THE ROLE OF DUTY-BASED ETHICS IN PUBLIC RELATIONS:
AN ETHICAL JUSTIFICATION MODEL FOR THE ACTIONS OF CRISIS COMMUNICATORS

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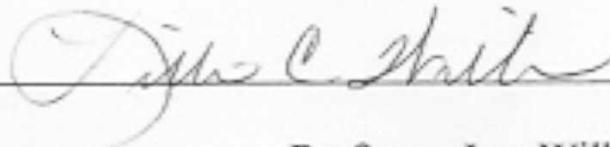
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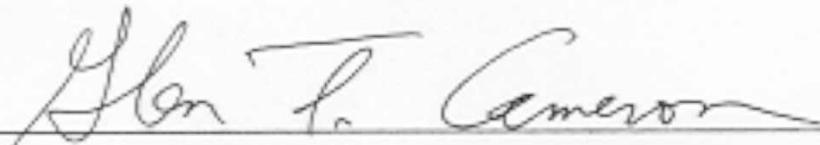
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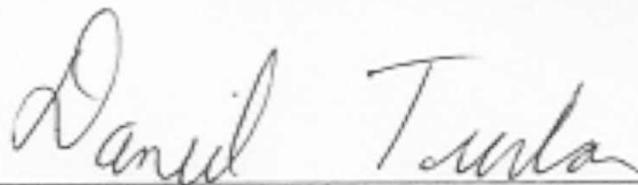
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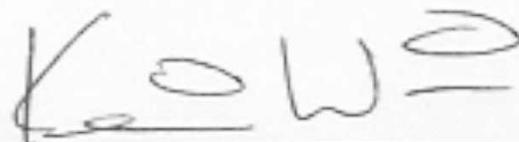
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DEDICATION

To my professors, family and friends. Without the love and support of each and every one of these individuals, the content of thesis would not be as relevant, grammatically correct, inspired and meaningful to me and the world we all live in.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores how duty-based ethics can aid in explaining how public relations professional employed by corporations communicate with external publics, especially when organizations are faced with crises. A content analysis examined whether ethical duties were mentioned in various types of messages by four organizations', two non-profit and two profit corporations, in times of "non-crisis" and crisis. The analysis examined publicly available documents, which contained official communication related to the organizational culture and news stories published in four newspapers during times of crisis.

Analysis found that autonomy and respect from the dominant coalition enabled public relations, practitioners to act as ethical advocates. In addition, public communication follows a crisis life cycle. Content analysis also found that Ross' six ethical duties could be plausible evaluative criteria for determining the ethical tone of communication. Identifying the dominant ethical duties for each case established the ethical tone for the messages. When there was no crisis, all six of Ross' ethical duties were expressed in the messages through mission statements and descriptions of corporate culture. In times of crisis, often the message is changed to reflect the law or only some ethical duties. The change of message suggests that ethical communication can be accomplished in several ways, which supports a fundamental claim of contingency theory.

INTRODUCTION
INCREASING THE VISIBILITY OF ETHICS IN COMMUNICATION

Within the past 15 years, public demand began to force organizations across industries and professions to reconsider the notion of corporate accountability (Ettorre, 1992). This increased societal focus on ethics in organizations caused various institutions to respond in different ways (Jones, 1991) .To address the public's concerns and demands, between 1990 and 1992, more than one-third of Fortune 500 companies drafted formal codes of ethical conduct (Beheish and Chatov, 1993; Maes et al.). As corporations established or updated codes of ethics, business schools increased ethics courses and academics expanded the literature on the subject of ethics (Jones, 1991).

In addition to these formalized calls for the integration of ethics, some corporations and investment strategies began to be founded on ethical principles. Companies such as Whole Foods and TIAA-CREF's social responsibility investments embraced the idea that if an organization's mission was build on a foundation of ethical principles, good would come for employees, stakeholders and the general public. When Google was established, the company's founders did more than just embrace the idea that ethical goals could be beneficial. They established a philosophy that explicitly states "you can make money without doing evil," which suggests that ethical business practices are more than just "doing good."

Professional organizations began to be agents of professional competency and quality control functions. Some organizations served as a governing body of the professions as well as a screening mechanism for those entering the profession (Maes,

Jeffery and Smith, 1998). For highly regulated professions, like certified public accountants, professional organizations were able to punish members who violated the ethical codes. Accountants involved in the Enron crisis lost their certification and with that their credibility within the business community (Seeger and Ulmer, 2003). However, industries composed of support services, such as public relations, have less rigid codes and have a diminished policing authority (Maes, Jeffery and Smith, 1998). Specifically, in the advertising industry, the emphasis on codes of ethics has been used as a way to help legitimize the industry's practices (Schultze, 1981).

According to Jones (1991) and Borden (2000) organizational settings present special challenges to the practice of ethics. Research has found that situations can arise where resisting the constraints of business culture is actually morally required. Borden suggests that defending professional rights, obligation to personal integrity and employees' own reasoning for disobeying a boss' orders all can cause resistance.

Understanding ethical thinking benefits both the organization and its communication. Communication practitioners have a responsibility to advocate ethical ideas internally to employees and externally to the various publics. Yet, in times of crisis, often the legal team takes over the strategy and execution of communication. The message is changed to reflect the law more than ethical principles. For scholars, it is important to understand the role that ethics play in modern communication and the influence ethics may have on the stance of an organization. With this understanding, a new generation of communicators will see a realistic and pragmatic application of ethics in the field of public relations.

The overarching research question for this thesis aims at understanding the role ethical duties play in conflict management and how they may affect the resulting stance of organizations. The continued growth and expansion of corporations and increased visibility of organizational crises contribute to the need for an ethical foundation in which practitioners can use to guide communication. This thesis will explore how duty-based ethics can aid in explaining communication process with external publics, especially when organizations are faced with crises. Answering this question may help support the contingency theory of conflict management by placing ethical duties as an important variable in evaluating the actions of public relations practitioners.

CHAPTER 1: REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE
THE GAP IN THEORY AND APPLICATION

The following review will explore literature focusing on both theoretical and pragmatic research on ethics, public relations and specifically crisis communications. First, three case studies will be evaluated. Each case explores the varying ethical issues encountered by public relations practitioners during a corporate crisis. Second, literature will be reviewed to show public relations practitioners as professionals. Unlike other professions such as accountancy, law or medicine, in order to practice public relations, no certification is required. Next, a discussion on ethical codes will show that there is still a gap in how public relations practitioners can communicate ethically.

Two conflicting public relations theories will be summarized and analyzed, focusing on how ethical crisis communications might fit into each theory. Finally, the ethics of W.D. Ross will be applied to public relations, which will lead into the specific research questions and methodology of this thesis.

Case Studies on the Ethics of Corporate Crises

Enron

According to Seeger and Ulmer (2003) the 2001 Enron crisis shed light on the idea that there is a thin line between what is legal and what is right. Enron's principal entrepreneurial impulse was radical innovation at the expense of existing rules and policies that maintained integrity. Instead, the underlying culture embraced the breaking of rules and rewriting them to fit financial goals. Communication aimed at guiding

employee actions was rooted in greed rather than in any ideology or even larger sense of social or normative obligations.

The Enron crisis shifted thinking about where responsibility lies and how it is defined within an organization. Responsibility, according to Seeger and Ulmer (2003), suggests that individuals and groups have morally based obligations and duties to others and to larger ethical, moral and legal codes, standards and traditions.

Enron was a crisis-prone organization because its managers failed to take responsibility for even the smallest mistakes and misjudgments (Pauchant and Mitroff, 1992). Instead of side-stepping or just revising policies to suit agendas as in the Enron case, managers need to engage stakeholders in dialogue regarding key ethical issues. The dialogue should be lead by communicators who can: communicate appropriate values to create a moral climate, maintain adequate communication to be informed of organizational operations and maintain openness to signs of problems.

A crisis management approach to corporate responsibility would include helping management realize a distinction that benefits both the organization and its publics (Bowen and Heath, 2005). The practitioners involved on the crisis management team would offer advice that helps organizations to avoid financial meltdown by elevating ethical principles over legal standards.

Enron's façade of good behavior hid a core of corporate corruption which was not concealable in the long run. Their culture "fostered risk taking and extreme innovation, with no tolerance for failure," (Bowen and Heath, 2005). This type of culture allowed Enron to focus on what it could do legally in the loosest sense instead of promoting self-improvement of the organization based on mistakes.

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Legal counsel can help in defining legal issue alternatives, but as Enron illustrated, that which is legal is not synonymous with that which is ethical. Relying too much on general counsel and too little on public relations counsel can reduce the likelihood of long-term business survival (Bowen and Heath, 2005).

The Enron collapse provides a case summary of the potential negative influence of corporate culture on decision making, and why legal standards should never be used as a substitute for ethical principles.

Malden Mills

Aaron Feuerstein, CEO and owner of the Malden Mills manufacturing plant responded quickly and received widespread critical acclaim for his post-crisis response and his care and responsibility toward employees and the community when the plant suddenly exploded. The incident on December 11, 1995 injured 36 workers, destroyed three critical manufacturing buildings and threatened to put 3,000 employees out of work.

Communication surrounding the crisis involved determining the cause of the crisis, recovery and to preventing future accidents. The initial communication worked to minimize the uncertainty associated with the crisis and also focused concentration on Malden Mills' prior public commitments to the community. Feuerenstein's statements were consistent with his historical focus on the welfare of his employees and the community (Ulmer, 2001).

Previous actions by Feuerstein, such as a refusal to move the plant to locate cheaper labor, illustrate his loyalty to his workforce and the community (Ulmer, 2001). Even after bankruptcy and job cuts, the actions of management solidified positive relationships as well as high levels of trust between management and workers. Feuerstein

served the needs of the most affected group instead of prioritizing stakeholder needs and interests, which would have minimized the complexity of stakeholder communication.

Feuerstein's response is an excellent alternative example of crisis communication within an organization that placed the welfare of internal and external stakeholders ahead of financial concerns. The incident at Malden Mills (Ulmer, 2001) shows how an organization with an ethically-minded leader helps to produce positive and effective crisis communication. In addition, the Malden Mills crisis shows how communication for non-crisis related events has a significant impact on crisis communication.

AT&T

Through the evaluation of the AT&T service crisis, Marra (1998) challenges the doctrine that excellent crisis communication is always possible when practitioners prepare a crisis plan. The creation of a thorough list of instructions, suggestions and checklists are only a part of what determines excellent crisis public relations practice.

Organizations with crisis plans do not always manage crises well. Most organizations today do not have a public relations professional or strategic communicator sitting at the same table as the executives, but the AT&T case study shows that not having representation among executives does not have to be a large road block for public relations professionals. The autonomy, that AT&T's public relations department was given and actually utilized, allowed it to respond quickly to the crisis and properly communicate to their constituents.

Potential legal liabilities often cause attorneys to caution against the immediate and frequent communication typically suggested by public relations practitioners. However, the role ethics play in corporate culture could be further examined to determine

its influence on implementation of a crisis communication plan. Organizations have different unwritten rules about safety, promotion, decision making, personal appearance, reimbursement, and absence from work. Marra states that "culture influences public relations by providing a broad base of worldview, meaning and values that affect all decisions in the organization, including the choice of a model of public relations," (1998, pg.465). AT&T's public relations crisis strategy was dictated more by the communication culture than any crisis communication plan.

All the previous case studies indicate that incorporating ethics into communications can be beneficial to an organization, especially during a crisis. Also, the Enron case specifically shows how ignoring ethical principles and focusing solely on the law to guide the actions of an organization can be detrimental. Many variables influence the stance an organization makes. Yet, there is not a specific frame to evaluate the specific role ethics may play in the decision-making and communication of messages.

What is the role of public relations practitioner on ethical decision-making?

Corporate leaders see public relations as important to their organizations, but they have not connected that support to participation of public relations at the highest levels of their organizations and decision-making (Plowman, 2005). Negotiation strategies can help empower public relations practitioners and become an effective part of communication with the dominant coalition and other publics. Membership in the dominant coalition and having a more advocative stance often provides them the autonomy needed to communicate with publics most effectively.

However, public relations practitioners are often uncomfortable with their roles as advocates within organizations. Edgett (2002) believes that there is a need for

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practitioners to reconcile their roles as advocates with their roles as facilitators of social communications in order to be seen as professionals. Advocacy is a legitimate function of public relations that can be accomplished without sacrificing the moral good. When public relations advocates for external publics, professionalism in the field is enhanced, and is seen as a justified activity. When the activities of public relations can be justified as ethical both the field and organization benefit.

Yet, often the issue for public relations is not what activity is more right than another, but what kind of communication maximizes the chances that competing interests can be changed (Pearson, 1989). Since many practitioners do not have ethical expertise, ethical issues are discussed in the context of the communication relationship between publics and organizations.

Pearson indicates that the core of the argument is that some ways of communicating are more ethical than others, and therefore, the question should involve the structural constraints on communicative interaction. He suggests that for ethical communication to occur, the relationships among communicators should be evaluated. Pearson's suggestions of things such as time between messages, initiating topic choices and auditing are valid, but could apply to any general communication situation and do not provide anything specific enough for public relations.

