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How and Where to Respond? Testing the Effectiveness of the Base Crisis Response in the Different Media Contexts

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HOW AND WHERE TO RESPOND? TESTING THE EFFECTIVENESS
OF THE BASE CRISIS RESPONSE IN THE
DIFFERENT MEDIA CONTEXTS

by

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ABSTRACT
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Crisis response strategies require preparation. In order to equip organizations with the most effective crisis response strategy, this research aims to understand the most appropriate message and media context to utilize when responding to a crisis. This study applies factors driven from theoretical groundings to evaluate the impact on practical outcomes. Applied to realistic crises in two crisis-prone industries, results capture how crisis response strategies are perceived by stakeholders when an organization becomes the subject of an accidental and preventable crisis. This experimental study found preventable crises causing the most detrimental reputational damage, evaluated with corporate reputation and supportive behavioral intentions. Findings indicate that the combined base crisis response strategy, which includes instructing and then adjusting information, can produce effective communication that promotes stakeholder reassurance. Since crisis communication has the capability to shape the crisis outcome, understanding the most effective crisis response strategy is critical.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this research study is to determine how organizations should

respond when they experience a crisis. The aim is to understand what their first message

should be and on what media platform. As the first priority after any crisis is to protect

the public, this study will use three different message strategies to determine which will

lead to the best outcome. The best outcome is a positive perception of the organization,

such as the organization maintains a positive reputation and that the public is willing to

have supportive behavioral intentions (e.g., to pursue behaviors that support the

organization).

Who is at fault when an organization experiences a crisis? This is determined by

the public and their belief of how responsible the organization is for the event occurring

and also depends on how controllable the crises are to the organization. It can range from

the organization being a victim, to an accidental crisis, and, the more intentional, a

preventable crisis. Depending on how the crisis is framed and how the public interprets

the message, this varying level of responsibility requires research to identify how crisis

communication strategies should adjust and cater to each circumstance.

This research also tests the media contexts, which will show if the message will

be best received when the crisis is communicated on traditional and nontraditional

platforms. The message strategy involving traditional media takes the form of an online

news article and the nontraditional is a message on social media. Comparing how

participants perceive the message will help contribute to our understanding of what

constitutes an effective crisis communication message strategy and equip organizations

with the tools to provide an optimal crisis response to the public. This is measured through supportive behavioral intentions and corporate reputation. To fully understand how the message is perceived in each context, we will gauge how participants understand the organization's prior reputation and their relationship with the organization. The credibility of each message and the organization itself will also be taken into account to ensure each strategy is measured accurately. With the goal of creating sound results that are generalizable for practitioners' use, the experiment was developed utilizing organizations in the food and automotive industry, which two of the most crisis-prone industries in the United States, as well as a dominating social media platform and online news outlet.

Crises provoke an emotional response that can potentially generate motivation to behave, whether it be in a supportive or opposing action (Coombs & Holladay, 2004). While taking into account this emotion, results can interpret how each strategy elicits a response. Findings distinguish attributes of crisis communication response strategies between those that provoke positive outcomes and repercussions, such as a consumer actually feeling pleased that something bad happened to the organization because they felt the organization deserved it. Emotion proves to be a powerful factor in analyzing crisis response strategies. In Coombs and Holladay's (2005) analysis of stakeholder emotions, they found that when the organization was perceived as the victim of the crisis, the emotion of sympathy was elicited but when the crisis was preventable, or more intentional, it was anger. Schadenfreude, or the feeling of pleasure when seeing an organization suffer during a crisis, was also provoked when an organization was perceived as responsible for the crisis.

This additionally has theoretical implications, since it incorporates fundamental elements of existing theories, yet it also addresses the research gap that confronts this critical messaging. As existing crisis communication research predominantly focuses on reputation management contents (e.g., apology or denial), it neglects the most critical messaging that serves to protect stakeholders physically and psychologically from the crisis (Holladay, 2009; Sturges, 1994; Winn, MacDonald, & Zietsma, 2008; Roberts & Dowling, 2002; Helm, 2007). The literature review will discuss the specific measurements tested and how it will contribute to the field of crisis communication. The findings aim to optimize organizational assets, such as positive corporate reputation and supportive behavioral intentions, and incorporates the most susceptible industries, the food and automotive industries, to bridge practice with implications for theory development.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This research identifies aspects of crisis response messaging to ultimately determine how strategies are perceived. Contributing to our knowledge of crisis communication, this study considers many dimensions of crises and stakeholder perception that contribute positive and negative responses to messaging. Scholarship within each dimension will be respectively acknowledged to address the significance of further investigation and the quest for understanding how to optimize effectiveness of this communication.

Crisis and Crisis Communication

Crisis events occur every day and become part of our television's top stories, breaking news RSS alerts, newspaper headlines, and appear continuously on social media newsfeeds. Crisis situations have been increasingly studied over the years and the growing literature has developed to assess relationship management, threats to organizational assets, the impact of crisis framing, and the outcomes of reputation response strategies (Sohn & Lariscy, 2014; Sweetser & Metzgar, 2007; Barton, 2001; Coombs, 2011; Alsop, 2004; Fombrun & Van Riel, 2004). This literature has rapidly revolved around the concept of reputation management, or how stakeholders perceive an organization (Klein, 1999; Nakra, 2000). While this has helped redefine and improve theoretical application to adjust to current, relevant circumstances, further research on this evolutionary concept will optimize utility.

Fundamental to understanding crisis communication, a crisis is defined as an unpredictable event that can disrupt operations and threaten corporate reputation (Coombs & Holladay, 2002). This broad scope may include natural disasters such as floods and droughts, product recalls such as food contaminations, manufacturer defects, and endless other plights both small and large in extent and severity. Crisis communication is a concept that must be translated from theoretical groundings in academia to guide practitioners. Practical relevance has been a concern as the differentiation of worldviews between academics and practitioners show an incongruence in interpretations (Nicolai, Schultz, & Göbel, 2011). To bridge this gap, this research is motivated by instrumentality, regarding practitioners as key constituents.

As crises are unpredictable, it is the organization's responsibility to optimize what they have the ability to control; their response strategies to the crisis. As crises jeopardize organizational assets, effective crisis communication becomes critical in its ability to shape and influence public perception of the crisis (Stephens & Malone, 2009). Fearn-Banks (2017) defines crisis communication as the dialog between the organization and its publics designed to minimize damage to the organization. When used effectively, this communication not only has the power to alleviate the impact of the crisis, but even potentially produce a more positive reputation than it had prior to the crisis. These response strategies determine how the public will understand the situation through the way messages are presented and how the message is narrated to maintain corporate reputation (Coombs, 2007b).

Corporate Reputation

As crises threaten corporate reputation, an organization must recognize what is at stake and the severity of implications. Corporate reputation, or how stakeholders perceive an organization, is a central asset with links to outcomes such as stock and recruitment and retention of employees (Fombrun & Van Riel, 2004). Prior research has developed definitions that encompass reputation as an intangible asset (Miles & Covin, 2000; Drobis, 2000), value judgment (Larkin, 2003), assessment based on perceptions (Dukerich & Carter, 2000), assessment of a firm's performance (Fombrun & Van Riel, 1997), and perceptions of how stakeholders think and feel about a firm (Ferguson, Deephouse, & Ferguson, 2000).

As prior research has been shown to extensively evaluate the value of reputation, it has been proven to be a dimension that needs to be preserved and protected. When a crisis influences reputation, it can alter stakeholder beliefs and interactions either positively or negatively. When impacted in an organization's favor, it can produce outcomes including heightened financial performance and positive government influence (Fombrun, 1996; Klein, 1999; Nakra, 2000). As successful communication strategies have the ability to protect corporate reputation, understanding the best strategy to utilize is central to a crisis response. As consistently found throughout research, a positive reputation links to favorable outcomes such as financial performance, employment success, and government influence (Fombrun, 1996; Klein, 1999; Nakra, 2000). Above reputational concerns, the organization must address public safety by providing information on how they can protect themselves (Coombs, 2011; Coombs & Holladay, 2001; Sturges, 1994).

Historically, crisis communication research has predominantly focused on reputation management contents (e.g., apology or denial strategies) and neglected to recognize the impact of base response strategies, which are the foundation for every crisis response (Coombs, 2015; Kim & Sung, 2014). To fill the research gap, this study will examine the base response strategies (i.e., instructing information and adjusting information), as they serve to protect stakeholders physically and psychologically from the crisis (Holladay, 2009; Sturges, 1994).

Behavioral Intentions

When a crisis induces negative perceptions of an organization, the organization's reputation might not only be tarnished but it can also affect behavioral intentions. Supportive behavioral intentions could halt as publics stop buying the organization's products and no longer show support for the organization (Helm & Tolsdorf, 2013). Unfavorable perceptions catapult negative behavioral intentions such as a loss of confidence that can severely hurt the organization (Simon, 2009). Contrarily, when an organization utilizes effective crisis communication, positive behavioral intentions accompany the crisis response (Coombs & Holladay, 2008).

Within the current study, behavioral intention refers to an intention's intensity and the personal intention to do the target behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Since crises can serve to motivate publics both positively and negatively, the public evaluates their perception of the crisis based on how it is framed and the attribution of responsibility (Weiner, 1995). Positive behavioral intentions occur when an organization is perceived as not responsible for the crisis and sympathy is evoked. Adversely, when an organization is

deemed as responsible for the crisis and anger is evoked, negative behavioral intentions are elicited. This demonstrates how attributions of crisis responsibility generate emotion towards an organization. Negative behavior associated with this can include anger causing a public to engage in negative word-of-mouth (WOM) (Coombs & Holladay, 2004). A behavioral intention that accompanies this could be a customer no longer having support for an organization or no longer purchasing products or services from the organization. Behavioral intentions, such as purchasing intentions and support for an organization, are important to address because the ramifications extend to employment and financial loss. Organizations should strive for communication that initiates supportive behavioral intentions; however, these intentions are largely impacted by how responsibility is assigned.

Crisis Types

Building on Weiner's (1995) attribution theory, which states that people need to assign responsibility when negative or unexpected events such as crises occur, the situational crisis communication theory (SCCT) describes three clusters that a crisis relates to based on attributions of crisis responsibility (Coombs, 2007a). This also makes the assumption that people seek information and causal explanations for events, as Weiner (1986) argues that negative, unexpected events cause people to engage in causal attribution processing. The crisis type is determined by the attribution, or who is responsible for the crisis. When the public perceives the crisis with external attributions, they perceive the organization as less responsible (Weiner, 1995). For instance, Jorgensen's (1996) study manipulated information regarding an airline accident with

varying attribution. When the participants were exposed to information containing internal attribution, such as a lack of pilot training, they perceived the organization responsible and negative emotions were generated. Conversely, Weiner (1986) found that when attributions are perceived as external, they are viewed less controllable and emotions such as pity are evoked. The crisis type and consequent response strategy are thus contingent on stakeholders' perception of how much the organization is responsible for the crisis. With the varying amount of responsibility, an organization navigates with the assumption that their crisis falls within a cluster of crisis type classification, which includes victim, accidental, and the preventable cluster.

These three clusters reflect the categorized crisis types. The victim cluster has the least amount of crisis responsibility attributed to the organization (Coombs, 2006). This is illustrated in crises such as natural disasters or acts of nature like an earthquake, rumors circulating damaging information, or an external agent involved in product tampering. The accidental cluster has low attributions of crisis responsibility and are unintentional, or caused by the circumstance rather than the organization. Accidental crises can include technical accidents or equipment failures causing product recalls. The final cluster, the preventable cluster, is the most damaging to an organization's reputation because it evokes a high level of attribution to an organization and is perceived as a crisis that could have been prevented. This cluster can include crises involving inappropriate actions and law violations such as a human error causing an industrial accident or product recall, organizational misdeed, or intentional management misconduct.

Perceptions of attribution are essential to assess because recognizing the level of attribution determines the extent of damage to an organization's reputation (Coombs &

Schmidt, 2000; Coombs & Holladay, 2001, 2002). Regardless of the crisis type, it is the organization's responsibility to develop a crisis response strategy that adheres to how the crisis type has framed the event.

Crisis Response Strategies

Depending on the type of crisis, an organization can adjust their strategy to protect themselves from reputational damage. Coombs' (2007b) SCCT provides an empirical method for responding to crises with provided crises response strategies that range from an organization denying responsibility to apologizing and accepting the responsibility. These response strategies cater to the type of crisis with the goal of protecting reputation (Coombs, 2010; Coombs, 2007b). Crisis response strategies have also been categorized on a continuum from defensive to accommodative (Jin, 2010). In Jin's (2010) study, defensive strategies led to the use of denying responsibility, producing excuses, and justifying the crisis. On the accommodative end, strategies included the utilization of apologies and corrective action. More recently, crisis response strategies have emphasized the use of bolstering as a way to mitigate organizational attribution and found this strategy to be the most employed among crisis response strategies (Kim, Avery, & Lariscy, 2009; Brown & White, 2011).

Brown and White's (2011) study on bolstering indicates that although it may lower the attribution of the organization's responsibility to the crisis, it does not enhance other critical organizational assets such as corporate reputation and supportive behavioral intentions. Research has extensively investigated crisis types and response strategies; however, it has yet to evaluate the first response that an organization is ethically

responsible to release (Richards, Wilson, Boyle, & Mower, 2017; Bentley, Oostman, & Ali Shah, 2017; Sisco, Collins, & Zoch, 2010). Although prior research recognizes the influence that the crisis type has on crisis responsibility and crisis response strategy, few consider the relationship with the most fundamental response after a crisis; the base crisis response (Claesys & Cauberghe, 2014; Coombs & Holladay, 2001).

SCCT applies a systematic procedure designed to evaluate the crisis type occurring, deliver the base crisis response, and then match the crisis type with a crisis response strategy (Coombs, 2007b). Ample research has examined the impact of crisis response strategies; however, little research identifies strategies pertaining to the most critical aspect of crisis responses that value the ethical responsibility of the organization (Bradford & Garrett, 1995; Jorgensen, 1996). This research satisfies the need to understand what base crisis response strategy will best encourage public safety and address the psychological needs of the public. More recently, Park's (2016) research extends this idea by comparing the effectiveness of the bolstering strategy and base crisis responses. With this, it was found that bolstering should only be used supplemental to other crisis response strategies rather than to use bolstering alone. When crisis message does adjust to this strategy, the organization is at risk of suffering reputational decline and lose the trust of stakeholders.

SCCT also acknowledges intensifiers, prior crisis history and prior relationship history, which have the potential to amplify reputational damage (Coombs, 2006). The crisis history brings to light any similar crises that the organization experienced prior and the relationship history recognizes the quality of the interactions the organization has with its stakeholders (Coombs & Holladay, 2001). If the organization has historically

performed poorly, such as having had similar crises in the past or unfavorable and poor quality of communication with stakeholders, the intensifiers result in greater reputational damage. Theory-driven research has consistently recognized that an organization's response strategy, along with the intensifiers, have the potential to significantly affect corporate reputation (Benoit, 1995; Coombs, 2011, 2006).

Several factors are considered when understanding the type of relationship stakeholders have with an organization including trust, control mutuality, satisfaction, and commitment (Hon & Grunig, 1999). Additionally, the type of relationship is considered with scales of exchange relationship and communal relationship. Trust refers to the level of confidence in the other party and is also captured in terms such as integrity, dependability, and competence. Control mutuality explores the control that publics have over the organization, and vice versa. A high score in satisfaction can be achieved when the public has positive expectations about the relationship with the organization and the benefits appear to outweigh the costs. Lastly, commitment is determined by the extent the public believes their relationship with the organization is worth using energy to maintain and promote. The two types of relationships, exchange and communal relationships, illustrate how the public associate with the organization. Communal relationships are earned by providing a mutually beneficial service with stakeholders. Although not entirely altruistic, communal relationships provide benefits to both parties because they are "concerned for the welfare of the other -- even when they get nothing in return" (p. 3). Most organizations aim to achieve this rather than develop exchange relationships, which is when a party that receives benefits incurs an obligation or debt to return the favor. It is recognized that many organizations develop from exchange relationships into

communal by building their reputation. A communal relationship also indicates that the organization will encounter less opposition and more stability in support.

Matching the crisis type with the crisis response strategy is an important alignment, as it can determine the crisis outcome. For instance, SCCT offers guidance to navigate through crises by choosing appropriate responses like utilizing denial if a no real crisis exists (Coombs, 2007b). When a crisis lands in the preventable cluster, meaning there are strong attributions of responsibility towards the organization, the organization must acknowledge the damaging threat to reputation that is capable and work toward rebuilding reputation.

The base crisis response is the foremost information an organization needs to provide the public and stakeholders in the event of a crisis (Coombs, 2007b). Past research surrounding crisis communication has gravitated towards crisis response messages that focus on organizational outcomes, such as how exercising a denial strategy can reduce the perception that the organization is to blame for the crisis (Liu & Fraustino, 2014). Although important to recognize in order to repair reputation, this neglects the most critical messaging required. The necessity of base crisis response is unparalleled since this messaging can be lifesaving (Holladay, 2009; Sturges, 1994). Disseminating instructing information, or information that directs publics what to do, should be the first priority of the organization as it relays essential information and additionally posits that the organization values public safety over organizational assets (Coombs, 2015). In succession, adjusting information is provided to the public so they understand how to cope psychologically with the crisis.

