated directly from the corporation as it was intended. Public relations practitioners should be aware of this issue as the media coverage has the potential to misrepresent the corporate response, thus influencing the organization's reputation.

Theoretical Implications

The case of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill is an example of a cross-national conflict shift and this study provided further support for the cross-national conflict shifting theory. This case was justified as a cross-national conflict shift through the application of the theoretical propositions to the case and the subsequent case study that described the crisis within the context of the theory. This was the first cross-national conflict shifting study to focus on the Deepwater Horizon oil spill and to analyze the combination of news sources from the United States and the United Kingdom.

The findings of this study were congruent to several of the previous cross-national conflict shifting studies. The case study and statistical findings illustrated all of the intricacies that are included in a cross-national conflict shift including the media coverage across borders, the corporate response and the publics involved. This study depicted the connection between these three aspects of a cross-national conflict shift and contributed to global public relations research.

This study also provided theoretical implications for the growing body of knowledge in crisis response. The findings supported the situational crisis communication theory and the additional response strategies that have been suggested

to this theory. These findings indicated that research on crisis response strategies outside of the traditional theory may be useful as it provides new insight into the situational crisis communication theory.

Limitations and Further Research

The limitations of this study mainly pertain to the timeframe of the crisis. The Deepwater Horizon oil spill is an ongoing crisis and will last well beyond the timeframe selected for study. This timeframe of study was an appropriate selection but caused the long-term depth of the crisis to not be included.

The use of a quantitative content analysis methodology also presented limitations to the study. The disadvantage of conducting this kind of study quantitatively is that the results may lack the depth that it would otherwise have in a qualitative study. The majority of previous cross-national conflict shifting studies have utilized quantitative content analysis methods. It is suggested based on this limitation that qualitative studies on the cross-national conflict shifting theory be conducted to contribute to theory building.

Based on the timeframe limitation described, follow up studies on the media coverage and corporate response of this particular case would be useful to capture possible changes over time. Additional news source types including newspapers and television may provide a more detailed understanding of the media coverage of this case. The selection of additional corporate response resources beyond the news releases may also provide a wider scope to the study of crisis response.

In regards to the use of additional news source types and corporate response resources it is important to consider emergent channels of communication including social media. This channel of communication is providing a new dynamic approach for

organizations' publics to communicate regarding an issue and allows the opportunity for the corporation to respond. Social media has the capabilities to create a conversation between an organization and its publics without the limitations of time or geographic borders. For that reason, social media should be a consideration to be used in future cross-national conflict shifting studies.

APPENDIX A
ARTICLE CODING SHEET

| Variable Name | Variable Label | Value Label |
|---------------|--|--|
| ID | Identification Number | 0=122 |
| DATE | Story Date | MM/DD/YYYY |
| LENGTH | Word Count | 0000-9999 |
| ORIGIN | Country of Origin of News Source | 1=USA 2=UK |
| NEWSSOURCE | News Source Type | 1=AP 2=Reuters |
| FOCUS | Story Focus | 1=Financial 2=Legal 3=BP Accusation 4=Recovery 5=Consumer Impact 6=Government |
| TNCEXHL | TNC executive mentioned in headline | 0=NO 1=YES |
| TNCHL | TNC mentioned in headline | 0=NO 1=YES |
| USGOVHL | United States Government body mentioned in headline | 0=NO 1=YES |
| UKGOVHL | United Kingdom Government body mentioned in headline | 0=NO 1=YES |
| USGOVOHL | United States Government Official mentioned in headline | 0=NO 1=YES |
| UKGOVOHL | United Kingdom Government Official mentioned in headline | 0=NO 1=YES |
| NGOHL | NGO mentioned in headline | 0=NO 1=YES |
| INDMEMHL | Industry member mentioned in headline | 0=NO 1=YES |
| CITIZENHL | U.S. citizen mentioned in headline | 0=NO 1=YES |
| INVESTORHL | Investor mentioned in HL | 0=NO 1=YES |
| EXPERTHL | Expert mentioned in HL | 0=NO 1=YES |
| TNCEXLP | TNC executive mentioned in lead paragraph | 0=NO 1=YES |