Public relations is both a counseling and advocacy-oriented profession (Bivins, 2006). Promoting all-around ethical communication and fostering numerous relationships indicate a responsibility to counsel. Yet, a key difference between the two roles of counseling and advocacy is degree of autonomy afforded to the practitioner. Loyalty for advocates in the business realm may be a more important duty.

According to Bivins (2006), advocacy in public relations contributes to professionalism only when the action fulfills the practitioners' responsibility towards client interests, professional interests and third-party interests. Since public relations practitioners are often only slightly autonomous or non-autonomous, their authority and ability to address all interests are diluted (Bivins, 2006).

When professionalism is established for practitioners, they are often invited to participate in decision-making. This provides public relations the opportunity to be the ethical voice when decisions are made. Instead of the law being the only guide in decisions and communication to internal and external publics, ethics can be a part of the conversation. Yet, what will help public relations practitioners govern ethical decision-making?

What guides practitioners' ethical decision-making?

Though ethics in public relations has been given some attention by scholars, little has resulted in a foundation on which an ethic of public relations can be built (Edgett, 2002). Practitioners are afforded some codes of conduct through professional organizations, but these do not provide solid guidelines.

In 2000, Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) developed a member code of ethics. Fitzpatrick (2002) reviews the development of the PRSA's Member Code of Ethics 2000 from the perspective of an insider. Research from a focus group found that public relations practitioners are concerned with truthfulness in business activities, corruption in communication channels, and competitive practices. Yet, fewer than half of survey respondents said that they would turn to PRSA for guidance if they were faced with an ethical situation.

Though the code provides guidance for practitioners, full application of the code requires integration of the current organizational culture with the policies dictated by the code, which often does not happen. During integration some of the more normative ideas can be watered-down or disregarded. A mis-application of the code could occur since the values and ethics of the institutions often are confused with the values and ethics of the individual practitioners (Fitzpatrick et al., 2001).

Yet PRSA is unable to enforce the code and therefore, emphasizes the aspirational rather than punitive elements in the new code. Since PRSA does not have the authority to enforce aspects of the code, the responsibility of ethics often rests within the organization. Ethical codes have been developed to help public relations practitioners and organizations in decision making, but according to Bowen (2004) and Fitzpatrick (2002), current research suggests that codes provide limited guidance for individuals and are difficult to enforce.

Ethical codes have been developed to help public relations practitioners and organizations in decision making, but according to Bowen (2004) and Fitzpatrick (2002), current research suggests that codes provide limited guidance for individuals and are difficult to enforce. Instead, scholars and some professionals have begun to turn to public relations theory for ethical guidance. Yet, even less research on the ethical best practices for public relations has occurred, leaving several holes in the literature.

Ethics in Public Relations Theory

Symmetrical Public Relations

Grunig and Hunt's landmark book on public relations (1984) was one of the first big pushes in research and theory in the field. In Grunig's theory he researchers the

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practice of excellent public relations and states that the only correct way to practice is when two-way symmetrical communication occurs. This suggests that only 'excellent' or good public relations takes place when the organization and all its publics communicate with complete transparency.

Stoker and Tusinski (2006) critically examine some of the holes in Grunig's excellence theory when it comes to ethical public relations. The research points out that Grunig's excellence model has been a target of criticism for many reasons, such as how it fails to consider when organizations use a combination of the four models in public relations and demonstrate how symmetrical communication as an unattainable normative theory. Stoker and Tusinski show how dialogue in reciprocal communication loads public relations with ethically questionable relationships; whereas, dissemination can "enhance freedom, responsibility, diversity and reconciliation."

Grunig did not directly address ethics in the beginning of his research because Grunig saw ethics as an inherent factor of symmetrical public relations. Several years later Grunig and others (Pearson, 1989 and Bowen, 2004) began to explore, more in depth, the role of ethics in the practice of public relations. Like Pearson, Grunig believes that the relationships in communication should be examined and suggests that collaboration is the most important value in public relations. He suggests public relations professionals have: a set of professional values that are socialized by professional organizations, a code of ethics to enforce values, professional training and an intellectual tradition and an established body of knowledge (Grunig, 2000). With this belief, Grunig sees values as the core of ethical decision making and suggests that ethics should be incorporated into the cultural values of organizations.

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In 2004, Bowen further explored ethics in symmetrical public relations. Her study challenges the assumption that inherent ethics in symmetric communication is enough to foster ethical decision making. Bowen combines public relations theory and Kantian philosophy to form a normative model of ethical decision making to help guide public relations. This model goes beyond the declaration of good will that codes of ethics provide by supplying guidelines for ethical analysis. Bowen indicates the relevance of deontology in excellent public relations by associating it to the autonomy and freedom from encroachment. The research focuses on how Kant's deontological theoretical concepts of rationality, autonomy, categorical impetrative, dignity, duty and intention are a part of ethical issues management. However, a significant portion of this model relies on the presence of autonomy, which is not always afforded to public relations professions.

A year later, Bowen (2005) published a study that applied the proposed theory to practice. Bowen's practical model, the "Ethical Consideration Triangle," is used to answer questions about an organization regarding the autonomy of issues management, how much prominence ethics is given in decision making, and if the conceptualization of ethics is based on utilitarianism or deontology. The results suggest that when autonomy is present for issue managers, decision-making can be made independently or from a group consensus. Also, when a rational and consistent approach to ethics is used, trust can be maintained and ongoing relationships with publics can be built.

The most crucial problem addressed in symmetrical public relations theory, is figuring out how to deal with divided loyalties when balancing their personal values with those of organizations, public and other professionals. Grunig suggests that when faced with this balancing act, public relations professional should turn to a basic set of

professional values to solve the dilemma. Yet, this actually is a contradiction to the idea of symmetry since professional values are now more important than those of the organization, public or individual. Bowen and Grunig's research begins looking at the relationship between public relations and ethics, but the examination occurs outside of the actual practice of public relations. Bowen only examines ethics through the lens of the excellence theory's symmetrical communication, and this model may not be applicable in other communication situations. In addition, her research does not address a practical application of the model in public relations.

Contingency Theory of Public Relations

Since the inception of excellence in public relations, the theory remained the dominant public relations theory until researchers began to question the applicability of a normative theory to the actual practice, a common discord in many fields. Cancel et al. (1997) suggest that the practice of public relations is too complex, fluid and impinged by far too many variables to rest in only the four models of public relations. Therefore, they propose a continuum be used for organizations dealing with their publics since it illustrates the flexibility of organizational stance decisions and public relations strategy. Unlike normative theory, contingency states that excellence in public relations can be accomplished in many ways and that 'it depends.'

The theory states that the greatest factors in conflict management relate to the power and influence of the dominant coalition. Dominant coalitions composed of individuals who foster liberal or innovative values will be more likely to be open to input from external publics than organizations with conservative members of the dominant coalition. Yet, during a time of crisis, the openness of culture and/or the flexibility of a

dominant coalition can be compromised due to the stress of the situation. Throughout the life of a crisis, the stance of the organization toward each public involved can be identified along a continuum from pure accommodation to pure advocacy since they change during a crisis. A matrix of factors has the potential to affect the stance of an organization.

Cameron (2005) explored the theory further after acknowledging that within the practice of public relations, corporate crises and conflict also can take on many forms. He recognized a need for public relations practitioners to develop communication activities that will influence the course of conflicts. The research shows that by focusing in on external factors, practitioners can work to benefit the organization and its many publics. Cameron explains that strategic conflict management is divided into four general phases, (depicted below in Figure 1) which includes specific activities conducted during each phase of the conflict management life cycle.

Figure 1: The Crisis Life Cycle
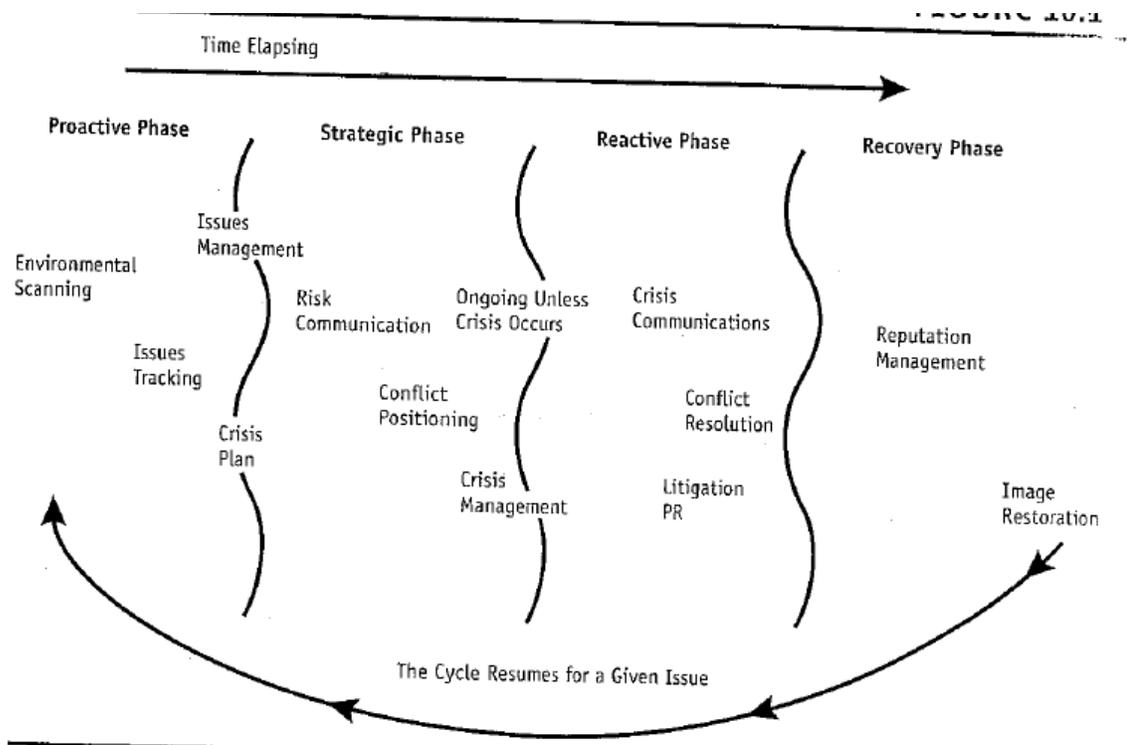
The Cycle of Conflict depicts the four phases in conflict management experienced by public relations professionals. The Cycle also includes a few of the numerous strategies in public relations that professionals employ to deal with conflict.

During the proactive phase, practitioners partake in activities that aim at conflict prevention and management. Environmental scanning, issues tracking and issues management are conducted to help develop a general crisis plan. The strategic phase begins when an issue is identified as an emerging conflict. During this phase, practitioners will initiate risk communication, conflict positioning and develop a specific crisis management plan. Evidence of the first two phases can be seen in the AT&T case. When employees are already aware of what they should do as soon as the crisis occurs, then employees are better able to act on the plan quickly. Once a crisis becomes public, practitioners will begin operating in a reactive phase. This phase includes both internal and external communications such as crisis communications, conflict resolution, and litigation. The final phase of the life cycle is recovery, which occurs during the aftermath of a crisis. During this time practitioners are conducting reputation management and image restoration. The Malden Mills case shows how communication in the final two phases occurs. During the crisis, Malden Mills' CEO delivers reactionary statements of commitment to employees and the community. Then after the crisis, statements indicate the organization's follow-through with rebuilding the plant.

In addition, Pang et al. (in press) used contingency theory to study crisis planning among public-listed, transnational organizations. His research indicates that many have alarmingly failed to take any precautionary steps in crisis planning. This study captures the tensions, contradictions and issues that arise in the implementation and synchronization of a regional crisis communication master plan in a Fortune 500 organization. According to Pang et al., the versatility of the theory allows it to be applied

internally to capture the movement of organization stance along the continuum between various parties.

Contingency theory provides a practical model to evaluate organizations involved in crises. Practitioners are charged with making many difficult decisions that often involve moral reasoning. However, until the ethical components are explored, the theory itself is subject to potential problems in analysis and execution.

Stoker and Tusinski (2006) suggest that a contingency approach attacks ethical relativism since the practitioner adjusts moral behaviors to fit the external factors. The researchers suggest that the morality of communicators rather than the mode of communication is more important when trying to establish ethical public relations. Yet, Stoker and Tusinski did not spend enough time examining newer developments in contingency theory to see where dissemination could work in an advocacy stance during a crisis.

Public relations practitioners have a number of duties implicit in their jobs which could be a major factor in how they communicate, especially during conflict or a crisis. Since the contingency theory is not normative, a more flexible ethical guide could be applied in order to justify the variety of potential stances and actions practitioners advocate and employ.

W.D. Ross' Ethical Duties for Public Relations

Kant has been used as a purely deontological ethical model for excellence in public relations (Bowen, 2004; Bowen, 2005), but W.D. Ross' six duties should also be examined since the model acts like a bridge between deontology and consequentialism. Public relations practitioners have various duties to more than just one public; therefore,

having an ethical justification model for weighing these duties will be beneficial for the professionalization of the field.