Instructing and adjusting information are crucial to the crisis response strategy as they provide vital, time-sensitive information to protect the safety of stakeholders and aid in the psychological understanding of the crisis (Coombs, 2007b). As instructing and adjusting information are the foundation for any crisis response, they are referred to as the base crisis response because such information should be released before other types of messages to repair reputation; however, little research investigates the base crisis response (Kim, Avery, & Lariscy, 2011; Kim & Sung, 2014).

Instructing information is created by providing information about the details regarding the crisis, or known information about the crisis event and tells the public what they can do to protect themselves (Bergman, 1994; Coombs, 2011; Sturges, 1994). This essential information helps stakeholders understand measures they should take to prevent harm. On the organization's end, this could include providing the make and model of vehicles that are subject to an airbag recall or production dates on contaminated food products. As this information has the potential to be life-saving, it is not only recommended that it is utilized but demanded and must be provided (Coombs, 2007b). As instructing information is essential to giving the public information on how to take action, the organization also needs to provide adjusting information to meet the psychological needs of the public.

After providing instructing, adjusting information needs to be communicated, which helps people cope with the psychological impact of the crisis (Coombs, 2007b). As opposed to providing action-based messaging, adjusting information evokes emotion. It can include "expressions of sympathy or concern, reports of actions to prevent a repeat of the crisis, and information about the cause of the crisis" (Carroll, 2013, p. 256). The

information provided during this phase is secondary information, or less important but more specific information about the crisis. For instance, information regarding how the crisis is being addressed and prevented from happening in the future is not as necessary as information needed to protect oneself immediately. Combined in succession, instructing and adjusting information are necessary and should be provided before any other crisis response strategy that focuses on organizational-focused reputation management (Coombs, 2007b; Huang, Lin, & Su, 2005). While these crisis response strategies have historically relied on traditional press coverage, social media has emerged to become an outlet for organizations to express their story on their terms. The dissemination of these messages on varying media contexts requires further research, as stakeholder media preferences urge organizations to adapt.

The Role of Media Context in Crisis Communication

As this study addresses comparisons in media contexts, it will explore the impact of a traditional platform (i.e., online news article) versus a non-traditional platform (i.e., social media post). Social media, as defined by Lui, Jin, and Austin (2013), is generally explained as various digital tools and applications that facilitate interactive communication and content exchange among publics and organizations online. As social media has become an outlet for organizations to present their information, most companies utilize it to create responses to criticisms (Na, 2017). Social media has presented new opportunities for crisis communication by enabling messages to be disseminated quickly and connecting with stakeholders directly. To recognize prior research regarding the impact of emerging social media platforms, the social-mediated

crisis communication (SMCC) model and surrounding research is acknowledged (Jin & Liu, 2010). As there is a lack of application to emerging platforms, comparing responses to the two contexts (i.e., traditional and nontraditional platforms) will support the recommendations for practitioners. Since SCCT does not explicitly refer to mediums used to communicate during crises, this addresses social media's integral role of communicating crisis responses, while extant research acknowledges the value of proactive stakeholder engagement on social media (Veil & Yang, 2012; Utz, Schultz, & Glocka, 2013; Cheng, 2016).

The media contexts function as an integral role, as research has demonstrated how the medium can be considered an important element to the message itself in a crisis response (Jin & Liu, 2010; Schultz, Utz, & Goritz, 2011). Liu, Jin, and Austin's (2013) social-mediated crisis communication (SMCC) produces insight to show how organizations can proactively engage with publics, which encourages positive communication, finding that organizations do not have to rely on traditional media in their crisis communication. As SCCT does not address how form, such as the medium being traditional or social media, can impact the perception of crisis communication, this study integrates this to determine how the media type impacts the publics' acceptance of crisis responses and behaviors (Coombs, 2015). It is, however, known that during crises, social media is used more often, and the coverage can be perceived as more credible than traditional media coverage (Pew Internet & American Life, 2006; Procopio & Procopio, 2007; Sweetser & Metzgar, 2007). Yang, Kang, and Johnson (2010) echo this by adding that when interactive mediums are utilized during crises, it encourages publics to have a more positive attitude about the organization. When a crisis interrupts an organization,

their online presence becomes salient as perceptions of corporate reputation and behavioral intentions are influenced (Van der Meer & Verhoeven, 2013). If handled effectively, communicating crisis messages on social media can strengthen relationships with stakeholders and improve reputation (North, Li, Liu, & Ji, 2017).

With the relationship between the crisis type and base response in mind, this research will illuminate the role and impact of the medium. As traditional mediums have historically been heavily relied upon and perceived as credible, technological advances warrant further examination of the potential social media produces as it continues to transform crisis communication (Veil, Buehner, & Palenchar, 2011; Littlefield & Quenette, 2007). To satisfy the context of traditional media, a news article was developed as the second media context. As social media continues to gain attention in academia, existing research primarily focuses on the promotion of utilizing it as a platform. Without incorporating it into a theoretical framework or comparing the effectiveness, our knowledge of the impact is not fully understood. As social media platforms often provide free memberships and accessible information, they also provide more opportunities for organizations to reach stakeholders with crisis communication (Wright & Hinson, 2009). In the current study, the platform of Facebook was chosen, as it is the most popular social media and continues to grow by a steady rate of 20 million active users every month (Kallas, 2017). Although Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram are among other popular social networking sites, Facebook surpasses them and dominates social media. Relevant studies analyzing the use of social media in crisis communication have additionally reported using Facebook more than any other platform (Austin, Fisher Liu, & Jin, 2012).

Overall, these results will bridge the gap in research within the crisis communication field, specifically in the area's dominating theory of SCCT. With the identification of the crisis type and the emphasis on the base crisis response strategies, this study will produce findings significant to enhancing both theoretical understandings and practical application. Additionally, the involvement of the SMCC model within this study will indicate the significance of social media's proliferating role in crisis communication. This study will experiment using the instructing information, adjusting information, and combining both base response strategies on media context, extending existing theories to consider the different media contexts (i.e., Facebook post vs. online news article) as each medium generates different effects on corporate reputation and behavioral intentions (Utz, Schultz, & Glocka, 2013).

Hypotheses and Research Questions

As research has primarily sought to identify the influence the crisis type has on crisis responsibility, little has considered the relationship on actual crisis outcomes (Claesys & Cauberghe, 2014; Coombs & Holladay, 2001). Kim's (2016) study on crisis framing identifies how measuring crisis outcomes, such as reputation and behavioral intention based on the publics' perception would be the most realistic approach to analyze how the variables affect crisis outcomes.

Reputation has proven to be an asset to protect and is threatened when a crisis occurs (Gaultier-Gaillard & Louisot, 2006; Jacques, 2014). Additionally, behavioral intentions, such as positive word-of-mouth and support for an organization, are also at risk during a crisis, as studies have indicated that crises cause less supportive behavioral

intentions (Coombs & Holladay, 2001, 2007; Siomkos & Kurzbard, 1994). Studies also suggest that strategies should not be used in isolation or solely focused on providing just instructing information because a lack of adjusting information may cause distress (Coombs, 2007b; Kim, Avery, & Lariscy, 2009; Kim & Liu, 2012).

As the combined base crisis response (i.e., instructing and adjusting information combined) provides the most information to satisfy stakeholder needs, it is predicted to produce more positive crisis outcomes (i.e., positive reputation and supportive behavioral intentions) than using any other base crisis response strategy. Adjusting information is often neglected and this can reflect poorly on the organization because "victims expect an organization to express concern for them" (Kim & Liu, 2012, p. 136), which is what adjusting information satisfies. Combined information includes both instructing and adjusting information in the message. With these past findings taken into consideration, the following hypotheses were posed to test the impact on the dependent variables:

H1: Combined information (i.e., both instructing information and adjusting information) will have a significant effect on corporate reputation when used in a crisis response.

H2: Combined information (i.e., both instructing information and adjusting information) will have a significant effect on supportive behavioral intentions when used in a crisis response.

Past research has recognized that crisis types that fall in the preventable cluster cause very high attributions of responsibility, as they are "violations of societal norms and so the crisis manager needs to use the deal response options" (Coombs, 2006, p. 249). With this in mind, the following hypotheses are posed:

H3: The relationship between corporate reputation and the preventable crisis type will

have the largest effect size of all other relationships between crisis type and corporate

reputation.

H4: The relationship between supportive behavioral intentions and the preventable crisis

type will have the largest effect size of all other relationships between crisis type and

supportive behavioral intentions.

As studies have yet to identify the relationship between base crisis response

strategies and crisis types, the following research question was openly asked. The

treatment affects all groups of participants, but this research question was developed to

identify which group would be more affected than the others.

RQ1: Is the combined base crisis response strategy (i.e., both instructing information and

adjusting information) more effective on the preventable crisis type, accidental crisis

type, or no frame?

RQ2: How will the crisis type and base crisis response affect corporate reputation?

RQ3: How will the crisis type and base crisis response affect supportive behavioral

intentions?

The second half of the experiment identifies these outcomes on different media

platforms. Previous studies indicate that the medium does have an effect on stakeholder

perception (Schultz, Utz, & Göritz, 2011; Utz, Schultz, & Glocka, 2013; Coombs &

Holladay, 2009; Yates & Paquette, 2011). A theory-driven strategy is needed to guide

scholars and practitioners to utilize the best medium when disseminating the first crisis

message.

Message form is the channel in which the message is on, such as a Facebook post

or online news article. Research does not provide an understanding as to which message

form is most effective when using the base crisis response. Past studies have identified the Internet as a communication tool with the capacity to sustain geographic community during crises (Procopio & Procopio, 2007) and that organizations are advised to continually strive for open communication practices in crises and consider computer-mediated communication to disseminate messages (Sweetser & Metzgar, 2007).

The SMCC model recognizes the source to be either the organization, which is the organization experiencing the crisis, or a third party, which are external groups or individuals such as media. As Austin, Fisher Liu, and Jin (2012) discovered that both traditional media and social media have merit, social media satisfies an immediate need for information. The following hypotheses and research questions were posed:

RQ4: How will corporate reputation be affected when the crisis response is on a social media post (i.e., Facebook post)?

RQ5: How will supportive behavioral intentions be affected when the crisis response is on a social media post (i.e., Facebook post)?

RQ6: How will corporate reputation be affected when the crisis response is on traditional media (i.e., an online news article)?

RQ7: How will supportive behavioral intentions be affected when the crisis response is on traditional media (i.e., an online news article)?

H5: Combined information (i.e., both instructing information and adjusting information) will have a significant effect size on corporate reputation than the relationships of a singular base crisis response in both media contexts.

H6: Combined information (i.e., both instructing information and adjusting information) will have a more significant effect size on supportive behavioral intentions than the

relationships of a singular base crisis response in both media contexts.

As previously noted, when a crisis falls within the preventable crisis type, organizations are attributed with more crisis responsibility. With this taken into consideration, the following two hypotheses are posed:

H7: The relationship between corporate reputation and the preventable crisis type will have a more significant effect size of all other negative relationships between crisis type and corporate reputation in both media contexts (i.e., Facebook post and online news article).

H8: The relationship between supportive behavioral intentions and the preventable crisis type will have a more significant effect size of all other negative relationships between crisis type and supportive behavioral intentions in both media contexts (i.e., social media post and online news article).

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This two-part study includes a 1 x 3 x 3 and 2 x 3 x 3 experimental design. The first half of the experiment used a 1 (industry: automotive industry) x 3 (the base crisis response: instructing, adjusting, or combined information) x 3 (framed crisis type: accidental, preventable, or no framed crisis) mixed experimental design. The independent variables are between-subject factors; that is, nine conditions. Dependent variables include corporate reputation and supportive behavioral intentions toward the organization. With regard to the frame, the crises were framed as either preventable, accidental, or no frame. They also either provided instructing information, adjusting information, or a combination of both.

The second half of the questionnaire tested the base crisis and crisis type on two media contexts. This half utilized a 2 (media context: Facebook post or online news article) x 3 (base crisis response: instructing, adjusting, or combined information) x 3 (framed crisis type: accidental, preventable, or no framed crisis). The crisis message form takes shape in an organization's Facebook post and a third-party's online news article. SMCC categorizes information source as either the organization or a third-party outlet (Jin & Liu, 2010). In the first case, the information source is a Facebook post from the organization itself. In the second, the third party is an online news article *USA Today*. Choosing the organization to represent the third party requires close examination of source credibility. Ensuring that the source of information has established trust and credibility produces outcomes that affect message acceptance (Callison, 2001). The source *USA Today* was selected for this study, as it is one of the leading daily newspapers in the nation and has gained respect for the increase in quality of the newspaper

(Malcolm, 2014; McCartney, 1997). Along with high circulation, it is considered

representative of the U.S. mainstream media, having the ability to influence other media

due to their reputation, and centrist in its reporting (Xu, 2013).

These two channels command particular interest because they are common

platforms utilized today, making these findings applicable to integrate in practice (Jin &

Liu, 2010). Of the social media platforms utilized today, Facebook dominates with users

and continues to be on the rise with user engagement (Anderson & Caumont, 2014;

Duggan, 2015). Anderson and Caumont's (2014) Pew Research study reports that the

majority of Americans, 58%, are using Facebook, while 70% are engaging daily. It is

referred to as a "home base" that users consistently update and revisit. Across the globe,

Facebook reports 1.45 billion daily active users on average and 2.20 billion monthly

users as of March 2018 (Facebook, 2018). This reach creates more opportunities for

organizations to interact with their stakeholders and release news updates.

To test the base crisis response, three messages were produced to include

instructing information, adjusting information, and a combined message with both

messages. The instructing information included information to guide the participants with

instructions. An example of instructing information without a frame used in the

experiment reads:

> Ford has issued a recall today on airbags in Ford vehicles. If the airbag in the
> vehicle is deployed, a ruptured inflator can send parts toward the vehicle
> occupants, resulting in injury or death. Please visit Ford's website to find out
> which Ford models are being recalled. You can also schedule an appointment to
> have your vehicle repaired. For additional information and assistance in locating
> your nearest Ford dealer, please visit the website and contact customer service.
> More information will be released pending an investigation.

Another example within the study was explaining which production dates were impacted in a food contamination and how to proceed. Both insinuate measures of efficacy and directs stakeholders to take measures to protect themselves. Adjusting messages show the empathetic expression of the organization. They also include a statement to recognize that steps have been taken to prevent the crisis from happening in the future. An example of adjusting information without a frame reads:

> Ford has issued a recall today on airbags in Ford vehicles. Ford remains deeply concerned about their customers and regrets this defect. They are working to support customers and make necessary changes to minimize the risk of this happening again. Ford has created a special quality task force to address the problem to focus on the issues arising from the incident and to ensure that all appropriate actions are taken. For additional information and assistance, please visit Ford's website. More information will be released pending an investigation.

As you can see, this guides the public with coping and managing how they process the crisis information. The combined message simply includes both instructing information and adjusting information, respectively.

The messages also include three crisis types, or levels of crisis responsibility. The crisis types include preventable, accidental, and no crisis type frame. In the preventable message, it was stated that a Ford Motor Company employee failed to check the quality of the airbags in the Ford vehicles. This message was accompanied with details on the product errors and the damage it could cause. This satisfies the preventable cluster because a factory worker caused a recall that placed stakeholders at risk and this cluster includes human error causing a product recall (Coombs, 2006). This puts high attribution of responsibility on the organization, The Ford Motor Company. While still having some attribution of responsibility, the accidental crisis type frames the crisis as unintentional. The accidental crisis type states, "An accidental equipment failure at a factory has caused

a recall on airbags in Ford vehicles." Although in this cluster, stakeholders may claim that the organization is operating in an inappropriate manner, it states the accidental nature of the crisis. This appropriately satisfies the accidental category as equipment failures causing a product recall is an explicit example of a crisis in the accidental cluster. To ensure the crisis types were appropriately represented, four elected students from a graduate crisis communication course evaluated the messages and coded them, showing the preventable and accidental crisis types were successfully portrayed. The final crisis type in this study, the crisis without a frame, simply states the information without any recognition of attribution. The messages that were provided to participants, both Facebook posts and online news articles, can be found in the questionnaire in Appendix B.

Participants

Participants were recruited through Amazon.com's Mechanical Turk (MTurk). MTurk is an online platform with a representative pool of subjects of over 400,000 panel members (Bartneck et al., 2015; Berinsky et al., 2012). The restrictions were set to only allow those within the United States to complete the survey. The efficiency of the data collection proves to be an effective option for recruitment by saving time and money (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011; Casler, Bickel, & Hackett, 2013). After obtaining IRB approval, 905 participants ($n=905$) were recruited on a voluntary basis. The participants were introduced to the study, were provided a consent form, and asked if they agreed to the terms of the study. The questionnaire took approximately fifteen minutes for participants to complete, with an average duration time of 15.99 minutes.

Once completed, participants ended with several debriefing statements, such as: "I understand that the crises I just read were false and will be used for academic research purposes only," which reiterated that the crises were fictitious and to ensure they understood they were not in danger. It also confirmed that participants understood the companies used in the study had not experienced the crises presented.