| | | |
|---------------|---|---------------|
| TNCLP | TNC mentioned in lead paragraph | 0=NO 1=YES |
| USGOVLP | United States Government body mentioned in lead paragraph | 0=NO 1=YES |
| UKGOVLP | United Kingdom Government body mentioned in lead paragraph | 0=NO 1=YES |
| USGOVOLP | United States Government Official mentioned in lead paragraph | 0=NO 1=YES |
| UKGOVOLP | United Kingdom Government Official mentioned in lead paragraph | 0=NO 1=YES |
| NGOLP | NGO mentioned in lead paragraph | 0=NO 1=YES |
| INDMEMLP | Industry member mentioned in lead paragraph | 0=NO 1=YES |
| CITIZENLP | U.S. citizen mention in lead paragraph | 0=NO 1=YES |
| INVESTORLP | Investor mentioned in lead paragraph | 0=NO 1=YES |
| EXPERTLP | Expert mentioned in lead paragraph | 0=NO 1=YES |
| ATTACK | Organization confronts the person/group that claims crisis exist | 0=NO 1=YES |
| DENIAL | Organization denies crisis exists | 0=NO 1=YES |
| SCAPEGOATING | Organization evades responsibility by placing crisis blame on another party | 0=NO 1=YES |
| EXCUSING | Diminish perceived responsibility attribution of crisis | 0=NO 1=YES |
| JUSTIFICATION | Minimize perceived damage of crisis | 0=NO 1=YES |
| COMPENSATION | Organization offers compensation to victims | 0=NO 1=YES |
| APOLOGY | Organization claims | 0=NO |

| | | |
|--------------|---|---------------|
| | responsibility for crisis and asks for forgiveness | 1=YES |
| REMINDING | Organization reminds publics of past good deeds | 0=NO 1=YES |
| ENHANCING | Organization discusses current good deeds | 0=NO 1=YES |
| INGRATIATION | Organization praises the involved publics in crisis | 0=NO 1=YES |
| VICTIMAGE | Organization plays role of victim in crisis | 0=NO 1=YES |
| TRANSFERRING | Organization uses third party support in hopes of transferring third party credibility on to them | 0=NO 1=YES |

APPENDIX B
NEWS RELEASE CODING SHEET

| Variable Name | Variable Label | Value Label |
|---------------|---|---------------|
| DATE | Story Date | MM/DD/YYYY |
| ATTACK | Organization confronts the person/group that claims crisis exist | 0=NO 1=YES |
| DENIAL | Organization denies crisis exists | 0=NO 1=YES |
| SCAPEGOATING | Organization evades responsibility by placing crisis blame on another party | 0=NO 1=YES |
| EXCUSING | Diminish perceived responsibility attribution of crisis | 0=NO 1=YES |
| JUSTIFICATION | Minimize perceived damage of crisis | 0=NO 1=YES |
| COMPENSATION | Organization offers compensation to victims | 0=NO 1=YES |
| APOLOGY | Organization claims responsibility for crisis and asks for forgiveness | 0=NO 1=YES |
| REMINDING | Organization reminds publics of past good deeds | 0=NO 1=YES |
| ENHANCING | Organization discusses current good deeds | 0=NO 1=YES |
| INGRATIATION | Organization praises the involved publics in crisis | 0=NO 1=YES |
| VICTIMAGE | Organization plays role of victim in crisis | 0=NO 1=YES |
| TRANSFERRING | Organization uses third party support in hopes of transferring third party credibility on to them | 0=NO 1=YES |