Contingency theory can be thought of as a connection between the normative, ideal, way to practice public relations and the pragmatic, actual, way public relations is practiced. Ethics can play a vital role in professional practice of public relations. Hence, integrating ethical duties with an established theory can help further the academic understanding of contingency theory and provide guidelines for ethical communication. This thesis proposes that Ross' duty-based ethics would be a practical ethical model to incorporate and apply to public relations, specifically crisis management.

Proposed Ethical justification for crisis communication

The six duties identified by Ross could be integrated in the conflict life cycle. This way, practitioners would be able to maintain an ethical focus as the crisis changes or grows. Ross defines the meaning of right in terms of acts and is quick to point out that "right does not mean the same as morally good."

After establishing what right means, Ross suggests ways to determine what makes right acts right. He proposes a conditional duty in which the individual forms an opinion based on the circumstances of the case. This is similar to contingency ideology since the theory asserts that various factors have the potential to affect the actions of an organization. According to Ross, each duty rests in definite circumstance, which cannot be held to be without moral significance.

The six broad duties Ross identifies promote the idea that duty does not lie in motives but actions. By focusing on actions, Ross' duties are more relevant to furthering the

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understanding of the actual practice of public relations, not the idealized notion of what 'excellent' public relations should be.

Ross describes duties of fidelity as those based on previous action. This could involve promises, both explicit and implicit, and previous wrongful actions. In public relations, fidelity would involve identifying various promises the organization made to its public and instances when the organization violated the trust of a public. Duties of gratitude are based on the previous actions of others. For practitioners, gratitude represents previous actions of publics towards the organization.

Ross' duties of justice rest on the fact or possibility of a distribution of pleasure or happiness. The distribution is not related to individual merit, and pleasure is considered not good when it arises from the actualization of a bad disposition or is undeserved. Public relations practitioners have a duty to prevent or promote the pleasure or happiness of an organization. Yet, the duty implies that practitioners need to respect the needs of all the publics, not just the organization, to execute this in a fair and balanced manner. Practitioners should also note that there is not a duty to produce as much good as they can or produce pleasure that will be solely enjoyed by the organization.

The duties of beneficence and non-maleficence are closely related. Beneficence suggests that there are other individuals whose condition can be made better in respect to virtue, intelligence or pleasure. Non-maleficence advocates that idea that individuals have an obligation to prevent an inclining to harm others or prevent pleasure-seeking that would incidentally harm others. In public relations, these duties are related to the type,

amount and medium in which information is communicated to a public. These duties will be especially important during the reactive and recovery phases of a crisis.

Ross' final duty is self-improvement, which suggests that individuals should improve their own condition via virtue or intelligence. This duty should be a focus for practitioners at all times, but again, will be most important during the recovery phase of a crisis. Public relations can focus on virtuous ways to improve their organization after learning from mistakes. Also, this duty is relevant to the management of corporation-client relationships. Both parties are involved in an ongoing process of give and take that aims to be mutually beneficial.

Deontological ethics have been applied to public relations in the past, but they have only been applied to normative theory (Bowen 2004, 2005). Since contingency theory is pragmatic, applying Ross' ideas of duties instead of Kant could provide a more accurate understanding of ethics within this theory.

Fitzpatrick et al. (2001) suggests that public relations practitioner should identify and compare the potential harms and benefits of proposed activities or policies in order to participate in responsible advocacy. This idea correlates to Ross' duties of beneficence and non-maleficence. In addition, the researchers conclude that all persons need to be treated with respect and dignity, which are related to Ross' idea of fidelity and gratitude. Practitioners should ensure that their decision-making abilities, choices, and actions support rather than interfere with equal respect for others (Fitzpatrick et al., 2001). Finally the researchers suggest that justice should be disseminated so that the risk of harm and actual harm are distributed among the affected parties as fairly as possible. The only duty of Ross' not identified by the research is that of self-improvement. This is likely

since a majority of public relations research looks to excellence theory, which always places others before the organization, for guidance.

Ross has not yet been used to justify ethics in public relations research; however Ross' duties have been applied to journalists. Since public relations has its roots in journalism (Fitzpatrick and Galliher, 2001) Meyers (2003) application of Ross' duties to the job of a journalist would be a good initial model to examine.

For decades, Ross' work was seen as an interesting but ultimately unimportant contribution to moral theory. Yet, this began to change when philosophers focused more on *how* ethical principles could be used to guide rather than about how to ground or justify those principles. Meyers (2003) concludes that the job of ethics theory is to explain why such moral principles are true, not argue that they are. This research shows how Ross' theory can be applied to media ethics by briefly describing its theoretical groundwork and then attempting to answer how duties can resolve dilemmas.

As stated previously, Ross provides a sort of bridge between deontology and consequentialism. Ross prominently included non-maleficence and beneficence in his list of prima facie duties. Prima facie duties are broad and abstract; actual duties are specific and contextual. But most of the other prima facie duties are backward-looking; they get their moral weight from previous actions. By contrast, beneficence and non-maleficence satisfy the primary condition of consequentialist theories because they are forward-looking and get moral weight from potential outcomes (Meyers, 2003).

Ross placed greatest emphasis on the deontological concern, but much of the power and originality of his theory emerged in recognizing the need to also account for relevant consequences.

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When Meyers (2003) applied Ross' theory, he worked under the assumption that each case brings its own moral context; therefore, even relatively minor differences in cases will result in different actual duties. There is not a standard model to weigh competing duties. Meyers suggests that the process of weighing duties can conflict with the journalistic ideal that reporting only the facts ensures moral action. However, the process does force the diligent reporter to recognize the complex moral nature of his/her job and take on their role as a moral agent (Meyers, 2003).

Ross suggests that all moral dilemmas represent a conflict among prima facie duties. In order to make an ethically justified decision, all six duties should be evaluated for the situation and then weighed. In public relations, especially crisis management and communication, the duties of the organization should be evaluated in the context of all of their publics, not just the organization itself. Meyers' research supports the idea that even when they are overridden, duties retain moral force.

A criticism of Ross' theory is that there is a lack of certainty attached to the determination of actual duty. Nonetheless, uncertainty is an inevitable factor in decision making. Ross' duties help to guide the decision making process in an ethical manner. Yet, it assumes that good processes have some relation to good outcomes. According to Ross, persons can be legitimately held responsible only for making the right choice.

In issues management, accurately predicting the response of stakeholders to an issue and all of the ramifications of issue alternatives in order to choose the right one, is nearly impossible (Bowen and Heath, 2004). Therefore, deontology is well-suited to weigh responsibilities of issues management. However, this thesis will argue that Ross' ethical approach, which bridges deontology with consequentialism, suggests that some

consequences are foreseeable. Therefore, this ethical approach can aid conflict and crisis management in considering the many possible ramifications and alternatives of communication decisions without prediction becoming too ambiguous.

Ethics should be ethics no matter what the situation. However, ethics are designed to help guide decision-making during difficult situations.

RQ1: Do the duties as expressed in communication generated by the organization remain the same during crisis as in non-crisis related events?

RQ1a: Will the dominant ethical duties as expressed in communication generated by the organization remain the same during crisis as in non-crisis related events?

RQ1b: Will the frequency of dominant ethical duties as expressed in communication generated by the organization remain the same during crisis as in non-crisis related events?

From contingency theory we can assume that excellent public relations can be accomplished in many ways and that an organization's stance, especially during a crisis, depends on several specific variables. The overall stance could also depend on ethical duties expressed in communication.

RQ2: Do the proposed ethical duties in the context of other contingency variables help determine the stance of an organization?

After establishing research questions on this topic, it is crucial to understand how scholars and practitioners can evaluate the effectiveness of ethics in communication, especially when a crisis situation emerges.

CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH DESIGN
IDENTIFY THE ROLE OF ETHICS

Chapter Overview

The goal of this thesis is to understand the role ethical duties play in conflict management and how they may affect the resulting stance of organizations. A review of the ethics and public relations literature has shown the research findings and advances of the pragmatic and theoretical. Ethics has been examined in some of the literature but not enough has been found to fill the gap of practicing good public relations and adhering to ethical duties. This is especially true when public relations practitioners must communicate during a time of crisis. This research design aims to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: Do the duties as expressed in communication generated by the organization remain the same during crisis as in non-crisis related events?

RQ1a: Will the dominant ethical duties as expressed in communication generated by the organization remain the same during crisis as in non-crisis related events?

RQ1b: Will the frequency of dominant ethical duties as expressed in communication generated by the organization remain the same during crisis as in non-crisis related events?

RQ2: Do the proposed ethical duties in the context of other contingency variables help determine the stance of an organization?

This study used content analysis to examine the relationship between ethical duties of an organization before, during and after a crisis. A crisis is defined as "an extraordinary event or series of events that adversely affects the integrity of the product, the reputation or financial stability of the organization; or the health or well-being of employees, the community or the public at large," (Cameron, 2005, pg. 258). Therefore, crises can be unexpected or expected; public media blitzes or an internal scandal. The crises selected for this thesis range from the expected to the unexpected but were all covered in the media and known publicly.

The proposed research will examine mass-mediated communication documents that can be accessed by the general public. Berger (1998) defines content analysis as "a research technique based on measuring the amount of something in a representative sampling of some mass-mediated art form," (pp. 23). Stacks (2005) suggests that content analysis is an objective and reliable way to describe a message and understand how messages are created. Unlike interviews, content analysis is a relatively inexpensive and unobtrusive way to gather current information and produce findings in a numerical form (Berger, 1998).

Previous studies (Beheish and Chatov, 1993; Maes et al.) have evaluated the role of ethics through stated values and standards of traditionally structured Fortune 500 organizations. However, little or no research has been conducted looking at large corporations that have built their business on specific principles.

Previous content analysis on contingency theory has examined the changing stances of the organizations along the contingency continuum. Shin et al. (2005) evaluated stances through news story content even though the content does not directly

reference the perspective of organization-public relationships. However, the news stories may indicate the actual impetus for changes in stances or strategies and reflect the perspectives of the media. Since the contingency factors have already been identified, content analysis is a practical method to evaluate which of the factors are present in the media coverage. (Shin et al., 2005)

Martinelli and Briggs (1998) argued that in a crisis, the media become an important tool to examine an organization's stances and strategies, and the effectiveness with which it gets its messages across to its public, rather than other means. Newspaper articles, often referred to as public records of history in the making (Washington , 1997), are argued to provide more detailed, comprehensive and chronological account of the management of the crisis than messages disseminated through television coverage, which are arguably more episodic and fleeting.

Martinelli and Briggs (1998) also suggested that the organization's decision making process is reflected in its communication response strategies. The content analysis and categorization of what was said allowed for the quantification of spokespersons' responses during the crisis. Content analysis of just news articles reflects more fully the crisis responses of corporate spokespersons. The responses are often the result of press conferences and interviews which may not have come to light in a press release.

As the contingency theory suggests, internal variables such as organizational culture and leadership affect how organizations respond to crisis. Therefore, the ethical foundation of the corporate structure could also play an even bigger role in how crises are managed.

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This thesis examined documents produced by four organizations, two for-profit and two not-for-profit, related to a specific crisis. According to Kerlinger (1964), content analysis should be systematic in selection and analysis, objective through clear and precise definitions of dimensions that are grounded in concrete characteristics and quantitative so that the end result is some form of descriptive statistics. The documents selected for analysis reflected the respective organizational culture as well as official statements provided by the organization to the media. In order to evaluate the ethics involved, content analysis will help categorize which of Ross' six duties are being employed for each organization.

And, as previous literature has shown, the actions of practitioners depend greatly on the corporate culture of the organization they work for. Therefore, the weighing of duties should vary, depending on the type of organization involved. Four different categories of organizations will be established to model the various types of organizations practitioners work with or for. The term "controversial" will be used to differentiate between the models and is conceptualized as organizations that engage in lobbying or innovation through non-traditional or questionable means. Analysis will indicate what duty or duties each organizational model should fall back on during a crisis based on the general mission statement and principles.

In addition, analyzing statements that were printed can help determine how effective a company was in getting its message communicated and the type of response strategies employed. Martinelli and Briggs (1998) employed content analysis of published responses made by Odwalla officials, during the juice contamination crisis. The content analysis instrument is designed to evaluate the stances and strategies of an

organization in crisis management, its multiple publics' stances and perceptual as well as emotional responses to the organization's performance, and the contingent factors associated with the stances and strategies of the parties.

The four organizations selected for the content analysis (The American Red Cross, Greenpeace, Whole Foods Market, and Google) were chosen based on previous analysis of corporate culture and the recent crises surrounding each of the companies. Corporations like Whole Foods and Google are consistently ranked high in Fortune's Most Admired and Best Places to Work while still growing their business. Yet, like other Fortune 100 companies, these corporations are not without public conflict or crises. In addition, not-for-profits often encounter problems that play out in the media. The American Red Cross and Greenpeace are two organizations that continue to be in the news not only for their positive assistance and missions but also for the negative consequences of their actions. Each organization was also categorized as controversial or non-controversial based on the researcher's knowledge of media and public perception. A controversial organization would have a reputation for taking action to spark media attention. A non-controversial organization would have a reputation of taking action to deliver a message without much fanfare.