Of the participants, 46.5% ($n=421$) were male and 53.5% ($n=484$) were female. The average age was 37.96 years old, the median was 35, and the range was 81.3 years. Almost all participants had completed high school, while 21.8% had some college with no degree, 13% had a two-year associate degree from a college or university, 36% had a degree from a four-year college or university degree, and 14.9% had a postgraduate or professional degree, including master's, doctorate, medical or law degree. Regarding race, the majority, 74.8% considered themselves white, 9.5% Black or African-American, 6.5% Hispanic/Latino, and 6.4% Asian or Asian-American. Taking family income into account, 11.9% made $20,000 to less than $30,000, 10.4% made $30,001 to less than $40,000, 10.8% made $40,001 to less than $50,000, 24.2% made $50,001 to less than $75,000, 14.7% made $75,001 to less than $100,000, and 11% made $100,001 to less than $150,000. Visual representations of the participant demographics and a map of participant locations within the United States can be found in Figures 1-5.
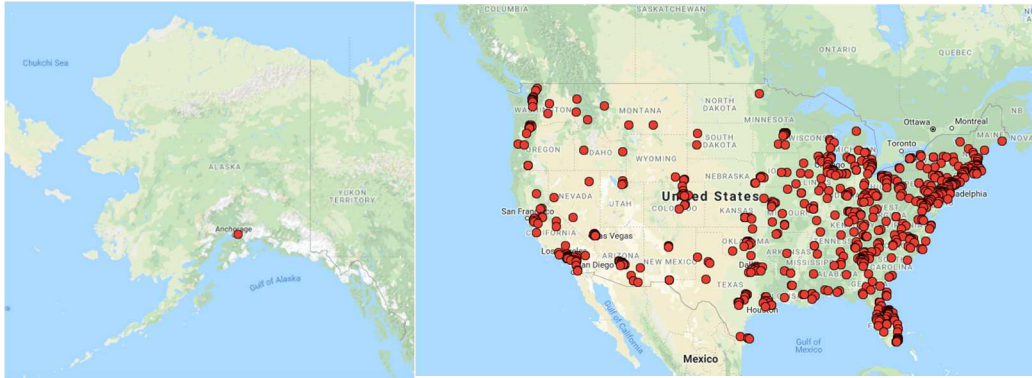
Figure 1. Map of participant location
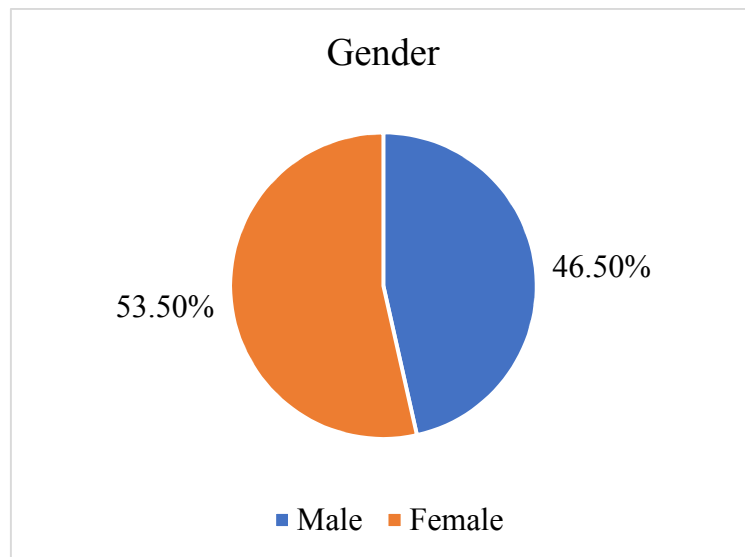
Figure 2. Participant gender
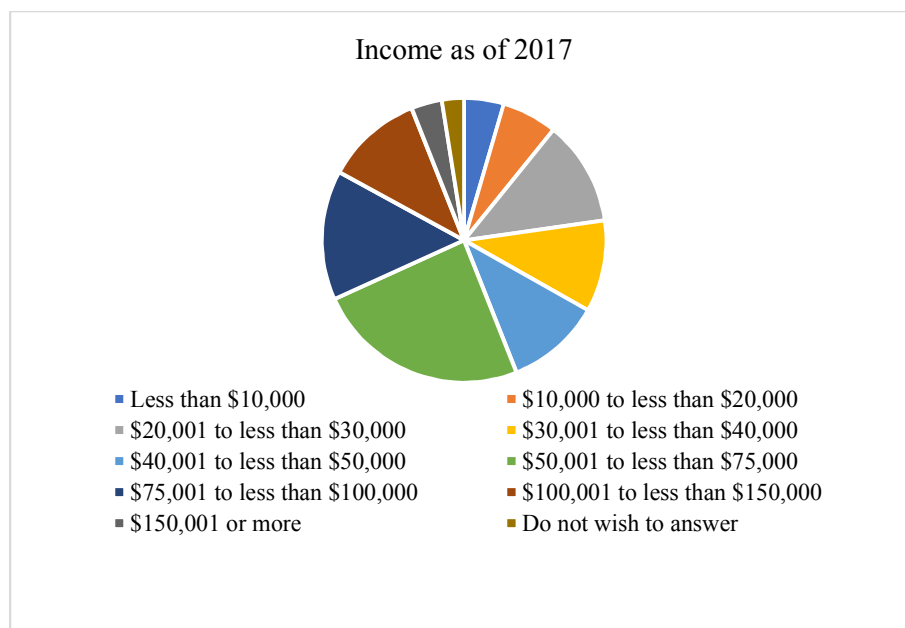
Figure 3. Participant level of income
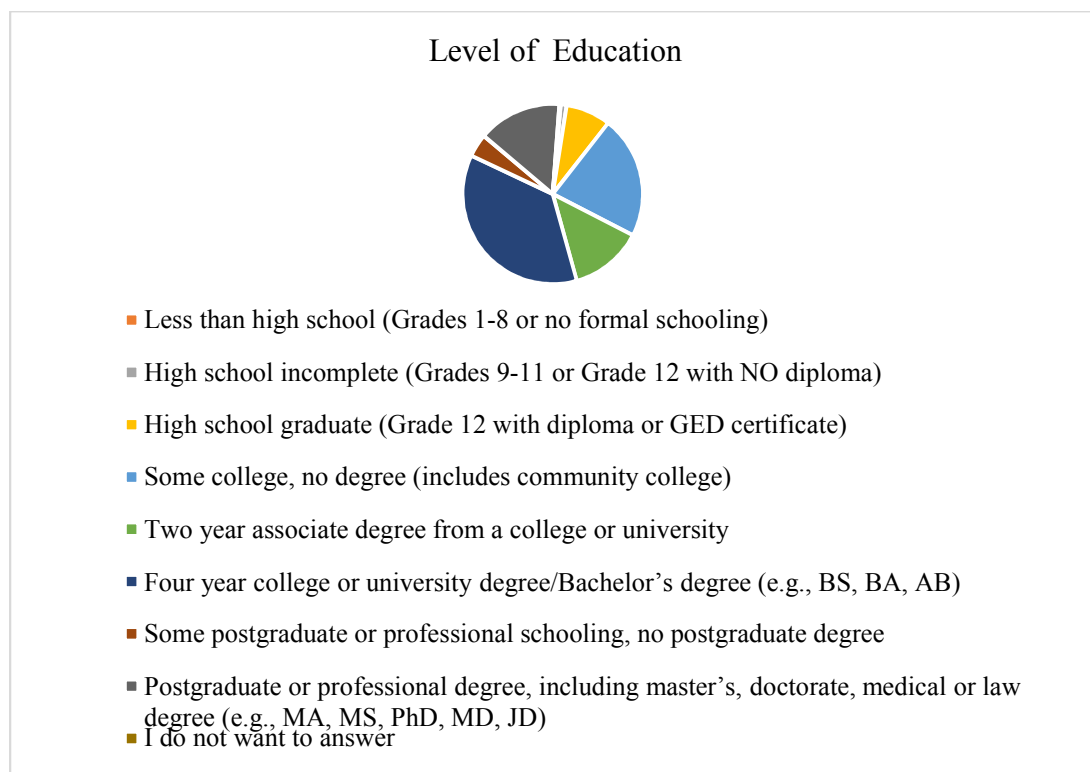
Figure 4. Participant level of education

Race

- White (e.g., Caucasian, European, Irish, Italian, Arab, Middle Eastern)

- Black or African-American (e.g., Negro, Kenyan, Nigerian, Haitian)

- Asian or Asian-American (e.g., Asian Indian, Chinese, Filipino, Vietnamese or other Asian origin groups)

- Native American/American Indian/Alaska Native

- Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian

- Hispanic/Latino (e.g., Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban)

- Other race

- I do not want to answer

Figure 5. Participant race

Procedure

Before the main experiment, two pretests were conducted. The first was to select the organization that would be experiencing a crisis from the autom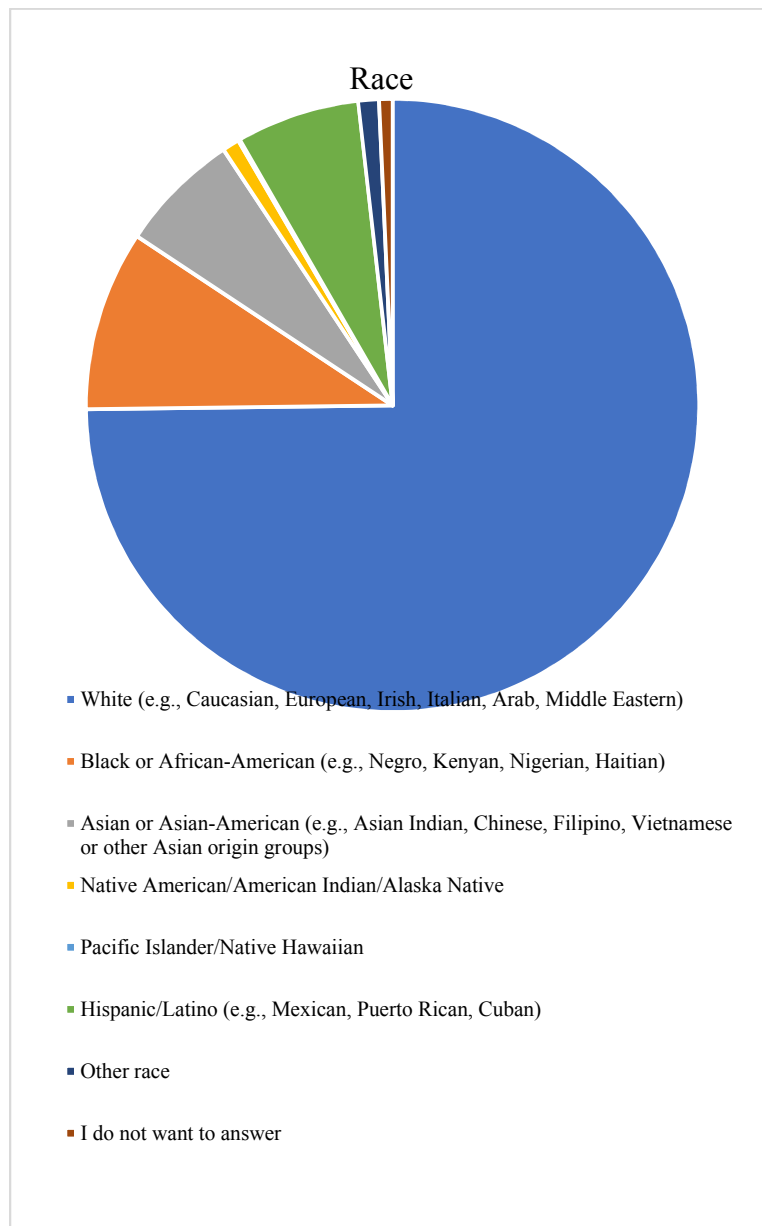otive industry to be used in the experiment. While any organization is susceptible to a crisis, select industries may be more inclined to experience one. The automotive industry was chosen for the study as they have made the list of top five most crisis-prone industries for three consecutive years (ICM, 2017). The automotive industry set a record of 53 million recalls in 2016, while recalls in 2015 were more than 51 million vehicles, and 52 million in 2014. Among recent recalls, General Motors admitted to a mishandling of defective ignition switches linked to 124 deaths and resulting in a $900 million fine. In 2017, over four million Fiat Chrysler's were recalled, 3.3 million Honda's, and 1.1 million Ford's (ICM, 2018). These statistics illustrate a few examples of the extent of damage this industry has faced in the past.

To determine which automotive company that would be experiencing a crisis in the study, a 2017 list of Forbes most reputable companies and Fortune 500 companies was consolidated to become a part of a pretest. The companies were presented in a pretest (*n*=95) and measured using a 7-point bipolar scale derived from Kim and Park (2017) ranging from "(1) = not familiar at all" to "(7) = extremely familiar" measured familiarity with the questions such as, "How would you rate your familiarity with this company?" Callison's (2001) measure of credibility also used items such as, "On a scale of (1) Strongly disagree to (7) Strongly agree, under most circumstances, I would be likely to believe what the company says." From this pretest, it was determined that The Ford Motor Company would be the automotive company. The Ford Motor Company scored a

6.28 average, (SD=.93), proving to be a company that participants were extremely familiar with. Along with familiarity, The Ford Motor Company scored the highest combined score of fairness, unbiased, "tells the whole story", accurate, and "can be trusted."

After it was determined that The Ford Motor Company would represent the automotive company experiencing a crisis, stimuli were created and a second pretest was conducted to test the main experiment, including stimuli and the manipulations checks. The pretest participants (N=50) were recruited through a snowball sample and it was ensured that these participants would not be participating in the main experiment. The pretest enhanced the quality of the study by determining the most realistic circumstances surrounding the crisis and several questions that were flagged for concern for participants were altered and rephrased. After the pretests, the main experiment was conducted. The participants (N=905), recruited by MTurk, began the survey after reading and agreeing to the informed consent document. The survey, hosted by Qualtrics consisted of a questionnaire estimated to take 15 minutes to complete. The participants were asked to answer questions regarding their perception of the organization, and then randomly assigned one of nine crisis response strategies. Since a real organization was used, prior reputation and history were taken into account and controlled for.

After reading the crisis information, they were asked to answer questions about their perception of the organization, including their emotions and behaviors toward the organization. They repeated this process with a second fictitious crisis situation. The second half included a scenario involving a fictitious organization experiencing a food contamination. Prior reputation and history was not taken into account for the second

scenario since the organization was fictitious. The organization was within the food industry, since this industry also lingers near the top of ICM's Annual Crisis Report as millions of pounds of food products were recalled in 2016 due to contamination (ICM, 2017). The food industry crisis was developed from the analysis of real press releases based on actual crises, while changing the name of the organization. In doing so, the information preserved a realistic scenario equivalent to an existing crisis. After participants complete the survey, they were exposed to a debriefing statement to insure they understand that the crises were fictitious and there was no real threat. The complete questionnaire is listed under Appendix B.

Manipulation Checks

Five manipulation checks were developed, three for the first half of the study and two for the second half. The first three were directed at the crisis type and base crisis response and were asked after the participant was exposed to the stimuli. Two questions from the manipulation check that aim at instructing and adjusting information include, "The information includes that you can schedule an appointment to have your vehicle repaired" and "The information says that the company has created a special quality task force." The participants were successful at identifying the different variables. As there were nine conditions in the first half the experiment, three included instructing messages, three included adjusting messages, and three were combined instructing and adjusting messages. The first stimulus (n=100) correctly perceived the message to include instructing information (M=5.99, SD=1.5) and not adjusting or combined information (M=2.81, SD=1.97). The second set of participants (n=101) perceived the message to

include adjusting information (M=6.1, SD=1.53) and not instructing or combined

information (M=2.75, SD=2.01). The third group (n=99), perceived the message to

include instructing and adjusting information, or the combined response (M=5.81,

SD=1.56). The fourth set (n=100) was exposed to instructing information and perceived

it as such (M=5.92, SD=1.04). Fifth, participants found the message to include adjusting

information (M=6.16, SD=1.43). The sixth stimuli included combined information

(M=6.03, SD=1.35, M=5.78, SD=1.59). The seventh group correctly found the

information to be instructing (M=6.22, SD=1.44), the eighth group was adjusting

(M=5.94, SD=1.58), and the ninth was combined (M=5.82, SD=1.54). A table depicting a

visual representation of the results of the manipulation check can be found Table 1.

Table 1: Part I Manipulation Check Results

Stimulus Group	Instructing	Adjusting	Participants
1. Instructing Information	(M=5.99, SD=1.50)	(M=2.81, SD=1.97)	(n=100)
2. Adjusting Information	(M=2.75, SD=2.01)	(M=6.10, SD=1.53)	(n=101)
3. Combined Information	(M=5.81, SD=1.61)	(M=5.81, SD=1.51)	(n=99)
4. Instructing Information	(M=5.92, SD=1.64)	(M=2.89, SD=2.02)	(n=100)
5. Adjusting Information	(M=2.66, SD=1.95)	(M=6.16, SD=1.43)	(n=98)
6. Combined Information	(M=6.03, SD=1.35)	(M=5.78, SD=1.59)	(n=104)
7. Instructing Information	(M=6.22, SD=1.44)	(M=2.84, SD=2.03)	(n=99)
8. Adjusting Information	(M=2.68, SD=1.97)	(M=5.94, SD=1.58)	(n=102)
9. Combined Information	(M=5.91, SD=1.49)	(M=5.89, SD=1.45)	(n=102)

The second half of the study had two additional manipulation checks aiming at

similar questions. To ensure participants recognized the platforms each message was one,

a multiple-choice question asked them to select which media the information was

presented on: A Facebook Post, an online news article, a Twitter Post, or a YouTube

video. This manipulation showed that the media context was accurately interpreted and

that the crisis types of preventable and accidental were appropriately categorized. To assess crisis responsibility, the following question asked, "On a scale from very unlikely to very likely, how likely do you believe that the organization caused the crisis?" The messages in the preventable scored a total average landing in "likely" to "very likely" (M=5.21, SD=1.55). The participants viewed the messages in the accidental cluster to be "somewhat likely" to "likely" (M =4.78, SD=1.76). There was a distinction between the preventable and accidental categories, as even the highest average (M=5.02) in the accidental cluster did not surpass the lowest average in the preventable cluster (M =5.04) and the stimuli without a frame showed the lowest attribution (M =4.62, SD=1.94). The participants successfully checked the manipulation and the results can be viewed in Table 2.