LIST OF REFERENCES

- Allen, M.W. & Calliouet, R. H. (1994). Legitimation endeavors: Impression management strategies used by an organization in a crisis. *Communication Monograph*, 61(1), 44-62.
- Assinder, N. (2010, June 11). Britain to Obama: Stop Bullying Us Over BP. *TIME*. Retrieved August 10, 2011, from <http://www.time.com/world/article/0,8599,1996056,00.html>
- Baltimore, C. (2010, June 8). Update 3-U.S. experts confirm oil from BP well. *Reuters*. Retrieved August 9, 2011, from <http://www.reuters.com/article/2010/06/08/oil-spill-noaa-idUSN0825637820100608>
- Benoit, W. L. (1997). Image repair discourse and crisis communication. *Public Relations Review*, 23(2), 177-186.
- Benoit, W. L., & Brinson, S. L. (1999). Queen Elizabeth's image repair discourse: Insensitive royal or compassionate queen? *Public Relations Review*, 25(2), 145-146.
- Benoit, W. L., & Henson, J. R. (2009). President Bush's image repair discourse on Hurricane Katrina. *Public Relations Review*, 35, 40-46.
- BP oil spill timeline. (2010, July 22). *The Guardian*. Retrieved February 18, 2011, from <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2010/jun/29/bp-oil-spill-timeline-deepwater-horizon>
- British Petroleum. (2010 April 21). *BP confirms that Transocean Ltd. issued the following statement today* [Press Release]. Retrieved August 9, 2011, from <http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&contentId=7061443>
- British Petroleum. (2010 August 23). *BP reports nearly \$400 million in claim payments as program transitions to GCCF* [Press Release]. Retrieved August 9, 2011, from <http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&contentId=7064597>
- Coombs, W. T. (1995). Choosing the right words: the development of guidelines for the selection of the "appropriate" crisis-response strategies. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 8(4), 447-476.
- Coombs, W. T. (2007). *Ongoing crisis communication: Planning, managing, and responding*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Coombs, W. T. (2007). Protecting organization reputations during a crisis: The development and application of situational crisis communication theory. *Corporate Reputation Review*, 10, 163-176.

- Cutler, D. (2010, June 3). Timeline Gulf of Mexico oil spill. Reuters. Retrieved February 18, 2010, from <http://www.reuters.com/article/2010/06/03/oil-spill-events-idUSN0322326220100603>
- Deepwater Horizon Incident Joint Information Center. (2010). Consolidated fish and wildlife collection report. Retrieved August, 9 2011, from <http://www.restorethegulf.gov/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/Consolidated%20Wildlife%20Table%20110210.pdf>
- Deepwater Horizon Incident Joint Information Center. (2011, April 19). *Last fisheries re-opening today* [Press Release]. Retrieved August 9, 2011, from <http://www.restorethegulf.gov/release/2011/04/19/last-fisheries-re-opening-today>
- Efstathiou, J., & Plungis, J. (2010, June 7). Hayward slammed by lawmakers for stonewalling on spill (Update 1). *Bloomberg Businessweek*. Retrieved February 19, 2011, from <http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=2065100&sid=ato9epKGrQ14>
- Experts double estimate BP oil spill size. (2010, June 11). *BBC*. Retrieved August 10, 2011, from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/10290238>
- Gabbatt, A. (2010, June 16). BP oil spill: Kevin Costner's oil-water separation machines help with clean-up. *The Guardian*. Retrieved August 9, 2011, from <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2010/jun/16/kevin-costner-oil-spill-machines>
- Grant, S. (2010, June 7). Can the BP brand survive Tony Hayward? PRSAY. Retrieved September 7, 2010 from, <http://prsay.prsa.org/index.php/2010/06/07/can-the-bp-brand-survive-tony-hayward/>
- Harlow, W. F., Brantley, B. C., & Harlow, R. M. (2011). BP initial image repair strategies after the Deepwater Horizon spill. *Public Relations Review*, 37, 80-83.
- Hearit, K. M. (1996). The use of counter-attack in apologetic public relations crises: The case of General Motors vs. Dateline NBC. *Public Relations Review*, 25(3), 291-308.
- Hearit, K. M., & Brown, J. (2004). Merrill Lynch: Corporate apologia and business fraud. *Public Relations Review*, 30, 459-466.
- Hinckley, D. (2010, June 2). James Cameron lends hand to help solve Gulf oil spill at meeting with scientist and engineers. *NY Daily News*. Retrieved August 9, 2011, from http://articles.nydailynews.com/2010-06-02/news/27066022_1_oil-spill-scientists-and-engineers-gulf
- Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture's Consequences*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