Overview of the Four Organizations

Non-controversial not-for-profit

The **American Red Cross** is used often in the literature as a not-for-profit that does not engage in controversial actions but still faces crises.

> **Mission Statement:** The American Red Cross, a humanitarian organization led by volunteers and guided by its Congressional Charter and the Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross Movement, will

provide relief to victims of disaster and help people prevent, prepare for, and respond to emergencies.

Principles: Humanity, Impartiality, Neutrality, Independence, Voluntary Service, Unity, Universality

For the American Red Cross, gratitude and justice would be the logical dominant duties to consider when communicating to their publics. Since the Red Cross relies heavily on volunteers, focusing on the duty of gratitude is vital during a crisis. Remembering that their organization would cease to exist without the help of others should affect how they communicate to one of their largest publics, volunteers. In addition, the duty of justice should be at the core of their communication during a crisis. The Red Cross' principles all are related to idea of just actions being equally distributed, not based on individual merit, but an overall promotion of pleasure.

Controversial not-for-profit

Greenpeace is a global environmental organization that is often cited in the literature as using non-violent but dubious methods of communication. The actions of this organization can often be interpreted as advocative.

> **Mission Statement:** "Greenpeace is an independent, campaigning organization which uses non-violent, creative confrontation to expose global environmental problems, and to force solutions for a green and peaceful future. Greenpeace's goal is to ensure the ability of the earth to nurture life in all its diversity."

From this statement, it can be assumed that the duties of beneficence and non-maleficence are most important to Greenpeace. Beneficence for Greenpeace would include their campaigning for environmental changes through educating their publics. They believe in non-violence and that the condition for all can be improved if humans knew how to respect and preserve their environment. The duty of non-maleficence is

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obvious in the non-violent confrontations of the organization, which advocate the idea

that individuals and the government have an obligation to help the environment.

Greenpeace believes that engaging in violent demonstrations would be more harmful than

helpful.

Non-controversial for-profit

   Whole Foods Market is a food retailer of natural and organic products that is

regarded as socially responsible and can be categorized as a non-controversial for-profit

organization. Whole Foods' recent acquisitions and continued expansion in the United

States and globally has attracted additional media coverage for the corporation.

> **Mission Statement:** We're highly selective about what we sell, dedicated to
> stringent Quality Standards, and committed to sustainable agriculture. Whole
> Foods. Whole People. Whole Planet.
> **Principles:** Selling the highest quality products available, satisfying and
> delighting out customers, supporting team member excellence and happiness,
> creating wealth through profits and growth, caring about our communities and
> our environment.

   As indicated from their mission statement, principles and additional information

from Whole Foods website, fidelity and self-improvement would be the two most

essential duties for the organization during a crisis or everyday situation. Fidelity

suggests that Whole Foods would make communication decisions based on their

previously proclaimed promises to provide high quality and aid to their communities.

These promises are not only stated in their mission and principles, but they are evidenced

in various programs started and supported by the organization. The duty of self-

improvement is not as prominent in their mission, but it explicitly found in Whole Foods'

principles. As a publicly-traded company, this duty relates to growing a profitable

business. However, unlike Enron, Whole Foods' duty to self-improvement seems to focus

on ways to improve its condition through virtue more than crafted innovation.

Controversial for-profit

Google, categorized as a controversial for-profit organization, is a public

corporation specializing in internet search and online advertising which is known for

relaxed corporate culture and its slogan of "don't be evil." Yet, as it has grown, Google

has been at the center of several controversies related to its business practices and

services.

> **Mission Statement:** "To organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful."
> **Principles:** Focus on the user and all else will follow, it is best to do one thing very, very well, fast is better than slow, democracy on the web works, you don't need to be at your desk to need an answer, you can make money without doing evil, there's always more information out there, the need for information crosses all borders, you can be serious without a suit, great just isn't good enough.

From their slogan it is evident that the duty of non-maleficence is foremost in

importance in all aspects of Google and should be found in their communication

activities. Google believes that businesses can be profitable in the long- and short-run

when no harm is done to others. However, when the mission statement and principles are

further examined it seems as if the duty to self-improvement ranks higher in importance.

Phrases such as "great isn't good enough" and "it is best to do one thing very, very well"

are reminiscent of Enron's ideology. Unlike Whole Foods, Google's duty of self-

improvement seems to revolve around intelligence and innovation more than virtue.

Evident from this initial analysis, non-for-profit organizations seem to share the

duty of beneficence since most are created in order to help improve the situation of

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something. However, non-for-profits seem to differentiate themselves based on the other duties they adhere to. An indication of beneficence should be found in the communication of all non-for-profits combined with other duties like non-maleficence, justice and gratitude depending on the mission of the organization. Inherent in the selected for-profit organizations, and likely all others, is the duty of self-improvement. How these companies distinguish themselves is not just in the additional duties they subscribe to, but it is in how they choose to execute self-improvement.

Data Collection Strategies

The content analysis first examined publicly available documents related to the organizational culture and implied ethical duties of all organizations. The mission statement, principles, ethical codes, standards, etc. of Google, Whole Foods, Greenpeace and American Red Cross were gathered from the organizations' websites. The unit of analysis was the individual article. A code book based on Ross' six ethical duties was created to help coders evaluate the data. In addition, the date, source of information and primary public being addressed was included in coding.

The second part of the content analysis examined official communication from each company during the selected crisis. A Lexis-Nexis search located articles related to the crisis from five major newspapers (New York Times, LA Times, Washington Post, USA Today and The Wall Street Journal). Like previous research, the Lexis-Nexis search will seek media coverage for specific time period and will identify relevant published articles. The article selection will exclude editorials, opinions, commentaries and letters to the editors. (Martinelli and Briggs, 1998; Shin et al., 2005).

To addresses the culture and ethics during a time of crisis, data was obtained through media coverage gathered on based on specific dates and keywords using LexisNexis. Media coverage addressed the Red Cross' actions in the aftermath of Hurricane Karina (9/1/05 – 4/1/06). Key words such as red cross, Bakersfield, Katrina, fraud, waste, abuse were used as search criteria to gather articles.

Media coverage gathered looked at Greenpeace's actions regarding global warming (1/1/00 – 2/5/07) and included the key words of Greenpeace and global warming. However, the majority of articles found during the search only included photo captions of members of the organization, not quotations in an official capacity.

Google is currently being sued by Viacom and is receiving a significant amount of media coverage from this impending crisis. Articles were obtained from a LexisNexis search from the date the lawsuit was filed until the coverage of the crisis subsided (3/13/07 – 5/1/07). Key words used to narrow the search included Google, Viacom, lawsuit. A search for official Google news releases could not be found on either the Google/YouTube Websites or PR Newswire.

Originally, for Whole Foods, media coverage surrounding the selling of live lobsters was to be gathered an analyzed, but the search on LexisNexis did not produce enough results for an accurate analysis. Instead, articles covering the proposed acquisition of Wild Oats (2/21/07 – 6/10/07) were obtained from a search on the key words: Whole Foods, Wild oats, merger, FTC. Coverage of this crisis continued after the date-range, but a census was established and validated the final date-range used. In addition, news releases distributed by the organization were incorporated into the analysis of the culture and ethics of Whole Foods during a time of crisis.

This methodology was selected because of its use in previous contingency theory case studies. Only statements and quotations from the organization's spokesperson or CEO within each article will be examined. The specific papers were chosen because they have the greatest readership and are national publications that could reach all publics related to the corporations. In addition, any press releases or media alerts sent by the organizations were included. These documents were found on the organizations' websites or PR Newswire.

Similar to the methodology of previous studies, only articles that included official responses were selected for analysis, and duplicate same-day responses in different newspapers were counted once (Martinelli and Briggs, 1998).

Four independent coders were selected to gather and analyze the data. Two coders will examine non-crisis related data and two different coders will examine the crisis related data. The coders discussed the code book to ensure that the coding directions are clear. In addition, the researcher was available via phone and e-mail for clarification of coding questions during the search and analysis. Since the coders and researcher were not in the same location, the process took longer than anticipated and was not as controlled.

Once the data was gathered and coded, the reliability of the coding pairs was tested to determine internal reliability, especially since coders would have to make some judgments when referencing duties. Reliability was established through Cohen's Kappa proportions of agreement. For the non-crisis data coders, seven articles were randomly selected to obtain a sample of 10 percent of the articles analyzed. For the crisis related data coders, the first five articles of Google and American Red Cross cases were selected to be a representative sample of about 10 percent of the total articles analyzed. The

difference in article selection between non-crisis and crisis related data was due to the delay of complete data reporting from one coder.

A 95 percent confidence interval was calculated according to the Wilson efficient-score method and corrected for continuity. According to Lowry (2007), Kappa provides a measure of the degree to which two coders agree in their respective coding of data into mutually exclusive categories. The researcher used the online data-entry matrix provided by Lowry to calculate Kappa for each variable. The coefficients, or proportions of agreement, for non-crisis had was on average .84 with a range of .70 to .99 and for crisis related data the average was also .84 with a range of .73 to 1. Table 1 found below documents the specific coefficients for each of the ethical duties for both the non-crisis and crisis related data. Since this is an exploratory study, coefficients greater than .70 or greater are acceptable (Lombard et. al, 2002).

Table 1: Inter-coder reliability of ethical duties

Ethical Duty	Non-crisis related data reliability	Crisis related data reliability
Fidelity	.70	.86
Gratitude	.88	.99
Justice	.80	.80
Beneficence	.80	1
Non-maleficence	.70	.86
Self-improvement	.70	.97

Once reliability was established, the researcher conducted qualitative analysis based descriptive statistics. The frequencies found in the data provided feasible answers

to the research questions. Analysis focused on the differences and similarities between non-crisis and crisis related communication in respect to duties and contingency variables. Data gathered from the scales provided a comprehensive look at each organization as a case study so that further analysis could be conducted.

The data coded based on a variety of variables. Data was categorized based on two date ranges: non-crisis (organizational culture documents) and crisis related (press releases, statements and quotations from spokesperson and/or CEO) based on the specific dates related to the specific crisis.

Additional variables identified in the coding include: news story source, characteristics of the organization involved, various internal contingency variables, messaging and strategy, and organizations' primary ethical duties. In order to identify the contingent factors involved in stance and strategy, coders evaluated variables based on a number of dimensions (Shin et al., 2005; Stephens et al., 2005; Pang et al., 2007). The organization's ethical duties were evaluated based on Ross' six duties as described above.

The ethical duties were coded based on a five-point Likert scale. The same scale will be used to evaluate all organizations and for all documents.

In order to identify the internal contingent variables present in organizational communication, coders used contingent factors outlined in previous research (Shin et al., 2005; Pang et al., 2007 in press; Jin et al., 2006) and modified to focus on corporate culture. Internal factors in the contingency matrix will be analyzed based on content analysis of the non-crisis and crisis related documents. Additional Likert scales were used to analyze the presence of internal factors that could affect movement along the continuum. If there was not sufficient information provided in a document to answer one

of the questions, the coders coded that question as 99 (N/A). The code books can be found in the Appendix.

Potential Limitations

Content analysis can provide good insight on the advocative or accommodative nature of organizational stances as well as identify what duties are reflected in organizational communication. However, content analysis is not able to analyze how organizations arrive at these stances. In-depth interviews would provide more information about how practitioners decide on stances and how organizational culture can influence the decision-making process. Interviewing practitioners who currently work or previously worked at these organizations could provide more in-depth content to analyze from an internal perspective. When interviews are conducted, often, unexpected information can be obtained and follow-up questions can be asked (Berger, 1998). However, the time and travel needed to schedule and execute interviews with practitioners from all four of the selected organizations would be too great. Also, obtaining the necessary contacts and interviews would be time-consuming and difficult to access because of the privacy of internal information. For the scope of this thesis, a preliminary evaluation of a relationship between ethical duties and existing contingency variables can be conducted with content analysis.

Another potential issue deals with the selection of newspapers for coding. The Red Cross' crisis with Katrina would also have received significant media coverage from local New Orleans, Louisiana and Mississippi newspapers. Also, the coverage could have revealed some different information. However, adding this type of coverage would challenge the consistency of the research.

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Of the four coders, one was the researcher. This could impact the results since a coder was also the designer of the code sheet and would be analyzing the results. Yet, the researcher (coder one) and coder two were able to meet and discuss the research often and had a similar understanding of the overall research. The physical distance between coders three and four and researcher limited the ease and accessibility of communication. The researcher e-mailed and discussed issues over the phone, but had less of an influence on the coding.

CHAPTER 3: DATA COLLECTION
UNCOVERING THE PROMINENCE OF ETHICS AND ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURAL

In order to better understand the role ethical duties play in conflict management and how they may affect the resulting stance of organizations, Web site articles, newspaper articles and press releases from four crisis case studies were analyzed. Documents included organizational characteristics, communication strategy, crisis response strategy, crisis characteristics and ethical duties. Communication data from non-crisis related and crisis related events for each case were analyzed to provide the researcher a clearer idea of what the organization communicates during a time of normalcy and during a time of crisis. Gathering both non-crisis and crisis related data for each case provided a foundation for analysis through the contingency theory of conflict management since communication from two phases of the crisis life cycle is included.