Table 2: Part II Manipulation Check Results

Stimulus Group	Media (Mode)	Org. Responsibility	Participants
10. Preventable	1 (Facebook Post)	(M =5.04, SD=1.61)	(n=51)
11. Preventable	1 (Facebook Post)	(M =5.16, SD=1.33)	(n=50)
12. Preventable	1 (Facebook Post)	(M =5.31, SD=1.57)	(n=51)
13. Accidental	1 (Facebook Post)	(M =4.47, SD=2.05)	(n=51)
14. Accidental	1 (Facebook Post)	(M =4.92, SD=1.59)	(n=52)
15. Accidental	1 (Facebook Post)	(M =5.02, SD=1.60)	(n=51)
16. No Frame	1 (Facebook Post)	(M =4.22, SD=1.81)	(n=51)
17. No Frame	1 (Facebook Post)	(M =4.75, SD=1.89)	(n=48)
18. No Frame	1 (Facebook Post)	(M =4.31, SD=2.13)	(n=49)
20. Preventable	4 (News Article)	(M =5.34, SD=1.79)	(n=50)
21. Preventable	4 (News Article)	(M =5.12, SD=1.60)	(n=51)
22. Preventable	4 (News Article)	(M =5.27, SD=1.39)	(n=48)
23. Accidental	4 (News Article)	(M =4.57, SD=1.73)	(n=49)
24. Accidental	4 (News Article)	(M =4.82, SD=1.88)	(n=50)
25. Accidental	4 (News Article)	(M =4.88, SD=1.74)	(n=52)
26. No Frame	4 (News Article)	(M =4.84, SD=1.88)	(n=50)
27. No Frame	4 (News Article)	(M =4.78, SD=1.97)	(n=49)
28. No Frame	4 (News Article)	(M =4.92, SD=1.99)	(n=52)

Measures

With organization in place, respondents were first asked about how they perceive The Ford Motor Company in terms of reputation and measuring OPRs (Fombrun, Ponzi, & Newbury, 2015; Hon & Grunig, 1999). This composed of the first 50 questions and respondents were asked to rate each item on a 7-point Likert scale with responses that ranged from "(1) Strongly Disagree" to "(7) Strongly Agree. Hon and Grunig's (1999) measure of relationships included items on control mutuality, trust, commitment, satisfaction, and measured the type of relationship that the participant had with the organization. An item within the exchange relationship included, "On a scale of (1) Strongly disagree to (7) Strongly agree, whenever this organization gives or offers something to people like me, it generally expects something in return." A communal relationship question asked, "I feel that this organization will not take advantage of people who are vulnerable."

After presented with the stimulus and manipulation checks, content and source credibility was measured. Content credibility was measured message credibility with a semantic differential-type scale with five items including believability, accuracy, and completeness (Eastin, 2001; Meyer, 1988; Gaziano & McGrath, 1986; Hu & Sundar, 2009). Source credibility, or the company employing the information source, was measured with four items, such as participant's perception of honestly, intentions, and truthfulness (Callison, 2001; Kim & Park, 2017). Emotion was taken into account using measures from Coombs and Holladay's (2005) study with statements such as "The event makes me feel angry toward the organization" and "I actually feel a little happy that something bad happened to the organization, the organization deserves it" on a 7-point

Likert scale. The dependent variables, corporate reputation and supportive behavioral intentions, were then measured using a 7-point Likert scale (Coombs, 1998; Coombs & Holladay, 1996). Participants were asked how trustworthy they perceived the organization and behavioral intentions such as saying nice things to others (WOM) and attend a rally to show public support for the organization. By measuring these two dependent variables, results will illustrate how the manipulation, different forms of crisis response strategies, affects the organization's outlook.

Independent Variables

The first half of the experiment uses a 1 x 3 x 3 factorial design to determine how the base crisis response and crisis type affects crisis outcomes within a crisis situation. The first independent variable is the organization represented in the crisis situation, which was determined through a pretest to be The Ford Motor Company. The industry was selected from ICM's list of most crisis-prone industries (ICM, 2017) and a pretest determined the organization from within this industry by measuring familiarity and credibility (Kim & Park, 2017; Callison, 2001).

The second independent variable is the base crisis response strategy. The base crisis response includes: 1. Instructing information; 2. Adjusting information; or 3. Combined information (Instructing and Adjusting information). This was derived from Coombs' (2006) breakdown of how the base crisis response is defined. The instructing and adjusting messages include the critical details Coombs includes emphasizes, such as the crisis basics on "the basic information about what happened in the crisis event" and

protection explaining, "what stakeholders need to do to protect themselves from harm" (p. 246).

The third variable is the crisis type, which is defined by Coombs (2011) as the "frame that is used to interpret the crisis" (p. 157). The three crisis types in this variable are categorized as preventable, accidental, and no frame. The creation of this manipulation was guided by Coombs' (2006) examples of crisis types illustrated in his "Table 1. Crisis Clusters" (p. 244) in "The Protective Powers of Crisis Response Strategies: Managing Reputational Assets during a Crisis." A human breakdown recall was used in the preventable crisis messaging and a technical breakdown recall was used in the accidental crisis messaging. The message without a frame did not include any details regarding the responsibility of the crisis, only the information.

The second end of the experiment tests the media context in a 2 (media context: Facebook post or online news article) x 3 (base crisis response: instructing, adjusting, or combined information) x 3 (framed crisis type: accidental, preventable, or no framed crisis) experimental design. This introduces the media context as an independent variable. The media contexts utilized in this experiment include one traditional and one nontraditional media platform. A Pew Research study published in 2017 found that the most common pathways to online news was when online news consumers reported getting the information directly from online news websites 36% of the time they got news (Bialik & Matsa, 2017). Direct visits to an online news organization's website are "the most common pathways to online news" (p. 8), which demonstrates the saliency of the functions and uses of this media context. Traditional media have the ability to shape the reputation of organizations experiencing crises, as the public still values and relies on it

(Capelos & Wurzer, 2009). In addition to traditional news, nontraditional platforms, such as social media, have evolved to become relied on during a crisis.

While social media has generated a platform for information gathering and sharing, it has been regarded to "complement" offline news sources, rather than replace them (Vyas, Singh, & Bhabhra, 2007). In the past, researchers examined media consumption during crisis events in the context of social media to determine how organizations disseminate their messages (Cooley & Jones, 2013), sharing trends in political movements (Zhou, Bandari, Kong, Qian, & Roychowdhury, 2010), and a tool for spreading information and news about crises (Comunello & Anzera, 2012; Mayfield, 2011). Kostkova, Szomszor, and St Louis (2014) add in their study of crises events that social media, through social networking, "presents a unique opportunity to gather information on large numbers of individuals as well as offering the opportunity to enhance early warning outbreak detection systems" (p. 82).

As crises evokes uncertainty in stakeholders, social media offers reassurance by providing a platform to communicate with stakeholders in a timely manner and build relationships with stakeholders (Coombs, 2007b; Jo & Kim, 2003). It creates benefits for both the organization and its stakeholders, such as meeting stakeholder needs, expectations, and providing transparency (Waters, Burnett, Lamm, & Lucas, 2009). Particularly in crisis events, social media offers necessary outlets for information, updates and news dissemination, and the ability to evaluate public opinion (Vis, 2013). Features of social media benefit the user by allowing interaction such as commenting, sharing, or liking an organization's post. The expedient quality that social media affords allows organizations to release information instantaneously and without the barriers traditional

news media face. This also creates the obligation for organizations to utilize social media

to satisfy the need for information that stakeholders have become accustomed to with the

aid of technology. Social media users can choose to subscribe or follow organizations so

that information released can be directed to relevant audiences. Organizations continue to

harness this media to communicate with stakeholders, create relationships, and gain

social influence (Kelly, Kerr, & Drennan, 2010; Rooksby & Sommerville, 2012). This

independent variable, media context, is utilized as a Facebook post or an online news

article.

Dependent Variables

To measure the effects of the manipulated crisis response strategies, two

dependent variables were used to identify their impact on the organizations: Corporate

reputation and supportive behavioral intentions (Coombs, 1998; Coombs & Holladay,

1996). For the purpose of this study, corporate reputation was defined by how

stakeholders perceive the crisis (Coombs, 1998; Coombs & Holladay, 1996).

Operationally, it was asked with the following questions: 1. The company is concerned

with the well-being of its publics; 2. The company has honest intentions; 3. The company

does not have a hidden agenda; 4. The company is trustworthy; and 5. Under most

circumstances, I would be likely to believe what the company says. Since crises threaten

the reputation of an organization, this is an important variable to represent a severe

concern. Much research contributes to understanding how causal attributions during

crises impact reputation, which adds interest to the current study. The aim is to

understand which crisis response strategy is appropriate, minimizing reputational damage and maintaining supportive behavioral intentions.

Supportive behavioral intentions illustrate the level of support for the organization and was operationalized also using Coombs and Holladay's (1996) measure that is interested in how willing a person is to exert support for the organization in a crisis. This was operationalized by asking how likely the participant would be to behavior with the following questions: 1. Say nice things about the organization to other people you knew; 2. Attend a rally designed to show public support for the organization; 3. Sign a petition in support of some action (e.g., re-zoning request, road improvements, etc.) the organization was trying to take; and 4. Apply for a job with or encourage others to apply for a job with the organization. On a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from "(1) Extremely Unlikely" to "(7) Extremely Likely", participants define where their intentions stand. Essentially defined as the intensity of intention towards a target behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980), it aims to measure how the varying crisis response strategies influence consumer behavior. Past research implies that when emotions of sympathy towards the organization occur, positive behavioral intention occur, while if it is anger, negative behavioral intentions are elicited (Coombs & Holladay, 2004).

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

One-way ANOVAs were used to evaluate the relationship that participants had with the organization, The Ford Motor Company. Hon and Grunig's (1999) scales of relationships, which can also be performed outside of the academic realm by environmental scanning, identified the type of relationship participants had with the organization. The results found the following scores: Trust (M=123.47, F=2.72, p=.01); control mutuality (M=62.22, F=2.41, p=.02); commitment (M=115.22, F=2.73, p=.01); and satisfaction (M=104.77, F=2.43, p=.01). Between communal and exchange relationships, communal was determined to be stronger with (M=74.94, F=2.3, p=.02). Prior reputation was also measured to find the organization to be reputable (M=1076.78, F=2.61, p=.01) (Fombrun, Ponzi, & Newbury, 2015). The complete results can be found in Table 3.

Table 3: Prior Reputation and OPR Results

PRIORREP - Prior Reputation (Fombrun, Ponzi, & Newbury, 2015)	
IV2:	M =1231.81 (F=2.607) (p=.008)
IV4:	M =1011.405 (F=2.501) (p=.007)
IV5:	M =1097.031 (F=3.038) (p=.002)
IV6:	M =966.867 (F=2.289) (p=.023)
PriorRep Mean:	M =1076.779
PriorRep Fvalue:	F=2.60875
PriorRep Pvalue:	p=.01

OPRTRUST - 23_28 OPR (Hon & Grunig, 1999) - Trust	
IV2:	M=130.213 (F=2.58) (p=.008)
IV4:	M=133.03 (F=3.44) (p=.000)
IV5:	M=107.168 (F=2.15) (p=.028)
Trust Mean:	M=123.4703333

Trust Fvalue	F =2.723333333
Trust Pvalue	p=0.012
OPRCONTROL - 29_32 OPR (Hon & Grunig, 1999) - Control Mutuality	
IV2:	M=69.894 (F=2.50) (p=.010)
IV4:	M=65.398 (F=2.883) (p=.002)
IV5:	M=66.592 (F=2.28) (p=.019)
IV6:	M=47.004 (F=1.986) (p=.049)
Control Mean	M=62.222
Control Fvalue	F =2.41225
Control Pvalue	p=0.02

To test the first two hypotheses, the impact of the combined information message on corporate reputation and supportive behavioral intentions was identified. The first two hypotheses suggest that the combined information (i.e., both instructing information and adjusting information) will have a significant effect on corporate reputation and supportive behavioral intentions when used in a crisis response than a singular base crisis response. For the first hypothesis focusing on the impact on corporate reputation, results show that there is a significant relationship between the combined crisis response strategy and corporate reputation. Measuring the combined information variables, all showed a significant relationship with the first dependent variable, corporate reputation. All combined strategies resulted in significant coefficients at $p < .05$, or $p =.007$, $p =.008$, and $p =.025$, respectively. Not all independent variables showed significance with corporate reputation, yet all combined responses showed significance. Therefore, H1, which predicted that combined information (i.e., both instructing information and adjusting information) would have a significant effect on corporate reputation, is supported. This information is also referenced in Table 4.

Table 4: Independent Variable Part I Results

Independent Variable	Corporate Reputation
IV3: Preventable/Combined	*M*=4.07, F=2.87, *p*=.007
IV6: Accidental/Combined	*M*=3.26, F =2.67, *p*=.008
IV9: No Frame/Combined	*M*=3.785, F =2.33, *p*=.025

The second hypothesis, which predicted that the combined information would also have a significant effect on the second dependent variable, supportive behavioral intentions, was not supported. Results show that the variables with statistical significance include the independent variables with the strategies Preventable/Adjusting, Accidental/Instructing, and Accidental/Adjusting.

H3 assumed that the preventable crisis messaging would result in the highest attributions of crisis responsibility, thus having the largest effect size between crisis type and corporate reputation. Although the Preventable/Combined response showed a large effect size, this hypothesis was unsupported because of the lack of statistical significance in other variables. Similarly, H4 predicted the relationship between supportive behavioral intentions and the preventable crisis type to have the largest effect size of all other relationships between crisis type and supportive behavioral intentions. Without complete statistical significance to compare clusters, H4 was not supported. The Preventable/Combined response, however, did show a significant effect size (*M*=4.25, *p*=.028), while almost all other strategies in the Accidental and No Frame clusters were above a mean square of 5.

Looking at the relationship between base crisis response strategies and crisis types, RQ1 questioned if the combined base crisis response strategy is more effective on the preventable crisis type, accidental crisis type, or no frame. The second and third research question openly ask how the crisis type and base crisis response affect corporate reputation and supportive behavioral intentions, respectively. Without distinct trends in the crisis type and response strategy, there is not a significant effect on the dependent variables, RQ2 and RQ3.

The study also took into account emotion. Emotion was measured using Coombs and Holladay's (2005) dimensions that ask participants about how they feel given the crisis situation. Questions measured how participants experienced sympathy, anger, and schadenfreude, or taking joy in the organization's misfortune. The largest effect size was within the preventable cluster. Participants felt anger towards the organization, which was found when measuring schadenfreude. Participants were asked how much they agree with the statement, "I actually feel a little happy that something bad happened to the organization, the organization deserves it," and this was felt the strongest in the preventable cluster (i.e., Preventable/Adjusting (M=9.013, p=0) and Preventable/Combined (M=10.842, p=.001). As expected, the accidental cluster scored lowered in this emotion category all three stimuli utilizing accidental messaging scoring below the preventable scores (i.e., Accidental/Instructing (M=8.756, p=0), Accidental/Adjusting (M=5.806, p=.004), and Accidental/Combined (M=5.088, p=.048). Another significant result was found with the sympathy measure in the Accidental/Adjusting category (M=6.06, p=.007). This question asked participants to rate their level of agreement with the statement, "The event makes me feel sympathy for the

organization."

The second half of the experiment takes into account the media context, utilizing both traditional and nontraditional media. RQ4-7 inquire how corporate reputation and supportive behavioral intentions are affected when the crisis response is on a social media post (i.e., Facebook post) compared to the online news article. Testing the media context did not find lesser or greater impact on supportive behavioral intentions or corporate reputation.

Hypothesizing that combined information will have a significant effect size on corporate reputation and supportive behavioral intentions than the relationships of a singular base crisis response in both media contexts, H5 and H6 was not supported. While investigating this, message and company credibility were considered. This ANOVA produced interesting findings that may potentially explain the lack of supportive behavioral intention in the combined response strategy that is explained in the discussion. Company credibility scored high in the combined response strategies (*M*=102.09, *p*=.002; *M*=90.76, *p*=.001; *M*=80.54, *p*=.011). This dimension measured if the participant felt the organization was trying to do what it believes is best for society, had honest intentions, does not have a hidden agenda, and was telling the truth in its entirety (Callison, 2001; Kim & Park, 2017).