- Holsti, O. (1969). *Content analysis for the social sciences and humanities*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Hotten, R. (2010, June 10). UK industry frets about “anti-British” BP backlash. *BBC News*. Retrieved February 18, 2011, from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/10282448>
- Jarvis, A. A. (2010, September 14). BP Oil Spill: Disaster by Numbers. *The Independent*. Retrieved August 10, 2011, from <http://www.independent.co.uk/environment/bp-oil-spill-disaster-by-numbers-2078396.html>
- Jeong, S. H. (2009). Public’s response to an oil spill accident: A test of the attribution theory and situational crisis communication theory. *Public Relations Review*, 35(3), 307-309.
- Kim, J. R., & Molleda, J. C. (2005, March). *Cross-national conflict shifting: an analysis of Halliburton’s bribery probe case in Nigeria*. Paper presented at the 8th International Public Relations Research Conference in Miami, FL.
- Kim, S., & Liu, B. F. (in press). Are all crises opportunities? A comparison of how corporate and government organizations responded to the 2009 flu pandemic. Manuscript accepted to the *Journal of Public Relations Research*.
- Lim, H., & Molleda, J. C. (2009, May). *The influence of a cross-national conflict shift on a transnational corporation’s host customers*. Paper presented at the International Communication Association 59th annual conference, Division of Public Relations, Chicago, IL.
- Macalister, T. (2010 November 11). Tony Hayward: Public saw us “fumbling and incompetent.” *The Guardian*. Retrieved February 18, 2011, from <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2010/nov/11/tony-hayward-bp-oil-spill>
- Molleda, J. C. (2010). Cross-national conflict shifting: a transnational crisis perspective in global public relations. In R. L. Heath (Ed.), *The SAGE Handbook of Public Relations* (pp.679-690). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Molleda, J. C. (2011). Advancing the theory of cross-national conflict shifting: a case discussion and quantitative content analysis of a transnational crisis’ newswire coverage. *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, 5(1), 49-70.
- Molleda, J. C., & Connolly-Ahern, C. (2002, August). *Cross-national conflict shifting: Conceptualization and expansion in an international public relations context*. Paper presented to the convention of the Association for Education in Journalism and Communication, Miami, FL.
- Molleda, J. C., Connolly-Ahern, C., & Quinn, C. (2005). Cross-national conflict shifting: Expanding a theory of global public relations management through quantitative content analysis. *Journalism Studies*, 6(1), 87-102.

- Molleda, J.C., & Laskin, A. (2010). Coordination and control of global public relations to manage cross-national conflict shifts: A multidisciplinary perspective for research in practice. In G. J. Golan, T. J. Johnson, & W. Wanta (Eds.), *International media communication in a global age* (pp. 319-344). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Molleda, J. C., & Quinn, C. (2004). Cross-national conflict shifting: A global public relations dynamic. *Public Relations Review*, 30, 1-9.
- National Commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and Offshore Drilling (2011, January 11). *Deep Water: The Gulf Oil Disaster and the Future of Offshore Drilling*. Retrieved August 9, 2011, from http://www.oilspillcommission.gov/sites/default/files/documents/DEEPWATER_ReporttothePresident_FINAL.pdf
- Reuben, A. (2010, June 10). Why is BP important to UK economy? *BBC News*. Retrieved October 15, 2011, from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/10282777>
- Riffe, D., Lacy, S., & Fico, F. G. (2005). *Analyzing media messages: Using quantitative content analysis for research*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Taylor, M. (2000). Cultural variance as a challenge to global public relations: A case study of the Coca-Cola scare in Europe. *Public Relations Review*, 26, 277-293.
- Transocean. (2010 April 20). *Transocean Ltd. reports fire on semisubmersible drilling rig Deepwater Horizon* [Press Release]. Retrieved August 9, 2011, from <http://www.deepwater.com/fw/main/News-748.html?c=113031&p=irol-news&nyo=0>
- Wang, Y. (2005). *Cross-national conflict shifting: a case study of the DuPont Teflon crisis*. Unpublished masters thesis, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL.
- Webb, T. (2010, June 1). BP's clumsy response to oil spill threaten to make a bad situation worse. *The Guardian*. Retrieved February 18, 2011 from <http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2010/jun/01/bp-response-oil-spill-tony-hayward>
- Wimmer, R. D., & Dominick, J. R. (2006). *Mass Media Research*. Boston, MA: Wadsworth.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Sarah Gravina enrolled in the Burnett Honors College at the University of Central Florida and received her B.A. in Advertising/Public Relations in 2009. Her interest in international public relations was developed during study abroad programs in Spain and Ireland. In the fall of 2009, she was admitted to the graduate program in the College of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Florida. In the summer of 2011, she completed an internship in the public affairs department at Mayo Clinic in Jacksonville, Florida and had the opportunity to apply her academic experience with her participation in a variety of internal, external and crisis communication activities. In December 2011, she graduated with her Master of Arts in Mass Communication with a specialization in public relations. Her research interests include international public relations, crisis communications, and health/science communications. After graduation, she plans to pursue a career in the health communications field.