The non-crisis and crisis related data is presented for each case. Each variable is expressed as a percent followed by an explanation of what the percent and variable mean in the context of this thesis. Below, in Table 2, is a quick summary of the ethical duties' percentages included to highlight a major focus of the research. This table illustrates the overall decrease in the percent of ethical duties mentioned by the organization in the newspaper articles and press releases (crisis) as compared to ethical duties mentioned in the Web site content (non-crisis).

Table 2: Ethical duties mentioned in non-crisis and crisis related articles

Ethical Duties	Google		Whole Foods		American Red Cross		Greenpeace	
	Non-crisis	Crisis	Non-crisis	Crisis	Non-crisis	Crisis	Non-crisis	Crisis
Fidelity	78%	0%	87%	8%	70%	15%	72%	11%
Gratitude	16%	8%	24%	0%	30%	0%	3%	6%
Justice	72%	14%	67%	8%	85%	64%	83%	19%
Beneficence	97%	18%	91%	15%	75%	16%	23%	6%
Non-maleficence	15%	0%	22%	0%	65%	32%	51%	0%
Self-improvement	91%	4%	89%	12%	75%	7%	66%	2%

Although the ethical duties for each organization were the central focus of this thesis, the additional variables coded provide a contingency theory context essential for the final analysis. The following case study sections include the percentages for all variables coded in the research and how the variables relate to one another.

Google Data

The non-crisis related data for Google included 32 articles gathered from the corporate Web site to reflect how Google normally communicated. The size of the organization, in terms of global presence and notoriety, was determined by the researcher based on preliminary data already gathered. The size of the organization was centralized and global with one main office and a few smaller regional offices.

The crisis related data for Google included 28 newspaper articles and press releases. The crisis addressed was the lawsuit filed by Viacom against YouTube, which is

owned by Google. The lawsuit claimed that several of the videos posted on YouTube violated copyrights owned by Viacom. The majority of media coverage during the life of the crisis lasted from mid-March to early May. Coverage was fairly equal from top tier news outlets, but the majority of articles analyzed were from the *LA Times* (4) and *New York Times* (5). Unlike other cases in this study, there were no official press releases found.

Six variables dealt specifically with the ethical duties present in the communication. In the non-crisis related information, fidelity was addressed identified when explicit or implicit promises made by Google. The ethical duty of fidelity was mentioned at least once in 78% of the articles and was mentioned more than once in 41% of the data. In the crisis related information, fidelity was not mentioned in the articles indicating that there were no explicit or implicit promises made by Google.

In the non-crisis related Web site articles, gratitude was addressed by the thankfulness Google expressed towards its public(s) and was mentioned in 16% of the articles. Yet, in the crisis related newspaper articles and press releases gratitude was mentioned in 8% of the articles.

Justice addressed the promotion of an egalitarian environment and was mentioned at least once in 72% of the Web site articles and mentioned more than once in 50%. For the crisis related newspaper articles and press releases, justice addressed was mentioned in 14% of the articles.

In the non-crisis related Web site articles, beneficence addressed improving the condition of the public(s) and was mentioned at least once in 97% of the articles and

mentioned more than once 58%. In the crisis related newspaper articles and press releases beneficence was mentioned in 18% of the articles.

Non-maleficence addressed Google's desire to not cause harm to the public(s), which was mentioned in 15% of the Web site articles. Non-maleficence was not mentioned in the crisis related newspaper articles and press releases, so there was no indication that Google desired to not cause harm to the public(s).

Self-improvement, the final ethical duty, addressed Google improving its condition through virtuous or intellectual actions. In the non-crisis related Web site articles, self-improvement was mentioned at least once in 91% of the articles and more than once 53%. In the crisis related newspaper articles and press releases self-improvement was mentioned in 4% of the articles.

The following three paragraphs address the characteristics of the organization based on the non-crisis related information gathered from the organization's Web site. Each paragraph addresses a set of variables that help describe the specific characteristics of the organization.

A section of variables characterized more abstract depictions of the organization. The values of Google were present and in 31% the Web site articles indicated that value seemed to be placed on tradition. The pervasiveness of traditional or historical business methods was present and gave the impression that the organization valued some traditional business practices such as organizational structure, code of conduct, formality of speech and professionalism. A promotion of knowledge growth within the organization was found in 88% of the Web site articles. Also, in 47% of the Web site articles, knowledge was shown as growing and being encouraged by executives and

managers. This indicated that Google as an organization somewhat encouraged its employees to seek out additional training and education in order to grow the corporations overall knowledge. The outward economic stability of the organization was found in 97% of the Web site articles, and Google was seen as profitable through the word choice of the messages.

The next section of variables addressed characteristics on how the organization communicates. The presence of an issues management program or official within the organization was not found in any Web site articles. The decision-making process was not distributed throughout the organization since in 16% of the Web site articles; the power of decision-making seemed to be concentrated among a few individuals. The formality of the organization was identified in 88% of the Web site articles as lacking since there were not obvious roles or codes that define and/or limit positions. Since the positions were not as well-defined, position structure was seen as stratified in 59% of the Web site articles. The influence by a legal department was noted in 81% of the Web site articles as low since overall little legalese was a part of the actions of communication team. The business exposure of the organization was found in all of the data to be high since Google produced a majority of products or services regarded as necessities for the general public. The pervasiveness of corporate culture was seen in 91% of the Web site articles and indicated that corporate culture had a pervasive impact on the style of communication and was deemed influential in the messaging.

Other variables helped characterize the organization as it represented itself externally through presented facts. The overall impression of Google's organizational culture was found in 81% of the Web site articles. The culture was identified as clear and

honest, expressing the attitudes, experiences, beliefs and values of the organization in an open, transparent manner. The level of technology the organization uses to produce its product or service was identified in all of the Web site articles. Google indicated the organization was high-tech at some level, which implied that Google would likely use some advanced communication techniques and technology in delivering its messages. The organization's officials were identified as seemingly mixed (19%), somewhat heterogeneous (3%) and heterogeneous (9%) in the Web site articles. This showed some evidence that Google had a group of officials with a mix of races, gender and educational backgrounds.

The following five paragraphs address the crisis itself and how the organization responded to the crisis based on the crisis related newspaper articles and press releases gathered. These paragraphs will provide a clearer picture of the situation and reactions of the organization.

Other variables dealt with characterizing the crisis itself. The urgency of the situation was noted in the newspaper articles and press releases, and in 54% of the newspaper articles and press releases, the communications suggested that the crisis would probably not result in a negative situation for the organization. The level of threat the situation could pose to the organization was addressed, and in 43% of the newspaper articles and press releases, the threat was shown to be related to the goals of Google which could impact its goals. Yet, only 25% of the newspaper articles and press releases suggested that negative publicity, government regulation and litigation could impact the operations and reputation of the organization. Also, the potential costs or benefits the crisis might bring about were analyzed. In 22% of the newspaper articles and press

releases, the costs for the organization were classified as relatively low and the benefits to the public(s) high. The communication from Google expressed balancing interests was found in the newspaper articles and press releases. In 53% of the newspaper articles and press releases, a moderate commitment to balance its own interests with the interests of various publics and the general interests of society was shown. Google's message indicated that the interests of the public(s) were being considered.

The set of variables served to describe the public(s) the organization was addressing in their communications. The public(s) addressed in the communication were identified. Google addressed the general public in 50% of the newspaper articles and press releases, the government in 14%, and the media in 11%. In the newspaper articles and press releases, Google chose to take an action-based stance and indicated what the stance was. Google stated, in 25% of the newspaper articles and press releases, it was not willing to yield to the public's demands. In the newspaper articles and press releases, the organization took a qualified-rhetoric-mixed stance toward the public(s). In 29% of the newspaper articles and press releases, Google stated that it was not willing to express regret, apologize or collaborate with any public being addressed.

The primary crisis response strategy of the organization was also identified through the newspaper articles and press releases. In 25% of the articles, Google had a response strategy which denied there was a crisis present. In 18% of the newspaper articles and press releases, the organization chose to attack the accuser (Viacom) and also in 18% of the newspaper articles and press releases, Google minimized its responsibility for the crisis by making excuses.

Other variables addressed the overall strategy of crisis communication by the organization by categorizing the messages as defensive or accommodative, ambiguous or specific, and emotional or factual. In 54% of the newspaper articles and press releases, Google's strategy was defensive instead of accommodative towards the public(s) and it denied the existence or occurrence of an issue. In 29% of the newspaper articles and press releases, Google was neither ambiguous nor specific in its messages. Communication talked about the issue in a general sense without going into the details and focused more on how others are involved in this issue. According to the newspaper articles and press releases, Google chose to deliver a factual message 58% of the time by briefly mentioning attitudinal aspects of the issue or not using emotion at all in communication.

The final variables addressed the organizational involvement during the crisis. The priority of organizational resources such as time, finances, knowledge and management being allocated was addressed in the newspaper articles and press releases. In 32% of the newspaper articles and press releases, Google was neutral and does not seem to be willing, nor unwilling, to address the crisis and does not present a solution to the issue raised. None of the newspaper articles or press releases addressed if the organization was dependent on external support.

Whole Foods Data

The non-crisis related data for Whole Foods included 46 Web site articles to reflect how Whole Foods normally communicated. The size of the organization, in terms of global presence and notoriety, was determined by the researcher based on preliminary data already gathered. The size of Whole Foods was centralized and global with one corporate headquarters and several locations locally managed.

The crisis related data for Whole Foods included 26 newspaper articles and press releases. The crisis addressed was the FTC investigation of Whole Foods in regards to its proposed merger with Wild Oats. The majority of media coverage during the life of the crisis lasted from late February to early June. The data collection period ended before it was discovered that the CEO of Whole Foods had a secret blog. There was coverage from all the top tier news outlets except for *The Washington Post*, but the majority of articles analyzed were from the *New York Times* (4) and official press releases from the organization's website and PR Newswire (4).

Six of the variables dealt specifically with the ethical duties present in the communication. In the non-crisis related Web site articles fidelity addressed explicit or implicit promises made by Whole Foods, which were mentioned at least once in 87% of the articles and was mentioned more than once in 50% of the articles. For the crisis related newspaper articles and press releases, fidelity was mentioned in 8% of the articles.

The presence of gratitude was identified by the thankfulness expressed by Whole Foods towards its public(s). Gratitude was mentioned in 24% of the non-crisis related Web site articles. Yet, in the crisis related newspaper articles and press releases gratitude was not addressed in the articles, so there was no indication that Whole Foods expressed thankfulness towards its public(s).

In the non-crisis related Web site articles, justice addressed the promotion of an egalitarian environment and was mentioned at least once in 67% of the articles and mentioned more than once in 28%. In the crisis related newspaper articles and press releases justice was mentioned in 8% of the articles.

Beneficence addressed improving the condition of the public(s) and in the non-crisis related Web site articles was mentioned at least once in 91% of the articles and mentioned more than once 39%. In the crisis related newspaper articles and press releases beneficence was mentioned 15%.

Non-maleficence addressed Whole Foods' desire to not cause harm to the public(s), which was mentioned in 22% of the non-crisis related Web site articles. Non-maleficence was not mentioned in the crisis related newspaper articles and press releases, so there was no indication that Whole Foods had a desire to not cause harm to the public(s).

The final ethical duty, self-improvement addressed Whole Foods improving its condition through virtuous or intellectual actions. Self-improvement was mentioned at least once in 89% of the non-crisis related Web site articles and more than once 35%. However, in the crisis related newspaper articles and press releases, self-improvement was mentioned 12%.

The following three paragraphs address the characteristics of the organization based on the non-crisis related Web site articles gathered. Each paragraph addresses a set of variables that help describe the specific characteristics of the organization.

One set of variables characterized more abstract depictions of the organization. The values of Whole Foods were present and in 57% of the Web site articles values seemed to be placed on tradition. The pervasiveness of traditional or historical business methods was present and gave the impression that the organization valued some traditional business practices such as organizational structure, code of conduct, formality of speech and professionalism. A promotion of knowledge growth within the

organization was found in 22% of the articles. This suggests that employees of Whole Foods were not overwhelming encouraged to seek out additional education and training. The outward economic stability of the organization was evident in 48% of the Web site articles, and showed Whole Foods as profitable through the word choice of the messages.

The next section of variables addressed characteristics on how the organization communicates. The presence of an issues management program or official in the organization was found in 20% of the Web site articles. The decision-making process was mentioned in only 7% of the Web site articles, so the concentration of power was not identified. The formality of the organization was shown in 96% of the Web site articles to have obvious roles or codes that define and/or limit positions. The structure of those positions was not identified for Whole Foods since only 6% of the Web site articles addressed the variable. The moderate influence of a legal department was evident in 65% of the Web site articles, since legalese was a part of the actions of communication team. The business exposure of the organization was seen as high in 94% of the Web site articles, since Whole Foods produced a majority of products or services regarded as necessities for consumers. The pervasiveness of corporate culture was evident in all the Web site articles; corporate culture had a pervasive impact on the style of communication and was deemed influential in the messages.