Considering the media context, H7 posits that relationship between corporate reputation and the preventable crisis type will have the most significant effect of all other negative relationships between crisis type and corporate reputation in both media contexts (i.e., Facebook post and online news article). Results did not support this, but did find that instructing information alone created more positive outcomes on corporate

reputation than adjusting information alone on nontraditional media. H8 evaluates this effect on supportive behavioral intentions. The lack of significance in measuring supportive behavioral intentions on the media context also makes H8 unsupported. Although unable to compare effect of supportive behavioral intentions on both media contexts, we are able to compare impact within traditional media. Supportive behavioral intentions were weaker in the preventable cluster (M=3.85, F= 2.38, p=.038) than the accidental cluster (M=4.24, F= 2.36, p=.047).

Results from the second part of the study also showed similar trends of emotion. The accidental cluster showed participants felt anger towards the organization when both posted on Facebook and conveyed on an online news article (e.g., Accidental/Instructing on the Facebook post (M=10.93, p=.004) and the news article (M= 7.25, p=.044)). Other significant results from emotion measurements was sympathy. Participants that read the message on the Facebook post felt sympathy for the organization (Preventable/Instructing: M=7.91, p=.012), while those who received the news article felt a lesser amount of sympathy (Preventable/Instructing: M=5.79, p=.05).

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

This research aims to produce evidence-based crisis response strategy recommendations for practical application by producing results that show strategy effectiveness and to further improve theoretical understandings. While many of the hypotheses were not supported, other findings drew interesting considerations for how crisis message strategies are interpreted. With the goal of understanding how the base crisis response strategies are best communicated, this study was able to determine how precise aspects of a message are experienced through emotion, credibility, and supportive behavioral intentions, among others.

To put the results into context, we begin by acknowledging the perception participants had of the organization. The organization was found to be reputable, scoring high in Fombrun, Ponzi, and Newbury's (2015) measure of prior reputation. If prior reputation of the organization were poor, this could have contributed to greater attributions of crisis responsibility and reputational threat (Coombs, 2007a). This also recognizes that research needs to continue to focus on the perception stakeholders have of the organization and responding with communication that is adjusted to align with this status.

Hon and Grunig's (1999) measure of relationships brings to light additional dimensions of the relationship that stakeholders have with the organization. From the results, participants showed confidence in the organization, have positive expectations about the relationship with the organization, and believed the relationship they had with the organization was worth maintaining. Relationships with organizations often start out

as exchange relationships, which is one party benefitting the other only because they have provided benefits in the past and expect them to continue in the future. This relationship, however, is weaker than communal because the public often expects organizations to service the community while not expecting a return. If an organization can achieve this communal relationship, which is often developed over time, they create more stable stakeholders that view the organization positively, developing trust, satisfaction, and commitment to the organization. Hon and Grunig (1999) also describe this enhanced relationship to "greatly reduce the likelihood of negative behaviors from stakeholders mentioned above—litigation, regulation, strikes, boycotts, negative publicity, and the like" (p. 11).

These positive associations indicate that the crisis intensifiers did not escalate the participants' response. This also means there is the possibility for the organization to be less susceptible to reputational damage after a crisis. Blazer and Sulsky's (1992) note that this favorable relationship history can potentially produce a metaphorical shield that protects the organization from reputational damage of a crisis, which is also called the halo effect. Adversely, if the organization has a negative relationship with stakeholders, the organization will face greater threat to reputational damage (Hon & Grunig, 1999).

Supportive behavioral intentions in the combined crisis response strategy provoked further investigation. Supportive behavioral intentions asked participants how likely they would participate in the following activities if they had been affected by the crisis: 1. Say nice things about the organization to other people they knew; 2. Attend a rally designed to show public support for the organization; 3. Sign a petition in support of some action (e.g., re-zoning request, road improvements, etc.) the organization was trying

to take; 4. Apply for a job with or encourage others to apply for a job with the organization (Coombs, 1998; Coombs & Holladay, 1996). While this dimension is important to understand how an organization faces actionable repercussions, it might not fully capture the complexity of stakeholder intentions. In the combined base crisis response strategy, the organization provides the details of a crisis, along with instructions on how to prevent harm and explains measures they have made to improve processes to prevent the crisis occurring again. This was conveyed in the study by stating that the organizations were working to make changes to minimize the risk of it happening again, the creation special quality task forces to address the problem, and attention to ensure that all appropriate actions are taken, while also providing an external link for additional information and assistance. With all of these precautions now set in place after the crisis and communicated to the public, it may appear that the organization is credible, or trusted to correct themselves. The public may not be motivated to intervene or feel compelled to advocate for or against the organization. To understand if this was the case, we look to the measure of company credibility.

As reported in the results, company credibility scored highly, showing that participants felt the organization was trying to do what it believes is best for society, had honest intentions, did not have a hidden agenda, and was telling the truth in its entirety (Callison, 2001; Kim & Park, 2017). This could illustrate how the presentation of the base crisis response improves an organization's credibility, suggesting this response strategy can help an organization experiencing any range of attribution can quickly rebound from a crisis. With increased company credibility and low scores of anxiety, stakeholders are reassured that the organization has the issue under control and anxiety is

eased. This could additionally imply that after instructing and adjusting information is provided to the public, the image restoration strategy of corrective action may be employed. Once the organization has fulfilled their ethical responsibility to attend to the public with critical information, they can then further focus on restoring their image with corrective action to recover from crises by regaining or maintain social legitimacy (Keminsky, 1994; Sellnow, 1993; Ulmer & Sellnow, 1995). Corrective action is defined by Benoit (1997) as, "restoring the state of affairs existing before the offensive action, and/or promising to prevent the recurrence of the offensive act" (p. 181). While this is just one of many image restoration strategies, the positive response to the combined base crisis response show this may produce beneficial outcomes during post-crisis recovery measures.

While the findings from company credibility confirmed that the organization was perceived as credible and competent at handling the crisis, the measure of supportive behavioral intentions could be expanded. The measure was operationalized with questions on the participants intent to attend a rally, sign a petition, apply for, or encourage others to apply for a job with the organization (Coombs, 1998; Coombs & Holladay, 1996). While these do measure actionable behavioral intentions, this four-item measure has the potential to capture other common behaviors suited to current conditions. If a preventable crisis has evoked the emotion of anger and schadenfreude, as it has in this study, past research has shown that stakeholders do hold the company accountable through actionable measures. For instance, when the Tennessee Valley Authority had financial issues, customers took to Facebook to voice their anger (WRCB, 2012). This action, commenting on the organization's Facebook post, shows new ways that

stakeholder behavioral intentions can be captured. Among other social media actions, supportive behavioral intentions may include posting positively about the organization or following and "liking" the organization's social media platforms. Integrating these aspects helps capture more comprehensive criteria for this concept rather than working strictly within the bounds of the current measure.

Anger and schadenfreude peaked in the preventable crisis type messaging in the first half of the study and was detected on both media contexts in the second half. This is also consistent with current research that validates that the higher the attribution an organization is responsible for, the stronger emotions of anger, and even schadenfreude. Schadenfreude, or feeling pleasure in witnessing an organization suffer, shows that stakeholders feel that the misfortune was deserved. This was evident as the construct given to participants explicitly stated, "I actually feel a little happy that something bad happened to the organization, the organization deserves it." Crisis messaging in the preventable cluster framed the organization with high attribution of crisis responsibility, thus we can see the strong emotion preventable crises provoke. This is consistent with prior research that shows how anger, and the evermore-powerful schadenfreude, from intentional crises can fuel behavior, such as negative word-of-mouth (Coombs, 2005). To understand how crisis messaging can limit this emotion, and rather bring out sympathy for the organization, additional research should tailor a study to evaluate how communication strategies, especially when framed as preventable, can maneuver crisis response messaging and delivery. Validating prior research that shows how the cause of an event influences a response and reaction, research should further the identification of factors that contribute to specific emotions, such as schadenfreude (Weiner, 1985).

In the second half of the study, it appeared the media context became salient, but not as expected. Although there was not a distinction if traditional or nontraditional media is more effective to use in crisis messaging, results found interesting implications. When the organization utilized their social media platform, which was tested with Facebook in the current study, more sympathy for the organization was elicited. Of Coombs and Holladay's (2005) tested emotions of sympathy, anger, and schadenfreude, less responsibility gives rise to sympathy. A sympathetic response may also indicate the public becomes more understanding of the situation or the organization less deserving of retribution (Salovey & Rosenhan, 1989). There could be several explanations to this result. First, you could consider the social media post more genuine and the organization more transparent since the message is posted on behalf of the organization rather than transmitted through a third-party news outlet. Second, Wispe's (1986) research shows that sympathy is more eminent in nonvictims than the victims of the crisis. As participants of this study may not have been directly involved with the crisis or threatened by the harms that accompany the crisis, they may categorize themselves as nonvictims, therefore demonstrating sympathy for the organization. As sympathy and anger were prominent in this study, these emotions are critical to analyze when evaluating crisis response strategies as they are typical attribution-dependent emotions (Dalal & Tripathi, 1987).

Lack of significance in media context results hindered the ability to directly compare the impact of crisis response and media context on the dependent variables, but the findings did reinforce the idea that crises in the preventable cluster face the greatest threat to loss of supportive behavioral intentions. It can also be concluded that if used

singularly, instructing information should be prioritized ahead of adjusting information, as this led to better corporate reputation outcomes. This can be applied to organizations that utilize platforms that limit the amount of characters that can be used. For instance, if an organization relies on Twitter to disseminate their crisis response messaging, they are only afforded a set amount of characters that should first release instructing information and then choose to provide adjusting information.

The lack of statistical significance in the second half of the study could be due in part to the sample size that was randomized with 18 conditions. Replicating this study with a greater sample size may contribute a clearer conclusion and understanding of how media context impacts corporate reputation and supportive behavioral intentions. Results of corporate reputation were recognized as more significant while the behavioral intentions were not as distinct. This was interesting because past research has revealed parallels with those variables, indicating that attitudes and emotion towards an organization motivate behavior (Frijda, Kuipers, & Schure, 1989). However, if anxiety and fear is generated, it can also cause one to refrain from committing to behavioral intentions and avoid the risk.

The findings provide essential and practical strategies for organizations to instill and guide crisis orientation. Not only do the findings provide guidance on which response an organization should use in the event of a crisis, but they add valuable insights on the effectiveness of each strategy. This research satisfies the need to understand which base crisis response strategy best encourages public safety and address the psychological needs of the public while minimizing both physical and psychological damages (Johansson & Bäck, 2017; Coombs, 2007b; Sturges, 1994). Rather than emphasizing

reputation repair efforts, scholars and practitioners must continue to pursue strategies that promote public safety. Practitioners within crisis management, or those performing in areas of technical and administrative aspects of crisis, must integrate these findings into their crisis management plan (CMP) (Perrow, 1984). These results indicate which base crisis response is most effective, so it is appropriate to integrate these recommendations into the CMP, which "consists of a full range of thoughtful processes and steps that anticipate the complex nature of crisis real and perceived" (Caywood & Stocker, 1993, p. 411).

In light of these findings, theoretical extension has the capability to provide guiding strategies for organizations, something these findings expand by equipping practitioners with effective crisis response strategies and business acumen that will lead to auspicious outcomes. As crises are inevitable in any industry, this study produces insight for practical orientation, dovetailing theory and practice. Understanding the effect of crisis response strategies is critical for organizations, as it can work to resolve potential harms to the public or, if neglected, it can exacerbate a crisis.

Limitations and Future Direction

There are several limitations of the study that produce opportunity for future development. Corporate reputation and supportive behavioral intentions could not be proven to be greater based on the media context. As this was conducted utilizing a Facebook post, rather than another form of nontraditional media, further application should compare other platforms of social media. It is also important to consider who is publishing the information, whether it is the organization, a CEO, or social media

influencer. While extending this, source and message credibility should be taken into account, as this study has, to ensure participant responses are valid.

As social media has become a dominating platform for consumers to obtain news, it is evident that it is here for the long run. Although Facebook has topped the list, this is not to say that it will remain so, since Facebook supplanted the once-popular social media platform, Myspace (Fearn-Banks, 2017, p. 74). Guth and Alloway (2008) reiterate, "In an era when mass communications channels are becoming more and more diffused with the passage of time, the need to reach the public through the media they prefer is increasingly critical" (p. 32). The present study does not explore alternative social media, so if the specific platform further moderates the effect of the form, this study is not equipped to detect that effect. Facebook is currently the most utilized platform but as preferences shift and new platforms emerge, this research should capture the impact of dominant platforms and their distinctive features. For instance, if an organization heavily relies on Twitter to communicate with stakeholders, which restricts the amount of characters an organization is able to post, we find that instructing information should be released first and then adjusting information.

Further investigation of media platform can also enhance our understanding of each media platform and its functions. Understanding which media are relied on for news can help determine the most appropriate platform for disseminating vital information. Identifying the platform that stakeholders depend on and have the most access to can help distinguish the most appropriate platform. For instance, the current study utilizes an automotive company. The automotive industry typically provides recall information on their website or provides access to a landing page within their website to direct the

public. Comparative analyses could explore how organizations control access to this information and frame recall announcements. Understanding each how each platform functions and how stakeholders can interact, such as sharing information, reviewing a company, or allowing a discussion, shows how these findings are distinctive to the platforms tested and encourages further testing on other contexts. As well, future research should take into account for prior history and reputation and examine the possibility of an effect that derives from this source.

Prior history and reputation of the organization is important to take into consideration because it creates a baseline for the assessment and pre-crisis conditions that could potentially escalate reputational damage. Also, if an organization has a positive prior reputation, they may be less vulnerable to reputational threat. In the current study, the organization scored highly in prior reputation, which forces us to consider the possibility of a halo effect, which protects the organization from reputational damage of a crisis (Blazer & Sulsky, 1992). Further, an organization's existing social media presence and history may influence the crisis outcome. While testing the media context in the current study, a fictitious organization was used so prior history and reputation was not a factor. While testing the impact of crisis messaging on the automotive company, this was accounted for; however, prior reputation presents a confounding variable that makes it difficult to translate these results directly in a generalized way. The evolution of social media produces direction for future research.

In addition to the exploration of impact on nontraditional media, traditional media contexts should be investigated. Participants of the current study found the media sources utilized to be credibility both in source and message, this must be continually tested. The

chosen platforms were selected by a pretest which enhanced the validity of the experiment and the usefulness of the results. Another significant difference between the media contexts was the publisher. On the social media post, the organization posted on its own behalf, but the online news article was published by a third-party news outlet. The entity posting the information is an aspect worth investing in the future to understand how stakeholder perception varies depending on the publisher. Currently, there has been an increase in organization spokespersons speaking on behalf of organizations. Notable instances include past-CEO Tony Hayward's poorly received statement on the 2010 BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and the more well-received apology that CEO Mark Zuckerberg issued about Facebook's security issues. Understanding how stakeholders perceive these statements can add additional value to benefit practitioners with effective crisis response strategies.

While the crisis situations were realistic, given they were derived from common, real-life crises, the study utilized only two crisis situations within two industries. It's important to acknowledge that these findings cannot necessarily be generalized to all crisis situations. Further research should continue to explore crises with respect to the industry. Practitioners can choose to dedicate their research with specific interest in an industry or choose to recognize leading crisis-prone industries that can be identified annually on the Institute of Crisis Management's published crisis report. In light of rectifying the limitations, research should continue to measure the causal relationship between the crisis response strategy and stakeholder perspective while experimenting with the independent variables.

Conclusion

The findings rely on the belief that providing information regarding a crisis helps the public understand and cope with the risks of a crisis (Reynolds & Seeger, 2005). The inevitability of a crisis shows the importance of preparation in crisis management, to assist organizations in being equipped with the proper tools and educated on how a crisis response will affect their organization (Coombs, 2010). As these implications extend to crisis communication researchers and practitioners, the ultimate goal is to enhance our understanding of effective communication that contributes to public safety and quality of life. This exchange also allows organizations to strategically defend and control their message (Coombs, 2006).

Research has primarily sought strategies that decrease crisis responsibility in order to protect corporate reputation but in light of the findings, we find the nature of this relationship to be more complex than attribution (Coombs, 2008). Providing information to the public in itself, in the form of the base crisis response, can convey confidence and management over the issue, easing the public and potential collateral harm to the organization. This beneficence transcends the message to alter public perception that favors the organization. Relating to the nature of base crisis response strategy, which prioritizes the ethical responsibility to provide information to the public, further research should pursue how the perception of the combined base crisis response strategy varies cross-contextually.

It is apparent that much is yet to be discovered in the field, which can be expanded by methodological diversity in qualitative and quantitative methods, critique of theoretical application, and growing a collaborative effort to further our comprehension.

Applying theoretical concepts to simulated crisis scenarios facilitates generalizable results and organizational learning that helps redefine our understanding of crisis communication.

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APPENDIX A. PRETEST

Company Pretest

NEW BLOCK

Familiarity (Kim & Park, 2017)
7-point bipolar scale (1 = not familiar at all, 7 = extremely familiar)

How would you rate your familiarity with this company on a scale of 1 (not familiar at all) to 7 (extremely familiar)?
1. BMW
2. BorgWarner
3. Daimler
4. Ford Motor
5. General Motors
6. Harley-Davidson
7. Honda Motor
8. Nissan Motor
9. Tesla
10. Toyota

PAGE BREAK

Credibility (Callison, 2001)
7-point semantic differential scale items

Please rate each company based on your knowledge of the company.
BMW
11. trustworthy/untrustworthy
12. expert/inexpert
13. reliable/unreliable
14. professional/unprofessional
15. experienced/inexperienced
16. qualified/unqualified

NEW BLOCK

BorgWarner
17. trustworthy/untrustworthy
18. 18. expert/inexpert
19. reliable/unreliable
20. professional/unprofessional
21. experienced/inexperienced
22. qualified/unqualified

NEW BLOCK

Daimler
23. trustworthy/untrustworthy
24. expert/inexpert
25. reliable/unreliable
26. professional/unprofessional

27. experienced/inexperienced
28. qualified/unqualified

NEW BLOCK

Ford Motor

29. trustworthy/untrustworthy
30. expert/inexpert
31. reliable/unreliable
32. professional/unprofessional
33. experienced/inexperienced
34. qualified/unqualified

NEW BLOCK

General Motors

35. trustworthy/untrustworthy
36. expert/inexpert
37. reliable/unreliable
38. professional/unprofessional
39. experienced/inexperienced
40. qualified/unqualified

NEW BLOCK

Harley-Davidson

41. trustworthy/untrustworthy
42. expert/inexpert
43. reliable/unreliable
44. professional/unprofessional
45. experienced/inexperienced
46. qualified/unqualified

NEW BLOCK

Honda Motor

47. trustworthy/untrustworthy
48. expert/inexpert
49. reliable/unreliable
50. professional/unprofessional
51. experienced/inexperienced
52. qualified/unqualified

NEW BLOCK

Nissan Motor

53. trustworthy/untrustworthy
54. expert/inexpert
55. reliable/unreliable
56. professional/unprofessional
57. experienced/inexperienced
58. qualified/unqualified

NEW BLOCK

Tesla
  59. trustworthy/untrustworthy
  60. expert/inexpert
  61. reliable/unreliable
  62. professional/unprofessional
  63. experienced/inexperienced
  64. qualified/unqualified

NEW BLOCK

Toyota
  65. trustworthy/untrustworthy
  66. expert/inexpert
  67. reliable/unreliable
  68. professional/unprofessional
  69. experienced/inexperienced
  70. qualified/unqualified

NEW BLOCK

Credibility Cont.
Please rate each company based on your knowledge of the company.
BMW
  71. Fair 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Unfair
  72. Unbiased 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Biased
  73. Tells the whole story 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Doesn't tell the whole story
  74. Accurate 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Inaccurate
  75. Can be trusted 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Can't be trusted

PAGE BREAK

BorgWarner
  76. Fair 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Unfair
  77. Unbiased 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Biased
  78. Tells the whole story 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Doesn't tell the whole story
  79. Accurate 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Inaccurate
  80. Can be trusted 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Can't be trusted

PAGE BREAK

Daimler
  81. Fair 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Unfair
  82. Unbiased 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Biased
  83. Tells the whole story 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Doesn't tell the whole story
  84. Accurate 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Inaccurate
  85. Can be trusted 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Can't be trusted

PAGE BREAK

Ford Motor
  86. Fair 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Unfair
  87. Unbiased 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Biased
  88. Tells the whole story 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Doesn't tell the whole story

89. Accurate 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Inaccurate
90. Can be trusted 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Can't be trusted

PAGE BREAK

General Motors

91. Fair 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Unfair
92. Unbiased 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Biased
93. Tells the whole story 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Doesn't tell the whole story
94. Accurate 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Inaccurate
95. Can be trusted 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Can't be trusted

PAGE BREAK

Harley-Davidson

96. Fair 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Unfair
97. Unbiased 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Biased
98. Tells the whole story 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Doesn't tell the whole story
99. Accurate 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Inaccurate
100.   Can be trusted 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Can't be trusted

PAGE BREAK

Honda Motor

101.   Fair 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Unfair
102.   Unbiased 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Biased
103.   Tells the whole story 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Doesn't tell the whole story
104.   Accurate 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Inaccurate
105.   Can be trusted 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Can't be trusted

PAGE BREAK

Nissan Motor

106.   Fair 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Unfair
107.   Unbiased 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Biased
108.   Tells the whole story 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Doesn't tell the whole story
109.   Accurate 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Inaccurate
110.   Can be trusted 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Can't be trusted

PAGE BREAK

Tesla

111.   Fair 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Unfair
112.   Unbiased 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Biased
113.   Tells the whole story 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Doesn't tell the whole story
114.   Accurate 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Inaccurate
115.   Can be trusted 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Can't be trusted

PAGE BREAK

Toyota

116.   Fair 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Unfair
117.   Unbiased 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Biased
118.   Tells the whole story 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Doesn't tell the whole story
119.   Accurate 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Inaccurate
120.   Can be trusted 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Can't be trusted

APPENDIX B. MAIN EXPERIMENT

NEW BLOCK

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this online study. To begin, you will be asked to answer a survey to measure your opinion of an organization. You will be then asked to read about a crisis that occurred within an organization. You will be asked to answer how you perceive the situation and asked to evaluate your response on how the crisis situation was handled by the organization.

Please select the "NEXT" button to continue

AGREEMENT OF CONSENT FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

You have been invited to participate in this research study. Before you agree to participate, it is important that you read and understand the following information. Participation is completely voluntary. Please ask questions about anything you do not understand before deciding whether or not to participate.

PURPOSE:

· The purpose of this research study is to gain an understanding of how people respond to crisis messaging in different contexts.

· You will be one of approximately 900 participants in this research study.

PROCEDURES:

· You will be asked to complete this online survey to the best of your ability.

· You will be asked to read information about a crisis situation and asked about how you respond to the information.

· First, you will be asked questions about your familiarity with the crisis organization, then you will proceed to a survey with specific topics that include your perception of reputation and likelihood to purchase a product.

· This survey will be conducted online so please ensure you have an internet connection and are working in an uninterrupted environment.

DURATION:

· Your participation will consist of a main survey that should take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

RISKS:

· The risks associated with participation in this study are no greater than you would experience in everyday life.

· Collection of data and survey responses using the Internet involves the same risks that a person would encounter in everyday use of the Internet, such as hacking or information being unintentionally seen by others.

BENEFITS:

· There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this study. This research may benefit society by adding to crisis communication research.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

· Data collected in this study will be kept confidential.

· All your data will be assigned an arbitrary code number rather than using your name or other information that could identify you as an individual.

· Any identifiers will be secured on a password-protected laptop.

·   This data may be used in the future to apply to an additional research study
·   When the results of the study are published, you will not be identified by name.
·   The data will be destroyed by shredding paper documents and deleting electronic files two years after the completion of the study.
·   Although your responses will be deleted from the survey provider website May 30, 2018, your data may exist on backups or server logs beyond the timeframe of this research project.

COMPENSATION:
·   Participants that complete the questionnaire will be compensated with rates provided by Amazon's Mechanical Turk. There will be no additional compensation.

VOLUNTARY NATURE OF PARTICIPATION:
·   Participating in this study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study and stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.
·   Your data will be used even if you withdraw from the study.
·   You may skip any questions you do not wish to answer.
·   Your decision to participate or not will not impact your relationship with the investigators or Marquette University.

ALTERNATIVES TO PARTICIPATION:
·   There are no known alternatives other than to not participate in this study.

CONTACT INFORMATION:
·   If you have any questions about this research project, you can contact Erika Schneider at erika.schneider@marquette.edu.
·   If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, you can contact Marquette University's Office of Research Compliance at (414) 288-7570.

SELECTING THE "NEXT" BUTTON AND PROCEEDING INDICATES THAT YOU HAVE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO READ THIS CONSENT FORM, ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT THE RESEARCH PROJECT, AND ARE PREPARED TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.
_Yes
_No

NEW BLOCK

1-22 Combined PRIORREP?

PRIORREP – 1_5 Prior Reputation (Fombrun, Ponzi, & Newbury, 2015)
Based on your knowledge of the company, please rate each statement on a scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree).
    1. Offers high quality products and services
    2. Offers products and services that are a good value for the money
    3. Stands behind its products and services
    4. Meets customer needs
    5. Is an innovative company

NEW BLOCK

PRIORREP - 6_10 Prior Reputation (Fombrun, Ponzi, & Newbury, 2015)
Based on your knowledge of the company, please rate each statement on a scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree).
   6. Is generally the first company to go to market with new products and services
   7. Adapts quickly to change Workplace Rewards its employees fairly
   8. Demonstrates concern for the health and well-being of its employees
   9. Offers equal opportunities in the workplace
   10. Is open and transparent about the way the company operates

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NEW BLOCK

PRIORREP - 11_15 Prior Reputation (Fombrun, Ponzi, & Newbury, 2015)
Based on your knowledge of the company, please rate each statement on a scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree).
   11. Behaves ethically
   12. Is fair in the way it does business
   13. Acts responsibly to protect the environment
   14. Supports good causes
   15. Has a positive influence on society

NEW BLOCK

PRIORREP - 16_22 Prior Reputation (Fombrun, Ponzi, & Newbury, 2015)
Based on your knowledge of the company, please rate each statement on a scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree).
   16. Has a strong and appealing leader
   17. Has a clear vision for its future
   18. Is a well-organized company
   19. Has excellent managers
   20. Is a profitable company
   21. Delivers financial results that are better than expected
   22. Shows strong prospects for future growth

NEW BLOCK

OPRTRUST - 23_28 OPRTRUST (Hon & Grunig, 1999) - Trust
Based on your knowledge of the company, please rate each statement on a scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree).
   23. This organization treats people like me fairly and justly.
   24. Whenever this organization makes an important decision, I know it will be concerned about people like me.
   25. This organization can be relied on to keep its promises.
   26. I believe that this organization takes the opinions of people like me into account when making decisions.
   27. I feel very confident about this organization's skills.
   28. This organization has the ability to accomplish what it says it will do.

PAGE BREAK

OPRCONTROL - 29_32 OPRCONTROL (Hon & Grunig, 1999) - Control Mutuality
Based on your knowledge of the company, please rate each statement on a scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree).
29. This organization and people like me are attentive to what each other say.
30. This organization believes the opinions of people like me are legitimate.
31. This organization really listens to what people like me have to say.
32. The management of this organization gives people like me enough say in the decision-making process.

PAGE BREAK

OPRCOMMIT - 33_37 OPRCOMMIT (Hon & Grunig, 1999) - Commitment
Based on your knowledge of the company, please rate each statement on a scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree).
33. I feel that this organization is trying to maintain a long-term commitment to people like me.
34. I can see that this organization wants to maintain a relationship with people like me.
35. There is a long-lasting bond between this organization and people like me.
36. Compared to other organizations, I value my relationship with this organization more.
37. I would rather work together with this organization than not

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PAGE BREAK

OPRSATIS - 38_42 OPR (Hon & Grunig, 1999) - Satisfaction
Based on your knowledge of the company, please rate each statement on a scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree).
38. I am happy with this organization.
39. Both the organization and people like me benefit from the relationship.
40. Most people like me are happy in their interactions with this organization.
41. Generally speaking, I am pleased with the relationship this organization has established with people like me.
42. Most people enjoy dealing with this organization

PAGE BREAK

OPRCR - 43_46 OPR (Hon & Grunig, 1999) - Communal Relationships
Based on your knowledge of the company, please rate each statement on a scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree).
43. This organization enjoys giving others aid.
44. This organization is very concerned about the welfare of people like me.
45. I feel that this organization does not take advantage of people who are vulnerable.
46. This organization helps people like me without expecting anything in return.

PAGE BREAK

OPRER - 47_50 OPR (Hon & Grunig, 1999) - Exchange Relationships
Based on your knowledge of the company, please rate each statement on a scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree).

47. Whenever this organization gives or offers something to people like me, it generally expects something in return.
48. Even though people like me have had a relationship with this organization for a long time, it still expects something in return whenever it offers us a favor.
49. This organization will compromise with people like me when it knows that it will gain something.
50. This organization takes care of people who are likely to reward the organization.

NEW BLOCK

You will now be asked to read about the company experiencing a crisis. Please read the information carefully because you will be asked to answer questions about the information in the next section.

PAGE BREAK

Stimulus (Randomized Conditions)
IV1

Preventable – Instructing
Ford has issued a recall today. A Ford employee failed to check the quality of airbags in Ford vehicles. If the airbag in the vehicle is deployed, a ruptured inflator can send parts toward the vehicle occupants, resulting in injury or death. Please visit Ford's website to find out which Ford models are being recalled. You can also schedule an appointment to have your vehicle repaired. For additional information and assistance in locating your nearest Ford dealer, please visit the website and contact customer service. More information will be released pending an investigation.

Manipulation Check
The following are general questions about the crisis event. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements using the provided 1 representing (Strongly Disagree) to 7 representing (Strongly Agree).

51. The information includes that you can schedule an appointment to have your vehicle repaired
52. The information says that the company has created a special quality task force.
53. The information includes that you can schedule an appointment and that the company has created a special quality task force.

IV2

Preventable – Adjusting

Ford has issued a recall today. A Ford employee failed to check the quality of airbags in Ford vehicles. Ford remains deeply concerned about their customers and regrets causing inconvenience. They are working to support customers and make necessary changes to minimize the risk of this happening again. Ford has created a special quality task force to address the problem to focus on the issues arising from the incident and to ensure that all appropriate actions are taken. For additional information and assistance, please visit Ford's website. More information will be released pending an investigation.

Manipulation Check

The following are general questions about the crisis event. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements using the provided 1 representing (Strongly Disagree) to 7 representing (Strongly Agree).

54. The information includes that you can schedule an appointment to have your vehicle repaired
55. The information says that the company has created a special quality task force.
56. The information includes that you can schedule an appointment and that the company has created a special quality task force.

IV3

Preventable – Combined

Ford has issued a recall today. A Ford employee failed to check the quality of airbags in Ford vehicles. If the airbag in the vehicle is deployed, a ruptured inflator can send parts toward the vehicle occupants, resulting in injury or death. Please visit Ford's website to find out which Ford models are being recalled. You can also schedule an appointment to have your vehicle repaired. For additional information and assistance in locating your nearest Ford dealer, please visit the website and contact customer service.

Ford remains deeply concerned about their customers and regrets causing inconvenience. They are working to support customers and make necessary changes to minimize the risk of this happening again. Ford has created a special quality task force to address the problem to focus on the issues arising from the incident and to ensure that all appropriate actions are taken. More information will be released pending an investigation.

Manipulation Check

The following are general questions about the crisis event. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements using the provided 1 representing (Strongly Disagree) to 7 representing (Strongly Agree).

57. The information includes that you can schedule an appointment to have your vehicle repaired

58. The information says that the company has created a special quality task force.
59. The information includes that you can schedule an appointment and that the company has created a special quality task force.

IV4

Accidental – Instructing
Ford has issued a recall today. An accidental equipment failure at a factory has caused a recall on airbags in Ford vehicles. If the airbag in the vehicle is deployed, a ruptured inflator can send parts toward the vehicle occupants, resulting in injury or death. This was an unintentional defect. Please visit Ford's website to find out which Ford models are being recalled. You can also schedule an appointment to have your vehicle repaired. For additional information and assistance in locating your nearest Ford dealer, please visit the website and contact customer service. More information will be released pending an investigation.

Manipulation Check
The following are general questions about the crisis event. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements using the provided 1 representing (Strongly Disagree) to 7 representing (Strongly Agree).

60. The information includes that you can schedule an appointment to have your vehicle repaired
61. The information says that the company has created a special quality task force.
62. The information includes that you can schedule an appointment and that the company has created a special quality task force.

IV5

Accidental – Adjusting
Ford has issued a recall today. An accidental equipment failure at a factory has caused a recall on airbags in Ford vehicles. Ford remains deeply concerned about their customers and regrets this unintentional defect. They are working to support customers and make necessary changes to minimize the risk of this happening again. Ford has created a special quality task force to address the problem to focus on the issues arising from the incident and to ensure that all appropriate actions are taken. For additional information and assistance, please visit Ford's website. More information will be released pending an investigation.

Manipulation Check
The following are general questions about the crisis event. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements using the provided 1 representing (Strongly Disagree) to 7 representing (Strongly Agree).

63. The information includes that you can schedule an appointment to have your vehicle repaired
64. The information says that the company has created a special quality task force.
65. The information includes that you can schedule an appointment and that the company has created a special quality task force.

IV6

Accidental – Combined
Ford has issued a recall today. An accidental equipment failure at a factory has caused a recall on airbags in Ford vehicles. If the airbag in the vehicle is deployed, a ruptured inflator can send parts toward the vehicle occupants, resulting in injury or death. Please visit Ford's website to find out which Ford models are being recalled. You can also schedule an appointment to have your vehicle repaired. For additional information and assistance in locating your nearest Ford dealer, please visit the website and contact customer service.

Ford remains deeply concerned about their customers and regrets this unintentional defect. They are working to support customers and make necessary changes to minimize the risk of this happening again. Ford has created a special quality task force to address the problem to focus on the issues arising from the incident and to ensure that all appropriate actions are taken. For additional information and assistance, please visit Ford's website. More information will be released pending an investigation.

Manipulation Check
The following are general questions about the crisis event. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements using the provided 1 representing (Strongly Disagree) to 7 representing (Strongly Agree).

66. The information includes that you can schedule an appointment to have your vehicle repaired
67. The information says that the company has created a special quality task force.
68. The information includes that you can schedule an appointment and that the company has created a special quality task force.