Another section of variables characterized the organization as it represented itself externally through presented facts. The overall impression of Whole Foods' organizational culture was found in 78% of the Web site articles. The culture was shown as clear and honest, expressing the attitudes, experiences, beliefs and values of the organization in an open, transparent manner. The level of technology the organization

used to produce its product or service was found to be some what low-tech in 87% of the Web site articles which suggests that Whole Foods would not likely use some advanced communication techniques and technology in delivering their messages. The organization's officials were mentioned in only 7% of the Web site articles, so the diversity of the organization was not evident.

The following five paragraphs address the crisis itself and how the organization responded to the crisis based on the crisis related newspaper articles and press releases gathered. These paragraphs will provide a clearer picture of the situation and reactions of the organization.

This set of variables dealt with characterizing the crisis itself. The urgency of the situation was addressed in the newspaper articles and press releases. In 31% of the newspaper articles and press releases, the communications suggested that the crisis would possibly result in a negative situation for the organization. Also, in 30% of the newspaper articles and press releases, the communications suggested that the crisis would not likely create a negative situation. Based on the dates of the newspaper articles and press releases, Whole Foods communicated that the crisis could possibly create a negative situation during the middle of the crisis. In the beginning and end of the crisis, the organization indicated that a negative situation was not likely.

The level of threat the situation could pose to the organization was identified in the newspaper articles and press releases. In 26% of the newspaper articles and press releases, the threat was shown to be related to the goals of Whole Foods which could impact its goals. The potential costs or benefits the crisis might bring about were found in the newspaper articles and press releases. In 42% of the newspaper articles and press

releases, the costs for the organization were classified as relatively low and the benefits to the public(s) high. The newspaper articles and press releases addressed how the communication from Whole Foods expressed balancing interests. In 27% of the newspaper articles and press releases, a moderate commitment to balance its own interests with the interests of various publics and the general interests of society was shown. Whole Foods' communication indicated that the interests of the public(s) were being considered.

Other variables served to describe the public(s) the organization was addressing in their communications. The newspaper articles and press releases clarified what public(s) were addressed in the communication. Whole Foods addressed the general public in 39% of the newspaper articles and press releases and the media in 39%. The discussion around Whole Foods taking an action-based stance was only found in 12% of the newspaper articles and press releases. Therefore, there was not an indication if the organization was willing to yield to the public's demands. The discussion around Whole Foods taking a qualified-rhetoric-mixed stance toward the public(s) was only found in 15% of the newspaper articles and press releases. Again, the small variable presence did not provide an indication if Whole Foods was willing to express regret, apologize or collaborate with any public being addressed.

The primary crisis response strategy of the organization was addressed in the newspaper articles and press releases. In 23% of the newspaper articles and press releases, Whole Foods had a response strategy which attacked the accuser and suggested that the Federal Trade Commission's claims of a crisis have no bearing.

The next set of variables addressed the overall strategy of crisis communication by the organization by categorizing the messages as defensive or accommodative, ambiguous or specific, and emotional or factual. In 27% of the newspaper articles and press releases, Whole Foods' strategy was defensive instead of accommodative towards the public(s) and denied existence or occurrence of an issue. In 49% of the newspaper articles and press releases, Whole Foods was specific since communication talked about the issue in a general sense without going to the details and focused more on how others are involved in this issue. Last, Whole Foods chose to deliver a factual message in 62% of the newspaper articles and press releases by briefly mentioning attitudinal aspects of the issue or not using emotion at all in communication.

The final variables addressed the organizational involvement during the crisis. The priority of organizational resources such as: time, finances, knowledge and management being allocated, were addressed in the newspaper articles and press releases. In 31% of the newspaper articles and press releases, Whole Foods was proactive in addressing the issue by promising to utilize its resources to deal with the issue. The newspaper articles and press releases also addressed if the organization was dependent on external support. In 39% of the newspaper articles and press releases, Whole Foods communicated that they were sufficient in terms of internal resource, and that there was no need for external help.

American Red Cross Data

The non-crisis related data for the American Red Cross included 20 Web site articles to reflect how the American Red Cross normally communicated. The size of the organization, in terms of global presence and notoriety, was determined by the researcher

based on preliminary data already gathered. The size of the American Red Cross was global with a central office, but the decision making power was concentrated in its smaller regional offices.

The crisis related data for the American Red Cross contained 28 newspaper articles and press releases. The crisis addressed was the allegations made against the American Red Cross over the misuse of Hurricane Katrina relief funds. The majority of media coverage during the life of the crisis lasted from mid-October, 2005 to the end of April, 2006. Coverage from the *New York Times* dominated the analysis with 7 articles and there were no articles that fit the criteria from the *LA Times*. Two official press releases from the American Red Cross were included in the analysis from the middle and end of the crisis.

Six of the variables dealt specifically with the ethical duties present in the communication. Fidelity represented the explicit or implicit promises made by the American Red Cross. The duty of fidelity was mentioned in all of the non-crisis related Web site articles and was mentioned more than once in 70% of the articles. In the crisis related information, fidelity was mentioned in 15% of the newspaper articles and press releases.

Gratitude showed the thankfulness expressed by the American Red Cross towards its public(s). In 30% of the non-crisis related Web site articles, gratitude was mentioned. Yet, gratitude was not addressed in the crisis related newspaper articles and press releases, so there was no evidence that the American Red Cross expressed thankfulness during the crisis.

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Justice addressed the promotion of an egalitarian environment and was mentioned at least once in all of the non-crisis related Web site articles and more than once in 85%. Justice was also mentioned at least once in 64% of the crisis related newspaper articles and press releases.

Beneficence addressed improving the condition of the public(s) and was mentioned at least once in all of the non-crisis related Web site articles and more than once 75%. In the crisis related newspaper articles and press releases beneficence was mentioned 16%.

Non-maleficence addressed the American Red Cross' desire to not cause harm to the public(s) and was mentioned in 65% of the non-crisis related Web site articles. In the crisis related newspaper articles and press releases non-maleficence was mentioned at least once in 32%.

The final ethical duty, self-improvement addressed the American Red Cross improving its condition through virtuous or intellectual actions. Self-improvement was mentioned at least once in 75% of the non-crisis related Web site articles and was mentioned in 7% of the crisis related newspaper articles and press releases.

The following three paragraphs address the characteristics of the organization based on the non-crisis related Web site articles gathered. Each paragraph addresses a set of variables that help describe the specific characteristics of the organization.

The next section of variables characterized more abstract depictions of the organization. The values of the American Red Cross were found to be placed on tradition in 60% of the Web site articles. The pervasiveness of traditional or historical business methods was present and gave the impression that the organization values some

traditional business practices such as organizational structure, code of conduct, formality of speech and professionalism. A promotion of knowledge growth within the organization was found in 80% of the Web site articles. This indicated that the employees of the American Red Cross were somewhat encouraged to seek out additional training and education. The outward economic stability of the organization was identified in 65% of the Web site articles, and the American Red Cross was seen as profitable through the word choice of the messages.

Other variables addressed characteristics on how the organization communicates. The presence of an issues management program or official in the organization was found in 65% of the Web site articles. The decision-making process in 30% of the Web site articles was concentrated among a few individuals. The formality of the organization was unclear since the Web site articles were split: 50% indicated there were obvious roles or codes that define and/or limit positions and 50% indicated there were not. In 65% of the Web site articles the structure of the positions were identified as hierarchical. There was a high influence of a legal department since in 55% of the Web site articles legalese was a major part of the actions of communication team. In 90% of the articles, the business exposure to the general public was high since the American Red Cross produced a majority of products or services regarded as necessities for consumers. The pervasiveness of corporate culture was found in 60% of the Web site articles, which indicated that culture had an impact on the style of communication and was influential in the messaging.

Another section of variables helped to characterize the organization as it represented itself externally through presented facts. The overall impression of the American Red Cross organizational culture was found in 80% of the Web site articles as

honest and open. The level of technology was moderate to low-tech in 90% of the Web site articles. This implied that the American Red Cross might use some advanced communication techniques and technology in delivering their messages. The organization's officials were mentioned in 50% of the Web site articles and seemed to be a group with a mix of races, gender and educational backgrounds.

The following five paragraphs address the crisis itself and how the organization responded to the crisis based on the crisis related newspaper articles and press releases gathered. These paragraphs will provide a clearer picture of the situation and reactions of the organization.

Other variables dealt with characterizing the crisis itself. The urgency of the situation was addressed in the newspaper articles and press releases. In 40% of the newspaper articles and press releases, the communications suggested that the crisis might or might not result in a negative situation for the organization. The level of threat the situation could pose to the organization was discussed in the newspaper articles and press releases. In 32% of the newspaper articles and press releases, the threat was shown to be related to the goals of the American Red Cross which could impact its goals but not its survival. The potential costs or benefits the crisis might bring about were addressed in the newspaper articles and press releases. In 32% of the newspaper articles and press releases, the costs for the organization and benefits for the public(s) would be balanced. The communication from the American Red Cross did express a commitment to balancing interests. In 54% of the newspaper articles and press releases, a high commitment to balance its own interests with the interests of various publics and the general interests of

society was shown. The American Red Cross' communication indicated that the interests of the public(s) were being considered.

The next set of variables served to describe the public(s) the organization was addressing in their communications. The newspaper articles and press releases clarified what public(s) were addressed in the communication. The American Red Cross addressed the general public in 89% of the newspaper articles and press releases. The newspaper articles and press releases did indicate whether the American Red Cross chose to take an action-based stance and what the stance was. In 58% of the newspaper articles and press releases, the organization took a stance and was willing to yield to the public's demands. The newspaper articles and press releases also indicated whether the organization took a qualified-rhetoric-mixed stance toward the public(s). The American Red Cross, in 52% of the newspaper articles and press releases, was shown as willing to address one of the public's requests by apologizing or collaborating with any public being addressed.

The primary crisis response strategy of the organization was addressed in the newspaper articles and press releases. In 43% of the newspaper articles and press releases, the American Red Cross had a response strategy of corrective action where damage repair and crisis prevention were discussed.

Other variables addressed the overall strategy of crisis communication by the organization by categorizing the messages as defensive or accommodative, ambiguous or specific, and emotional or factual. The message strategy seemed to be ubiquitous, being both accommodative (36% of the newspaper articles and press releases) and defensive (36% of the newspaper articles and press releases) during the crisis. Based on the dates of

the newspaper articles and press releases, the organization became more consistently accommodative (higher numbers) towards the end of the crisis life cycle.

In 43% of the newspaper articles and press releases, the American Red Cross was specific since communication talked about the issue in a general sense without going into the details and focused more on how others are involved in this issue. The American Red Cross chose to deliver a factual message in 64% of the newspaper articles and press releases by briefly mentioning attitudinal aspects of the issue or not using emotion at all in communication.

The final variables addressed the organizational involvement during the crisis. The priority of organizational resources such as: time, finances, knowledge and management being allocated were addressed in the newspaper articles and press releases. In 58% of the newspaper articles and press releases, the American Red Cross was proactive in addressing the issue by promising to utilize its resources to deal with the issue. The newspaper articles and press releases did address if the organization was dependent on external support. In 25% of the newspaper articles and press releases, the American Red Cross communicated that they were somewhat more dependent on internal resources than external.

Greenpeace Data

The non-crisis related data for Greenpeace included 36 Web site articles. Again, these articles were gathered from the organization's Web site to reflect how Greenpeace normally communicated. The size of the organization, in terms of global presence and notoriety, was determined by the researcher based on preliminary data already gathered.

The organization was more centralized in the Americas, but had a global presence and recognition.

The crisis related data for Greenpeace contained 48 newspaper articles and press releases. The crisis addressed was the ongoing debate between Greenpeace and the government over the government's inaction towards global warming prevention. The majority of media coverage during the life of the crisis lasted from April, 2001 to early February, 2007. Coverage from Greenpeace's press releases dominated the analysis with 14 articles and there were no articles that fit the criteria from the *LA Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*.

Six of the variables dealt specifically with the ethical duties present in the communication. Fidelity addressed explicit or implicit promises made by Greenpeace. In the non-crisis Web site articles, fidelity was mentioned at least once in 72% of the articles and was mentioned more than once in 36%. In the crisis related newspaper articles and press releases fidelity was mentioned in 11%.

Gratitude addressed the thankfulness expressed by Greenpeace towards its public(s). Gratitude was mentioned in 3% of the non-crisis related Web site articles and was mentioned in 6% of the crisis related newspaper articles and press releases.

In the non-crisis related Web site articles, justice addressed the promotion of an egalitarian environment and was mentioned at least once in 83% of the articles and mentioned more than once 36%. In the crisis related newspaper articles and press releases justice was mentioned at least once 19%.

Beneficence addressed improving the condition of the public(s) and was

mentioned at least once in 23% of the non-crisis Web site articles. In the crisis related

newspaper articles and press releases beneficence was mentioned 6%.