IV7

No Frame – Instructing

Ford has issued a recall today on airbags in Ford vehicles. If the airbag in the vehicle is deployed, a ruptured inflator can send parts toward the vehicle occupants, resulting in injury or death. Please visit Ford's website to find out which Ford models are being recalled. You can also schedule an appointment to have your vehicle repaired. For additional information and assistance in locating your nearest Ford dealer, please visit the website and contact customer service. More information will be released pending an investigation.

Manipulation Check

The following are general questions about the crisis event. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements using the provided 1 representing (Strongly Disagree) to 7 representing (Strongly Agree).

69. The information includes that you can schedule an appointment to have your vehicle repaired
70. The information says that the company has created a special quality task force.
71. The information includes that you can schedule an appointment and that the company has created a special quality task force.

IV8

No Frame – Adjusting

Ford has issued a recall today on airbags in Ford vehicles. Ford remains deeply concerned about their customers and regrets this defect. They are working to support customers and make necessary changes to minimize the risk of this happening again. Ford has created a special quality task force to address the problem to focus on the issues arising from the incident and to ensure that all appropriate actions are taken. For additional information and assistance, please visit Ford's website. More information will be released pending an investigation.

Manipulation Check

The following are general questions about the crisis event. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements using the provided 1 representing (Strongly Disagree) to 7 representing (Strongly Agree).

72. The information includes that you can schedule an appointment to have your vehicle repaired
73. The information says that the company has created a special quality task force.
74. The information includes that you can schedule an appointment and that the company has created a special quality task force.

IV9

No Frame – Combined

Ford has issued a recall today on airbags in Ford vehicles. If the airbag in the vehicle is deployed, a ruptured inflator can send parts toward the vehicle occupants, resulting in injury or death. Please visit Ford's website to find out which Ford models are being recalled. You can also schedule an appointment to have your vehicle repaired. For additional information and assistance in locating your nearest Ford dealer, please visit the website and contact customer service.

Ford remains deeply concerned about their customers. They are working to make necessary changes to minimize the risk of this happening again. Ford has created a special quality task force to address the problem to focus on the issues arising from the incident and to ensure that all appropriate actions are taken. For additional information and assistance, please visit Ford's website. More information will be released pending an investigation.

Manipulation Check

The following are general questions about the crisis event. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements using the provided 1 representing (Strongly Disagree) to 7 representing (Strongly Agree).

75. The information includes that you can schedule an appointment to have your vehicle repaired
76. The information says that the company has created a special quality task force.
77. The information includes that you can schedule an appointment and that the company has created a special quality task force.

NEW BLOCK

COMPCRED1

78_81 Company Credibility

Based on your knowledge of the company, please rate each statement on a scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree).
The Ford Motor Company:
78. was trying to do what it believes is best for society
79. had honest intentions
80. does not have a hidden agenda
81. was telling the truth in its entirety

Page Break

CONTCRED1

82_86 Content Credibility (7-point semantic differential scale items)
Please rate the message based on your knowledge.
82. Fair 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Unfair
83. Unbiased 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Biased
84. Tells the whole story 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Doesn't tell the whole story
85. Accurate 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Inaccurate
86. Can be trusted 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Can't be trusted

Page Break

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87 Company Credibility
Please rate the company based on your knowledge.
87. Believable 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Unbelievable

NEW BLOCK

EMOT1 - 88_93 Emotion (Coombs & Holladay, 2005)
Think about the information you have just read and rate the items based on your feelings. Select your response to each question ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree).
88. The event makes me feel sympathy for the organization.
89. The event makes me feel angry toward the organization.
90. I would feel scared in this crisis situation.
91. I would feel anxious in this crisis situation.
92. I would feel outraged in this crisis situation.
93. I actually feel a little happy that something bad happened to the organization, the organization deserves it.

NEW BLOCK

CORPREP1 –
94_98 Corporate Reputation (Coombs, 1998; Coombs & Holladay, 1996)
Considering the crisis situation you just read, rate the following items based your impression of the organization. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements using the provided 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree).
94. The company is concerned with the well-being of its publics.
95. The company has honest intentions.
96. The company does not have a hidden agenda.
97. The company is trustworthy.
98. Under most circumstances, I would be likely to believe what the company says.

NEW BLOCK

SUPTBEHAV1 –
99_102 Supportive Behavioral Intentions (Coombs, 1998; Coombs & Holladay, 1996)
If you had been affected by the crisis, how likely would you be to do each of the following. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements using the provided 1 (Extremely Unlikely) to 7 (Extremely Likely).

99. Say nice things about the organization to other people you knew
100.   Attend a rally designed to show public support for the organization
101.   Sign a petition in support of some action (e.g., re-zoning request, road improvements, etc.) the organization was trying to take.
102.   Apply for a job with or encourage others to apply for a job with the organization

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NEW BLOCK

You are half way done! You will now read about a second crisis experienced by Schneider's Natural Foods. Schneider's Natural Foods is an American supermarket chain that features foods without artificial preservatives. They have stores nationwide and operate convenience store-like chains in the local area. Because of their convenience, you are often stop there.
Please select "Next" to begin reading information about the company. You may need to remember this information in later questions, so please read carefully.

New Block

Stimulus: Participants will be assigned to one of 18 conditions:
Stimulus (Randomized Conditions)
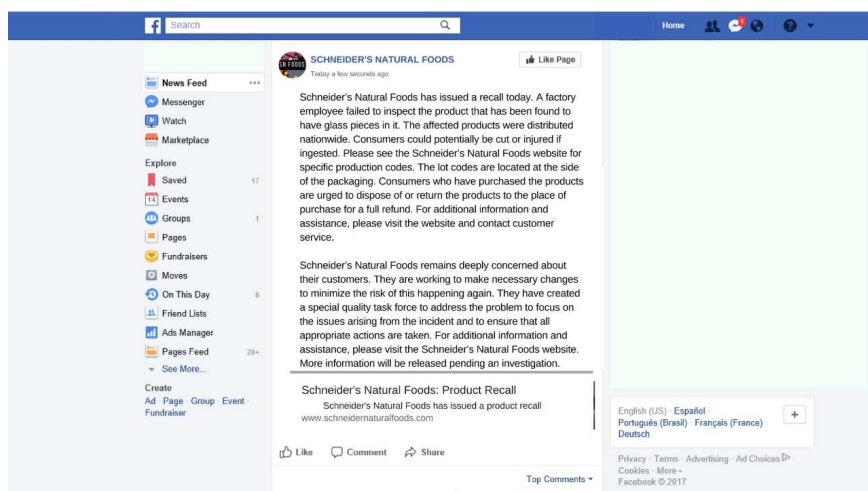

IV10
    IV10_1
    1V10_2

    Preventable – Instructing FACEBOOK POST
    Schneider's Natural Foods has issued a recall today. A factory employee failed to inspect the product that has been found to have glass pieces in it. The affected products were distributed nationwide. Consumers could potentially be cut or injured if ingested. Please see the Schneider's Natural Foods website for specific production codes. The lot codes are located at the side of the packaging. Consumers who have purchased the products are urged to dispose of or return the products to the place of purchase for a full refund. For additional information and assistance, please visit the website and contact customer service. More information will be released pending an investigation.

IV11

IV11_1
1V11_2

Preventable – Adjusting FACEBOOK POST
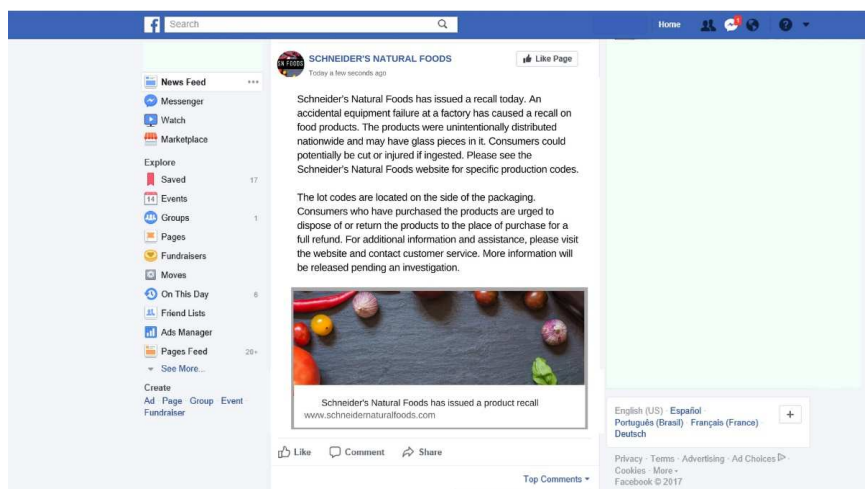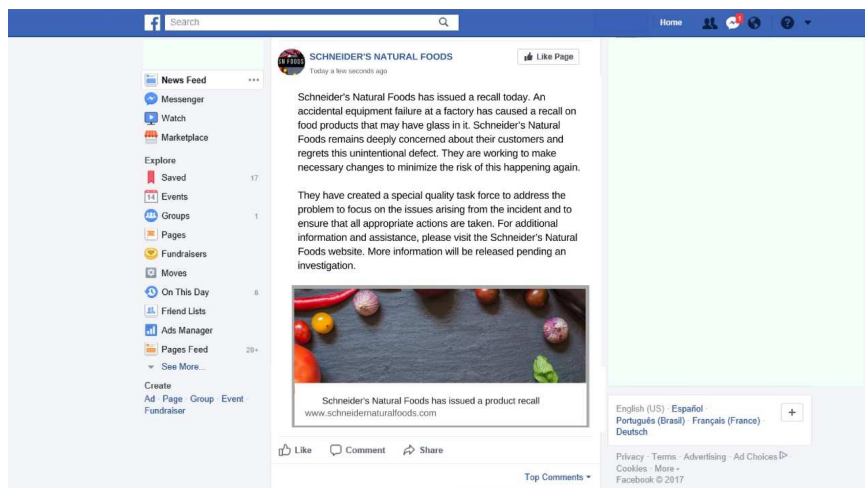Schneider's Natural Foods has issued a recall today. A factory employee failed to inspect the product that has been found to have glass pieces in it. Schneider's Natural Foods remains deeply concerned about their customers. They are working to make necessary changes to minimize the risk of this happening again. They have created a special quality task force to address the problem to focus on the issues arising from the incident and to ensure that all appropriate actions are taken. For additional information and assistance, please visit the Schneider's Natural Foods website. More information will be released pending an investigation.
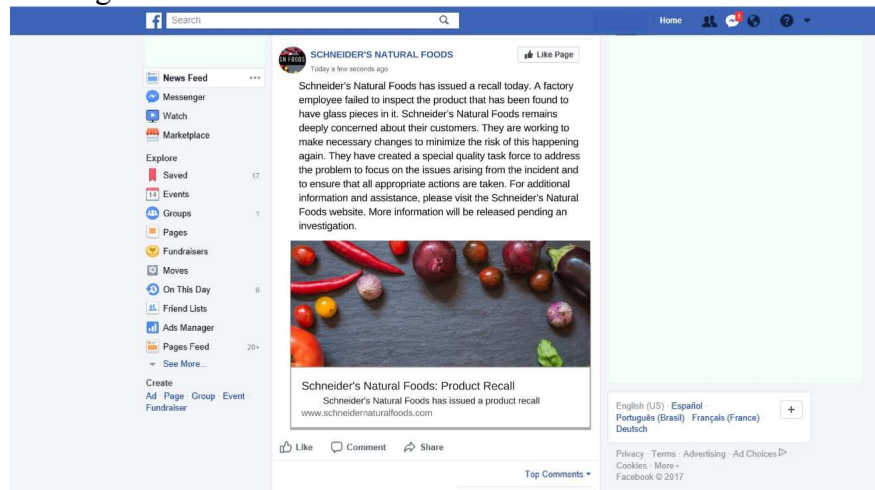
IV12
>   **IV12_1**
>   **1V12_2**

>   **Preventable – Combined FACEBOOK POST**
>   Schneider's Natural Foods has issued a recall today. A factory employee failed to inspect the product that has been found to have glass pieces in it. The affected products were distributed nationwide. Consumers could potentially be cut or injured if ingested. Please see the Schneider's Natural Foods website for specific production codes. The lot codes are located at the side of the packaging. Consumers who have purchased the products are urged to dispose of or return the products to the place of purchase for a full refund. For additional information and assistance, please visit the website and contact customer service.
>   Schneider's Natural Foods remains deeply concerned about their customers. They are working to make necessary changes to minimize the risk of this happening again. They have created a special quality task force to address the problem to focus on the issues arising from the incident and to ensure that all appropriate actions are taken. For additional information and assistance, please visit the Schneider's Natural Foods website. More information will be released pending an investigation.

IV13
>   **IV13_1**
>   **1V13_2**

>   **Accidental – Instructing FACEBOOK POST**
>   Schneider's Natural Foods has issued a recall today. An accidental equipment failure at a factory has caused a recall on food products. The products were

unintentionally distributed nationwide and may have glass pieces in it. Consumers could potentially be cut or injured if ingested. Please see the Schneider's Natural Foods website for specific production codes. The lot codes are located on the side of the packaging. Consumers who have purchased the products are urged to dispose of or return the products to the place of purchase for a full refund. For additional information and assistance, please visit the website and contact customer service. More information will be released pending an investigation.

IV14

IV14_1
1V14_2

Accidental – Adjusting FACEBOOK POST
Schneider's Natural Foods has issued a recall today. An accidental equipment failure at a factory has caused a recall on food products that may have glass in it. Schneider's Natural Foods remains deeply concerned about their customers and regrets this unintentional defect. They are working to make necessary changes to minimize the risk of this happening again. They have created a special quality task force to address the problem to focus on the issues arising from the incident and to ensure that all appropriate actions are taken. For additional information and assistance, please visit the Schneider's Natural Foods website. More information will be released pending an investigation.

IV15

    IV15_1
    1V15_2

Accidental – Combined FACEBOOK POST
Schneider's Natural Foods has issued a recall today. An accidental equipment failure at a factory has caused a recall on food products. The products were unintentionally distributed nationwide and may have glass pieces in it. Consumers could potentially be cut or injured if ingested. Please see the Schneider's Natural Foods website for specific production codes. The lot codes are located on the side of the packaging. Consumers who have purchased the products are urged to dispose of or return the products to the place of purchase for a full refund. For additional information and assistance, please visit the website and contact customer service.
Schneider's Natural Foods remains deeply concerned about their customers and regrets this unintentional defect. They are working to make necessary changes to minimize the risk of this happening again. They have created a special quality task force to address the problem to focus on the issues arising from the incident and to ensure that all appropriate actions are taken. For additional information and assistance, please visit the Schneider's Natural Foods website. More information will be released pending an investigation.
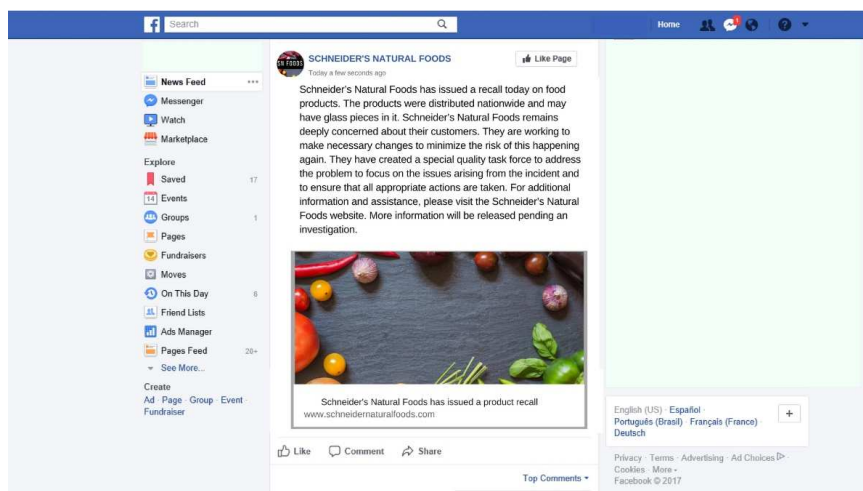
IV16

> **IV16_1**
> **1V16_2**
>
> **No Frame – Instructing FACEBOOK POST**
> Schneider's Natural Foods has issued a recall today on food products. The products were distributed nationwide and may have glass pieces in it. Consumers could potentially be cut or injured if ingested. Please see the Schneider's Natural Foods website for specific production codes. The lot codes are located on the side of the packaging. Consumers who have purchased the products are urged to dispose of or return the products to the place of purchase for a full refund. For additional information and assistance, please visit the website and contact customer service. More information will be released pending an investigation.

IV17

> **IV17_1**
> **1V17_2**
>
>
> **No Frame – Adjusting FACEBOOK POST**
> Schneider's Natural Foods has issued a recall today on food products. The products were distributed nationwide and may have glass pieces in it. Schneider's Natural Foods remains deeply concerned about their customers. They are working to make necessary changes to minimize the risk of this happening again. They have created a special quality task force to address the problem to focus on the issues arising from the incident and to ensure that all appropriate actions are taken. For additional information and assistance, please visit the Schneider's Natural Foods website. More information will be released pending an investigation.
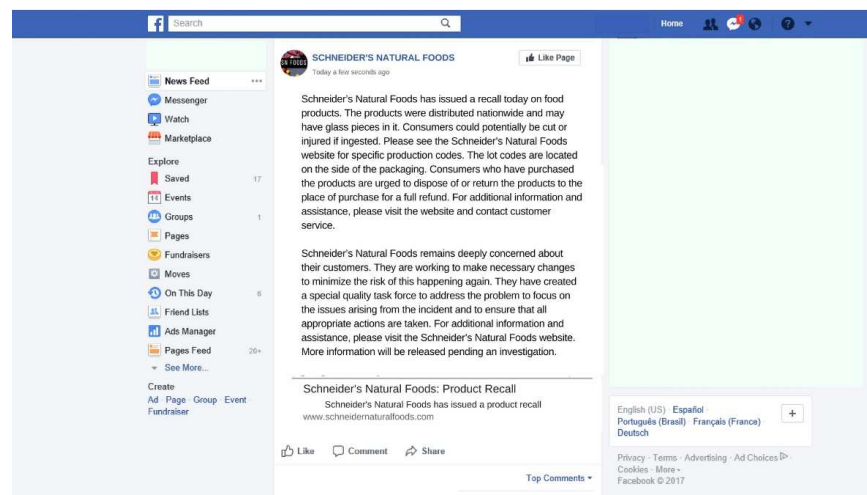

IV18

> **IV18_1**
> **1V18_2**
>
>
> **No Frame – Combined FACEBOOK POST**
> Schneider's Natural Foods has issued a recall today on food products. The products were distributed nationwide and may have glass pieces in it. Consumers could potentially be cut or injured if ingested. Please see the Schneider's Natural Foods website for specific production codes. The lot codes are located on the side of the packaging. Consumers who have purchased the products are urged to dispose of or return the products to the place of purchase for a full refund. For additional information and assistance, please visit the website and contact customer service.
> Schneider's Natural Foods remains deeply concerned about their customers. They are working to make necessary changes to minimize the risk of this happening

again. They have created a special quality task force to address the problem to focus on the issues arising from the incident and to ensure that all appropriate actions are taken. For additional information and assistance, please visit the Schneider's Natural Foods website. More information will be released pending an investigation.

IV19

IV19_1
1V19_2

Preventable – Instructing NEWS ARTICLE
Schneider's Natural Foods has issued a recall today. A factory employee failed to inspect the product that has been found to have glass pieces in it. The affected products were distributed nationwide. Consumers could potentially be cut or injured if ingested. Please see the Schneider's Natural Foods website for specific production codes. The lot codes are located at the side of the packaging. Consumers who have purchased the products are urged to dispose of or return the products to the place of purchase for a full refund. For additional information and assistance, please visit the website and contact customer service. More information will be released pending an investigation.

IV20

IV20_1
1V20_2
Preventable – Adjusting NEWS ARTICLE

Schneider's Natural Foods has issued a recall today. A factory employee failed to inspect the product that has been found to have glass pieces in it. Schneider's Natural Foods remains deeply concerned about their customers. They are working to make necessary changes to minimize the risk of this happening again. They have created a special quality task force to address the problem to focus on the issues arising from the incident and to ensure that all appropriate actions are taken. For additional information and assistance, please visit the Schneider's Natural Foods website. More information will be released pending an investigation.

IV21

> **IV21_1**
> **1V21_2**

> **Preventable – Combined NEWS ARTICLE**
> Schneider's Natural Foods has issued a recall today. A factory employee failed to inspect the product that has been found to have glass pieces in it. The affected products were distributed nationwide. Consumers could potentially be cut or injured if ingested. Please see the Schneider's Natural Foods website for specific production codes. The lot codes are located at the side of the packaging. Consumers who have purchased the products are urged to dispose of or return the products to the place of purchase for a full refund.
> Schneider's Natural Foods remains deeply concerned about their customers. They are working to make necessary changes to minimize the risk of this happening again. They have created a special quality task force to address the problem to focus on the issues arising from the incident and to ensure that all appropriate actions are taken. For additional information and assistance, please visit the Schneider's Natural Foods website. More information will be released pending an investigation.

IV22

> **IV22_1**
> **1V22_2**

> **Accidental – Instructing NEWS ARTICLE**
> Schneider's Natural Foods has issued a recall today. An accidental equipment failure at a factory has caused a recall on food products. The products were unintentionally distributed nationwide and may have glass pieces in it. Consumers could potentially be cut or injured if ingested. Please see the Schneider's Natural Foods website for specific production codes. The lot codes are located on the side

of the packaging. Consumers who have purchased the products are urged to dispose of or return the products to the place of purchase for a full refund. For additional information and assistance, please visit the website and contact customer service. More information will be released pending an investigation.

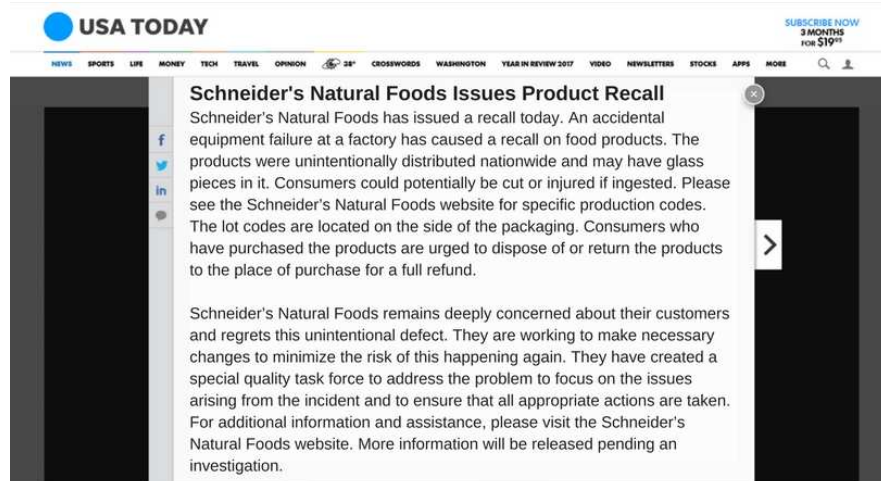**IV23**

> **IV23_1**
> **1V23_2**

> **Accidental – Adjusting NEWS ARTICLE**
> Schneider's Natural Foods has issued a recall today. An accidental equipment failure at a factory has caused a recall on food products that may have glass in it. Schneider's Natural Foods remains deeply concerned about their customers and regrets this unintentional defect. They are working to make necessary changes to minimize the risk of this happening again. They have created a special quality task force to address the problem to focus on the issues arising from the incident and to ensure that all appropriate actions are taken. For additional information and assistance, please visit the Schneider's Natural Foods website. More information will be released pending an investigation.

IV24
IV24_1
1V24_2

Accidental – Combined NEWS ARTICLE
Schneider's Natural Foods has issued a recall today. An accidental equipment failure at a factory has caused a recall on food products. The products were unintentionally distributed nationwide and may have glass pieces in it. Consumers could potentially be cut or injured if ingested. Please see the Schneider's Natural Foods website for specific production codes. The lot codes are located on the side of the packaging. Consumers who have purchased the products are urged to dispose of or return the products to the place of purchase for a full refund. Schneider's Natural Foods remains deeply concerned about their customers and regrets this unintentional defect. They are working to make necessary changes to minimize the risk of this happening again. They have created a special quality task force to address the problem to focus on the issues arising from the incident and to ensure that all appropriate actions are taken. For additional information and assistance, please visit the Schneider's Natural Foods website. More information will be released pending an investigation.

IV25
IV25_1
1V25_2

No Frame – Instructing NEWS ARTICLE
Schneider's Natural Foods has issued a recall today on food products. The products were distributed nationwide and may have glass pieces in it. Consumers could potentially be cut or injured if ingested. Please see the Schneider's Natural Foods website for specific production codes. The lot codes are located on the side of the packaging. Consumers who have purchased the products are urged to dispose of or return the products to the place of purchase for a full refund. For additional information and assistance, please visit the website and contact customer service. More information will be released pending an investigation.
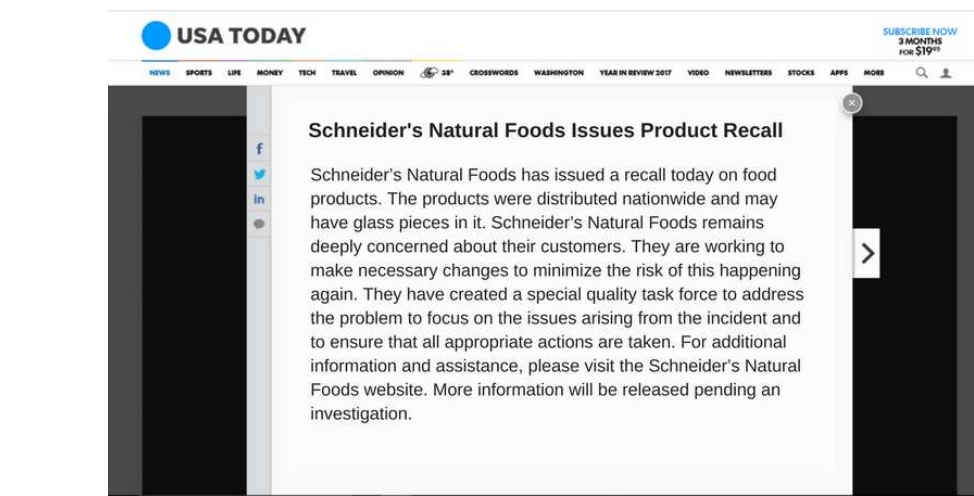
IV26

> **IV26_1**
> **1V26_2**
>
> **No Frame – Adjusting NEWS ARTICLE**
> Schneider's Natural Foods has issued a recall today on food products. The products were distributed nationwide and may have glass pieces in it. Schneider's Natural Foods remains deeply concerned about their customers. They are working to make necessary changes to minimize the risk of this happening again. They have created a special quality task force to address the problem to focus on the issues arising from the incident and to ensure that all appropriate actions are taken. For additional information and assistance, please visit the Schneider's Natural Foods website. More information will be released pending an investigation.
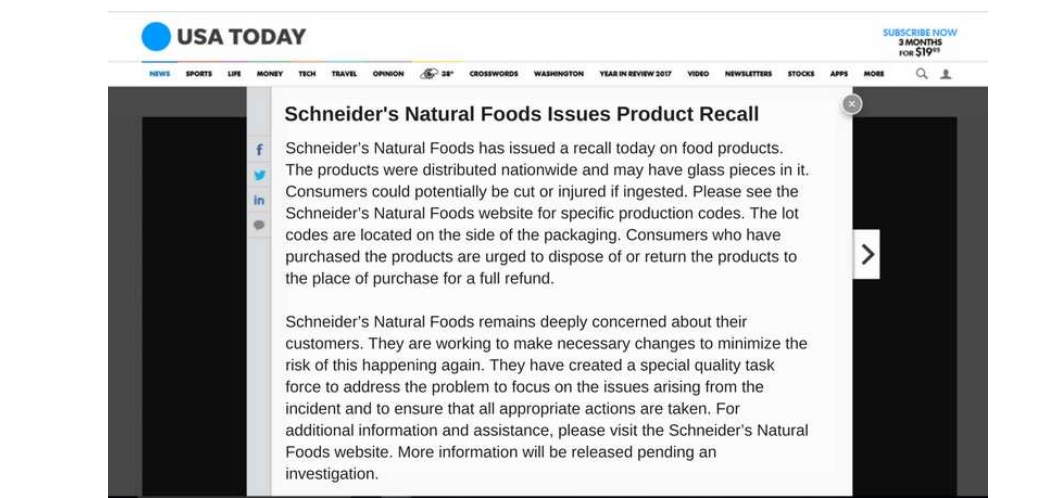

IV27

> **IV27_1**
> **1V27_2**
>
> **No Frame – Combined NEWS ARTICLE**
> Schneider's Natural Foods has issued a recall today on food products. The products were distributed nationwide and may have glass pieces in it. Consumers could potentially be cut or injured if ingested. Please see the Schneider's Natural Foods website for specific production codes. The lot codes are located on the side of the packaging. Consumers who have purchased the products are urged to dispose of or return the products to the place of purchase for a full refund. Schneider's Natural Foods remains deeply concerned about their customers. They are working to make necessary changes to minimize the risk of this happening again. They have created a special quality task force to address the problem to focus on the issues arising from the incident and to ensure that all appropriate

actions are taken. For additional information and assistance, please visit the Schneider's Natural Foods website. More information will be released pending an investigation.

PAGE BREAK

Manipulation check
103.   On a scale from very unlikely to very likely, how likely do you believe that the organization caused the crisis?
Very unlikely, unlikely, neither likely nor unlikely, likely, very likely

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PAGE BREAK

Manipulation check
        104. Which media context was the information presented on?
                A Facebook Post
                A Twitter Post
                A YouTube video
                An Online News Article

NEW BLOCK

COMPCRED2
105_108 Company Credibility
Based on your knowledge of the company, please rate each statement on a scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree).
Schneider's Natural Foods:
        105. was trying to do what it believes is best for society
        106. had honest intentions
        107. does not have a hidden agenda
        108. was telling the truth in its entirety

Page Break

CONTCRED2 –
Data file Reverse-Coded (1)"Extremely Credible" to (7) "Extremely Uncredible

109_113 Content Credibility (7-point semantic differential scale items)
Please rate the message based on your knowledge.
  109. Fair 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Unfair
  110. Unbiased 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Biased
  111. Tells the whole story 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Doesn't tell the whole story
  112. Accurate 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Inaccurate
  113. Can be trusted 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Can't be trusted

Page Break

(COMPCRED2)
  114 Company Credibility
  Please rate the company based on your knowledge.
114. Believable 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Unbelievable

NEW BLOCK

EMOT2

115_120 Emotion (Coombs & Holladay, 2005)
Think about the information you have just read and rate the items based on your
feelings. Select your response to each question ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to
7 (Strongly Agree).
115. The event makes me feel sympathy for the organization.
116. The event makes me feel angry toward the organization.
117. I would feel scared in this crisis situation.
118. I would feel anxious in this crisis situation.
119. I would feel outraged in this crisis situation.
120. I actually feel a little happy that something bad happened to the organization, the
    organization deserves it.

NEW BLOCK

CORPREP2

121_125 Corporate Reputation (Coombs, 1998; Coombs & Holladay, 1996)
Considering the crisis situation you just read, rate the following items based your
impression of the organization. Please indicate your level of agreement with the
following statements using the provided 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly
Agree).

121. The company is concerned with the well-being of its publics.
122. The company has honest intentions.
123. The company does not have a hidden agenda.
124. The company is trustworthy.
125. Under most circumstances, I would be likely to believe what the company says.

NEW BLOCK

SUPTBEHAV2

126_129 Supportive Behavioral Intentions (Coombs, 1998; Coombs & Holladay, 1996)
If you had been affected by the crisis, how likely would you be to do each of the following. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements using the provided 1 (Extremely Unlikely) to 7 (Extremely Likely).
126. Say nice things about the organization to other people you knew
127. Attend a rally designed to show public support for the organization
128. Sign a petition in support of some action (e.g., re-zoning request, road improvements, etc.) the organization was trying to take.
129. Apply for a job with or encourage others to apply for a job with the organization

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NEW BLOCK

Demographics (Pew Research Center, 2015)
Thank you for reading and answering questions regarding a crisis situation. This last section is now asking about information about yourself.
130. Are you:
      Male
      Female
131. What is your age? _____(Enter numbers only)
132. What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?
      High school incomplete or less
      High school graduate or GED (includes technical/vocational training that doesn't count towards college credit)
      Some college (some community college, associate's degree)
      Four-year college degree/bachelor's degree
      Some postgraduate or professional schooling, no postgraduate degree
      Postgraduate or professional degree, including master's, doctorate, medical or law degree
      I do not wish to answer

PAGE BREAK

133. Which of the following describes your race?
> White (e.g., Caucasian, European, Irish, Italian, Arab, Middle Eastern)
> Black or African-American (e.g., Negro, Kenyan, Nigerian, Haitian)
> Asian or Asian-American (e.g., Asian Indian, Chinese, Filipino, Vietnamese or other Asian origin groups)
> Native American/American Indian/Alaska Native
> Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian
> Hispanic/Latino (e.g., Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban)
> Some other race, please specify:
> I do not want to answer

134. Last year, that is in 2017, what was your total family income from all sources, before taxes?
> Less than $10,000
> $10,001 to less than $20,000
> $20,001 to less than $30,000
> $30,001 to less than $40,000
> $40,001 to less than $50,000
> $50,001 to less than $75,000
> $75,001 to less than $100,000
> $100,001 to less than $150,000
> $150,001 or more
> I do not wish to answer

NEW BLOCK - DEBRIEFING

You have one final step before exiting the survey.
Thank you for your time. I value your answers and I appreciate you taking the time to thoughtfully complete this survey. Your responses will contribute to furthering research in crisis communication. If you have any questions, please feel free to email me at erika.schneider@marquette.edu.
Before exiting the survey, please read and select the boxes below to show that you understand each statement.
> (Select the box) I understand that the crises I just read were false and will be used for academic research purposes only.
> (Select the box) I understand that organizations mentioned are not experiencing crises.
> (Select the box) I understand that this research was intended to measure my responses to fictional crisis situations.

> Remember, the crisis situations you read early are not real situations. Although the companies were real, the food contamination and airbag recall were made up to depict crisis situations.