Non-maleficence addressed Greenpeace's desire to not cause harm to the

public(s), which was mentioned in 51% of the non-crisis related Web site articles. Yet,

non-maleficence was not addressed in the crisis related newspaper articles and press

releases; therefore, Greenpeace's desire to not cause harm to the public(s) was not

evident.

The final ethical duty, self-improvement addressed Greenpeace improving its

condition through virtuous or intellectual actions. Self-improvement was mentioned at

least once in 66% of the non-crisis related Website articles and more than once 33%. In

the crisis related newspaper articles and press releases self-improvement was mentioned

2%.

The following three paragraphs address the characteristics of the organization

based on the non-crisis related Web site articles gathered. Each paragraph addresses a set

of variables that help describe the specific characteristics of the organization.

The next section of variables characterized more abstract depictions of the

organization. The values of Greenpeace were found to be placed on tradition in 58% of

the Web site articles. The pervasiveness of traditional or historical business methods was

present and gave the impression that the organization valued some traditional business

practices such as organizational structure, code of conduct, formality of speech and

professionalism. A promotion of knowledge growth within the organization was found in

50% of the Web site articles. This indicated that the employees of Greenpeace were

somewhat encouraged to seek out additional training and education. The outward economic stability of the organization was identified in 8% of the Web site articles and was seen as profitable through the word choice of the messages.

Other variables addressed characteristics on how the organization communicates. The presence of an issues management program or official in the organization was found in 69% of the Web site articles. This strongly indicates that the individual or program communicate about issues on a frequent basis. The decision-making process seen in 39% of the Web site articles was concentrated among a few individuals. In 92% of the Web site articles the organization was seen as formal since roles and/ or codes defined and limited jobs. The structure of positions in the organization was discussed in some of the Web site articles and in 31% the positions were identified as hierarchical. There was moderate influence by a legal department since in 92% of the Web site articles included legalese as part of the actions of communication team. The moderate business exposure of the organization was identified in 89% of the Web site articles since Greenpeace does not produce a majority of products or services regarded as necessities for all consumers. The services of Greenpeace do appeal to a part of the general public, but at this time the issues the organization tackles are not regarded as necessary to a majority. Yet, as more politicians and outspoken celebrities talk about global warming as an issue, the potential for the business exposure to grow increases. The pervasiveness of corporate culture was not evident in 75% of the Web site articles indicating that culture did not have an impact on the style of communication.

Another section of variables characterized the organization as it represented itself externally through presented facts. The overall impression of Greenpeace's

organizational culture was found in 83% of the Web site articles to be open and straightforward. The beliefs and values of the organization were communicated transparently. The level of technology the organization used to produce its product or service was low in 83% of the Web site articles. This implied that Greenpeace used communication techniques that are no longer cutting-edge. The organization's officials were not mentioned in the Web site articles; therefore, the diversity of leadership could not be determined.

The following five paragraphs address the crisis itself and how the organization responded to the crisis based on the crisis related newspaper articles and press releases gathered. These paragraphs will provide a clearer picture of the situation and reactions of the organization.

Other variables dealt with characterizing the crisis itself. The urgency of the situation was addressed in the newspaper articles and press releases. In 69% of the newspaper articles and press releases, the communications indicated that the crisis would result in a negative situation for the organization. The level of threat the situation could pose to the organization was identified. In 65% of the newspaper articles and press releases, the threat was shown to be related to the goals of Greenpeace which could impact its goals but not its survival. The potential costs or benefits the crisis might bring about were addressed in the newspaper articles and press releases. In 40% of the newspaper articles and press releases, the costs for the organization would be slightly less than the benefits for the public(s). The communication from Greenpeace expressed balancing interests in the newspaper articles and press releases. In 31% of the newspaper

articles and press releases, a moderate commitment to balance its own interests with the interests of various publics and the general interests of society was shown.

The next variables served to describe the public(s) the organization was addressing in their communications. The public(s) of Greenpeace were addressed in the communication. Greenpeace addressed the media in 71% of the newspaper articles and press releases and the general public in 19%. The newspaper articles and press releases addressed whether Greenpeace chose to take an action-based stance and what the stance was. In 21% of the newspaper articles and press releases the organization took an undefined stance. The newspaper articles and press releases also addressed whether the organization took a qualified-rhetoric-mixed stance toward the public(s). Greenpeace, in 29% of the newspaper articles and press releases, was willing to address one of the public's requests.

The primary crisis response strategy of the organization was identified in the newspaper articles and press releases. In 60% of the newspaper articles and press releases, Greenpeace chose to attack its accuser (the government).

Other variables addressed the overall strategy of crisis communication from the organization by categorizing the messages as defensive or accommodative, ambiguous or specific, and emotional or factual. In 66% of the newspaper articles and press releases, the message strategy was accommodative, not defensive. In 74% of the newspaper articles and press releases, Greenpeace was specific since communication talked about the issue in a general sense without going to the details and focused more on how others are involved in this issue. Also, Greenpeace chose to deliver a factual message in 44% of

the newspaper articles and press releases by briefly mentioning attitudinal aspects of the issue or not using emotion at all in communication.

The final variables addressed the organizational involvement during the crisis. The articles addressed the priority of organizational resources such as: time, finances, knowledge and management being allocated. In 59% of the newspaper articles and press releases, Greenpeace was proactive in addressing the issue by promising to utilize its resources to deal with the issue. The newspaper articles and press releases also addressed whether the organization was dependent on external support. In 50% of the newspaper articles and press releases, Greenpeace communicated that it valued external support and relied heavily on external help with the issues rather than its internal support.

Each organization studied presents a picture of the organization and the crisis it encountered similar to other studies applying the contingency theory of conflict management. What made this study unique was the specialized attention ethics received in data collection. The following chapter will analyze the Web site articles, newspaper articles and press releases to provide context and more in depth evaluation. In chapter two, the methodology classified each case as either for-profit or not-for-profit and controversial or non-controversial. The value of these classifications will be discussed in chapter four by relating each group's ethical duties.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS
WHERE EACH ORGANIZATION STANDS ETHICALLY

In order to get an overall picture each organization and its ethical duties, the data was analyzed as four separate case studies. Beyond the percentages and definitions discussed in chapter 3, this chapter provides examples of some of the variables identified in the data provide a more specific characterization of the organization from an external perspective. In addition, the dominant ethical duties for each case are identified and explained through specific examples from the data. After all the case studies are presented, a summary at the end of this chapter will provide a look at the overall similarities and differences among the organizations.

Google Case Study

Summary of Google Organization Characteristics

Based on the articles analyzed, Google's communication strategy seems to be open and honest. In the articles, it states that the organization always distinguishes an advertisement from other non-paid content on a page of search results. Consistently communication refers back to the corporate culture and permeates the messages being delivered while giving the reader the impression that the organization cares deeply about its employees by maintaining a small company feel as they grow rapidly and recognizing each employee as a hands-on contributor. That same respect gets translated to the consumer, but not with the same fervor since Google only commits to being honest and equal towards customers. The leadership of Google is organized, and appears to be equally distributed among individuals. The messages suggest that financially the

organization is stable Even as a newer organization, Google seems to value and adhere to traditional business practices. Traditionally, businesses do not have an obvious issues management program, but instead a legal team addressing issues.

Summary of the Google Crisis

The crisis centered on the Viacom lawsuit against Google and its Internet video sharing site YouTube over the unauthorized use of its copyrighted entertainment. Based on the articles gathered on the responses made by Google, its communication strategy reflects an organization that is neutral or quiet on its involvement with a crisis. The overall communication strategy was defensive, and Google communicated facts without any emotion, which came across as neutral to the situation. Google gave little details on its actions and provided limited feedback. Also, Google's dominant crisis response strategy was denial of the issues while sometimes attacking Viacom's lawsuit against the organization or making excuses.

Summary of Google Ethics

The most prominent ethical duty present in the non-crisis related communications of Google was beneficence since it was mentioned in 97% of the data. The messages focused on how Google improves the condition of its employees and customers based on virtuous acts that respect the publics' intelligence and pursuit of satisfaction. In 38% of the data beneficence was found to be the majority of the message communicated. Google communicated beneficence through messages such as:

> "Google works because it relies on the millions of individuals posting links on websites to help determine which other sites offer content of value."

Self-improvement was the second most prevalent ethical duty within Google's

non-crisis related communication. This duty was mentioned in 91% of the data and is

related to beneficence, but instead the messages focus more on how the organization

itself, rather than its publics, is improved by virtuous and intellectual actions. Google

expressed self-improvement in messages like:

> "Googlers work in high density clusters remarkably reflective of our
> server setup, with three or four staffers sharing spaces with couches and
> dogs. This improves information flow and saves on heating bills."

Justice was mentioned in 72% of the articles, yet did not dominant the messages

like the previous duties. Instead, its pervasiveness was seen through the frequent use of

terms like "equal" "non-discriminatory" and "access all" to indicate that Google

promotes an environment where all customers and employees have an equal chance for

happiness.

Yet, there were no prominent ethical duties present in the crisis related

communications of Google. Justice, beneficence and self-improvement were only hinted

at in a few articles. Nothing explicitly stated by Google indicated an ethical duty was

present in the communication; however, the coders did occasionally infer that duties were

a part of the messages.

In conclusion, the three most common ethical duties of beneficence, self-

improvement and justice remained in the communication from non-crisis to crisis related.

However, the percentage of these duties significantly decreased as the organization

moved from non-crisis to crisis related messaging. Although the total data evaluated was

close in size, the percentages of the major ethical duties were not the same. Evaluation of

the data indicates there was a decline in the total percentage of all the present duties

(beneficence, justice and self-improvement) in crisis related communication. The decline in percentage suggests that the presence of ethical duties for the organization changes from non-crisis to crisis related communication. When the ethical duties of Google were compared with the other cases, the implied dominance of justice diminished.

Whole Foods Case Study

Summary of Whole Foods Organization Characteristics

Based on the articles analyzed, Whole Foods' communication strategy comes across as open but also ostentatious. Its corporate culture permeates the messages being delivered and gives the reader the impression that the organization is a bit of a free-for-all on purpose. Leadership positions were not discussed in any of the articles; rather, cooperation and team work were stressed in the messages. The financial stability of Whole Foods was rarely discussed. The expansion of employee knowledge was not overwhelmingly encouraged and only mentioned three times in the data. There is some obvious disdain for traditional business practices such as organizational structure and professionalism in dress or manner. Yet, its code of conduct and formality of speech, do not provide a solid base for values. Yet, the legal department seems to have a strong hand in how things are communicated since messages come across as stilted and deliberate in spite of its attempt to be causal. Phrases such as "win-win situation" "buying agents" "sustainable legislation" and "regulatory transparency" did not flow in the context of the communication and came across as hidden legalese.

Summary of the Whole Foods Crisis

The crisis centered on the FTC's investigation of Whole Foods' proposed merger with Wild Oats. Based on the articles analyzed, Whole Foods' communication strategy

reflects an organization that does not view the crisis as much of a crisis. There is little urgency expressed in the communication, especially when the situation began and ended. Whole Foods does not see the situation as a threat to its operation or reputation, but only as a threat to its goals. They did not discuss the potential costs or benefits related to the situation for the organization or public(s) very often, but did seem already know what a fair balance for all parties would be. Whole Foods gave no real indication of yielding to the general public's and media's demands or expressing regret or working with the publics. The communication strategy was defensive, specific and factual. Whole Foods' dominant crisis response strategy was to attack the accuser, the Federal Trade Commission. The organization came across as proactive and extremely independent in regards to handling the FTC's proscriptive actions regarding Whole Foods' merger with Wild Oats.

Summary of Whole Foods Ethics

The most prominent ethical duty present in the non-crisis related communications of Whole Foods was beneficence, found in 91% of the articles. The pervasiveness of beneficence was shown through the use of phrases like "satisfying the customer" "meet or exceed its expectations" and "increasing long term shareholder value" to indicate that Whole Foods is looking to make improvements for its customers.

Fidelity to its publics was the second most prevalent ethical duty within Whole Foods' non-crisis related communication. This duty was mentioned in 87% of the data and messages discussed the promises, implicit and explicit the organization makes or has made in the past to its public(s). In 50% of the data fidelity was mentioned more than once in one communication and reflected messages such as:

> "We take responsibility for our own success and failures."

Self-improvement was mentioned in 89% of the data and focused on how Whole Foods is improved by virtuous and intellectual actions. Beneficence was obvious in messages such as:

> "Outstanding customer service is a result of both our Team Members skill and enthusiasm in serving our customers and their in-depth knowledge and excitement about the products we sell."

Beneficence and Self-improvement were dominant ethical duties expressed in Whole Foods' crisis related communication. Justice was also part of the messaging. Dominance of ethical duties for Whole Foods was indicated by the duty being present in more than one quarter of the articles. This was a relatively low frequency of ethical duties in crisis related communication.

Overall, the main ethical duties remained much the same. Beneficence and self-improvement dominated the communication for both non-crisis and crisis related messaging. When looking at all the articles for the case, secondary duties such as fidelity and justice came across as tactical messages and not the real focus of the communication. However, it is important to note that the frequency and intensity of the duties were less in the crisis related communication of Whole Foods.

American Red Cross Case Study

Summary of American Red Cross Organization Characteristics

The Red Cross' communication strategy seems to be open yet fairly non-descript. Messages were centered on policy more than the culture or individuals who work for or with the organization. The leadership and finances appear stable; yet, there did not appear to be too many formalized positions that allowed employees to make decisions, except

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for the legal department. Facts were communicated without emotive terms. This style of communication reflected its corporate culture, an independent, voluntary organization committed to sustaining a legacy of service.

Since the organization has so many regional chapters, it is hard to determine if the communication style of the headquarters is accurately reflected. But, for the purpose of this study, coders assumed that the style was reflective.

Summary of the American Red Cross Crisis

The crisis centered on accusations that the organization misused funds raised for Hurricane Katrina relief. Based on the articles analyzed, American Red Cross' communication strategy reflects an organization that expresses urgency in communication and recognizes the potential threat to its goals when a crisis occurs and sees a need for balancing its interests with the public(s). The organization seemed willing to yield to the general public's and media's demands by initiating an investigation into allegations of mismanagement and stating when employees were dismissed on fraud charges. They worked with the publics to address concerns. The communication strategy seemed to shift during the crisis from being defensive in the beginning to acting more accommodative towards the end. The American Red Cross first was defensive by blaming some of the issues on awkward databases used in the call centers, but then was accommodative in working with the FBI and various tasks forces to protect donations. The messages delivered became factual and more specific over time. Also, American Red Cross' dominant crisis response strategy was to discuss corrective actions. The organization came across as proactive and able to respond to the crisis independently.

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Summary of American Red Cross Ethics

Justice was mentioned in every message found in the data, and resonated as the main ethical communication strategy promoting an environment where all have an equal chance for happiness. In 45% of the data, justice was the majority of the message. Its influence was shown by the repetitive use of phrases like "impartiality" "great diversity" and "the needs of all" when discussing the mission and actions of the American Red Cross as an organization.

Fidelity was also mentioned in all of the data as the communication focused on the organization's commitment to its public and implicit and explicit promises. Promises were made more than once in 70% of the messages. A prime example of this type of fidelity as an ethical focus is:

> "Our goal is to help build a "culture of prevention" that helps make
> families and communities safer - before disaster strikes."

Beneficence was mentioned in all the data and was the majority of the communication 30% of the time. The beneficence found in messages delivered by the American Red Cross focus more on how the organizations could make improvements for its publics. An example of how the American Red Cross communicates beneficence in the data is:

> "It endeavors to relieve the suffering of individuals, being guided solely
> by their needs, and to give priority to the most urgent cases of distress."

Justice dominated the crisis related communication of the American Red Cross. In 64% of the data, justice was mentioned in the messaging. In 54% of the data, justice was mentioned more than once. Unlike the other cases, the American Red Cross had a significantly higher percentage of an ethical duty in crisis related communication.

Justice, fidelity and beneficence were dominant non-crisis related ethical duties employed in American Red Cross' messaging. Yet, the American Red Cross' crisis related communication only contained one principal ethical duty, justice. Justice remained the central ethical duty for non-crisis and crisis related communication. Since the American Red Cross' mission focuses on treating all individuals with respect and equally, justice as a dominant ethical duty does make sense.

Greenpeace Case Study

Summary of Greenpeace Organization Characteristics

Greenpeace's communication strategy seems to be open and straightforward. Messages were formal and read like traditional codes of conduct. The leadership and finances were not often discussed; and there did not appear to be individuals with formalized positions allowed to make decisions except for the legal department. There was evidence of an issues management department since the general counsel was charged with administering the code of ethics and investigating violations of policy. Greenpeace was exposed to a more specific public due that would be concerned with the issues they address and how they address them. There was not a distinct indication of corporate culture but instead a common purpose for its employees and volunteers to peacefully protest and communicate creatively to expose problems and promote solutions.

Greenpeace seems to be headquartered in the Americas, but has significant clout worldwide because of the global scope of issues it addresses. Also, its activities are often centralized in one location but are supported by smaller groups of participants around the world.

Summary of Greenpeace Crisis Related Data

The crisis centered on Greenpeace's long-standing debate with the government over global warming. Based on the articles analyzed, Greenpeace's communication strategy seems similar to the American Red Cross since they expresses urgency in communication and recognizes the potential threat to its goals when a crisis occurs and sees a need for balancing its interests with the public(s). The organization is more focused on addressing the media's demands by creatively staging protests and providing video footage of the event to help garner support among other publics to find a solution The communication strategy was more accommodative than defensive since Greenpeace was seeking a universal solution to global warming. It delivered specific and factual messages to illustrate the problem and solution. Greenpeace's dominant crisis response strategy was to attack the credibility of its accuser. The organization came across as proactive, yet unable to respond to the crisis without the assistance of external parties.

Summary of Greenpeace Ethics

Justice, again, was mentioned in 83% of the data and dominated the messages in 36% of the non-crisis related articles. Justice's influence was demonstrated by the repetitive use of phrases like "all employees" "any reported violation" and "every effort will be made." These quotes show Greenpeace as an organization that promotes an environment where all have an equal chance for happiness. Yet, it is important to note that the ethical duties described in non-crisis related events often focus more on the internal publics, like employees, rather than the general external public.

Fidelity was mentioned in 72% of the non-crisis related articles and contained messages that focused on the organization's commitment to its public and made explicit

promises. Fidelity was mentioned more than once in 36% of the data and a prime

example of this type of ethical for Greenpeace a message such as:

> "…shall also ensure that the ethical standards set forth herein are
> promoted; and investigate any reported violation."

In 66% of the non-crisis related articles, self-improvement was mentioned in

Greenpeace's communication. Self-improvement was expressed more than once in 33%

of the data when Greenpeace, rather than its publics, is improved by virtuous and

intellectual actions. A message reflecting Greenpeace's self-improvement is:

> "No current Greenpeace employee shall use or permit the use of any
> Greenpeace funds or property…to be, for other than Greenpeace's
> benefit."

The most prominent ethical duty in the crisis related communications of

Greenpeace was justice, yet this duty was only found in about one-third of the

communications. All other duties were barely hinted at in a few articles or not present at

all.

Fidelity, self-improvement and justice were the three dominant ethical duties

employed in Greenpeace's non-crisis related messaging. Like the American Red Cross,

Greenpeace's crisis related communication contained one principal ethical duty, justice.

Justice was a notable part of non-crisis related and crisis related communication.

It is interesting to note that the most obvious commonality among these four cases

is the lack of non-maleficence and gratitude, two of the six ethical duties coded. Non-

maleficence was found more often in the not-for-profit organizations, but never was a

dominant ethical duty. Gratitude seemed to be forgotten by all the cases, regardless of the

data being from non-crisis or crisis related events.

For the for-profit organizations, the ethical duties of beneficence and self-improvement were dominant. The promotion and encouragement of virtuous innovation for the organization and its publics does seem to reflect the mission of a public traded corporation. If customers are pleased with the product or service and the company continues to improve those same products and services, the corporation would be profitable.

For the not-for-profit organizations, the ethical duties of justice and fidelity permeated the communication. Often, not-for-profits are created to support individuals disenfranchised by society, so a message of equality and respect would be critical in communicating to the organization's publics. Also, if previous promises made to improve the condition of the publics were ignored, the credibility of the not-for-profit would be damaged.

It is also interesting to see that the controversial organizations' communication was dominated by self-improvement and justice in communication; whereas, non-controversial organizations' communication was dominated by beneficence and fidelity. This could suggest that a controversial organization focuses on improving its condition and limits the improvement by ensuring that all publics are treated equally. And, a non-controversial organization ensures that the needs of the publics are addressed by making and keeping promises.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION
WHAT A DECREASE IN ETHICAL DUTIES MEANS

Through the contingency theory and this research, we can assume that excellent public relations can be accomplished in many ways and that an organization's stance depends on several specific variables and ethical duties. Cancel et al.'s (1997) continuum illustrates the flexibility of organizational stance decisions and public relations strategy. As the review of the literature suggests, a more flexible ethical guide should be applied to the contingency theory to justify the variety of potential stances and actions practitioners advocate and employ.

The goal of this thesis was to understand the role ethical duties play in conflict management and how they may affect the resulting stance of organizations. The first research question aimed at discovering whether ethical duties remain the same during a crisis as in non-crisis related events. The previous case studies suggest that the ethical duties do, for the most part, remain the same. Not every organization's communication reflects all six of the duties, but instead have up to three dominant ethical duties identified by the coders and researcher.

As Ross states, ethical duties lie in the actions, not motives of an individual. That is why the communication and messages delivered by practitioners should be evaluated. All six of Ross' duties were found in each case's non-crisis and crisis related communication. However, the significance of each duty was determined by the frequency and prevalence of each duty overall. Unlike other contingency variables evaluated, the prevailing ethical duties did not significantly change. Most of the organizations

subscribed to the same ethical duties (justice, beneficence, fidelity, self-improvement) for non-crisis and crisis related communication, the duties just became more difficult to identify.

These dominant ethical duties were first identified for each organization through communication from non-crisis related events and from crisis related events and then compared. This comparison indicated that the majority of ethical duties remained the same, but that the difference was in the frequency or prevalence of each duty.

This is where the second part of the first research question comes into play. For example, self-improvement was a dominant ethical duty for Whole Foods for both crisis and non-crisis communication. Yet, the frequency of the duty found in the crisis message was considerably less in the crisis communication. A dominant duty in crisis communication would not have been classified as a dominant ethical duty in non-crisis communication.

Supporting and Filling Gaps in the Literature

Scholars suggest that the role of public relations practitioners in ethical decision-making is compromised when they are not part of the dominant coalition. The suggestion is supported by the Google case study since there was not a lot of communication that included officials and there was no obvious issues management program. For Whole Foods, Greenpeace and the American Red Cross, the legalese present in communications suggest that the legal teams have a decision-making position within the dominant coalition, instead of the practitioners. Yet, the most accurate position of legal, within each organization, would be best determined by internal documents. However, with Greenpeace, there is more evidence of an issues management program in addition to a

legal department. Since Greenpeace is more of a controversial organization, it likely has more experience with crises, and would understand the need of an issues management program to help resolve conflicts.

The "codes of conduct" for each organization were obtained from the official Web sites and included in the non-crisis related data. Google did not have an explicit code of conduct; instead, ethics seemed to be incorporated into the non-crisis related messages. Whole Foods seemed to have more of a defined code, but again it was communicated in a more non-traditional, less formal manner. As the literature suggests, Google and Whole Foods' ethical codes reflect a new shift in which more general communications, not just strict codes, contain the ethics of an organization. Both Google and Whole Foods are know for having an innovative and more casual corporate culture, and would likely want their external codes to reflect that. Yet, Greenpeace and the American Red Cross had observable, traditional codes as part of the non-crisis related communication.

The non-crisis related data for all cases fit into the proactive phase of the crisis life cycle for ethical issues because the communication addresses potential ethical concerns. The organizations' approaches to communication seemed to be more alike than different in the non-crisis related communication. A specific plan is not laid out, but there is an indication that the issues are being examined by the organization. When ethical values are emphasized in all communications, it is more likely that consumers will associate a positive brand image with the organization. In a time of crisis, an organization hopes to maintain a positive image by harkening back to its ethical values. Yet, if a crisis contradicts an organization's ethics, it runs the risk of coming across as insincere or

hypocritical in the eyes of its public. The potential contradiction may have limited the organizations in the four case studies from including ethical values in their messages.

The crisis related data fit into the reactive phase since it involves external communications and litigation. Articles included in the crisis related data included newspaper articles published on the crises and press releases distributed by each organization. Yet, throughout all the phases of a crisis as Cancel et al. (1997) suggest, the stance of the organization toward each public involved can change. Similar to other studies on the contingency theory of conflict management, when the crisis related communication was analyzed for each case study, the overall stance of each organization began to shift from what was said in the proactive to a different stance in the reactive phase.

The stance shift in this research originated from a different sense of corporate culture and a lack of ethical duties present in the crisis related messages. The most dominant ethical duties did not change dramatically since the type of duties mentioned in the articles remained the same. However, it was in the prevalence of the duties where the shift was evident.

Official statements from newspaper articles and press releases on the crisis reflected a stance from Google that was different than what was prominent on its Web site communication. Instead of an approachable, compassionate organization, Google came across as unemotional, silent and, at times, aggressive. As a new corporation, Google may not know the importance of taking a definitive stance during a crisis or may believe that the issue would just go away over time. The most dominant ethical duty for Google in non-crisis related messages, self-improvement, went from being mentioned in

91% of the articles to only 4%. The lack of self-improvement could be just from the lack of crisis related communication from Google or the belief that stakeholders would not be interested in how it is improving in spite of the issue.

For Whole Foods, their direct, pretentious approach to communication on its Web site shifted to a more closed and defensive stance present in press releases and newspaper articles. Whole Foods was directly challenged by the government and the threat of litigation likely caused it to change from acting on the offense. Beneficence, Whole Foods' most dominant ethical duty was mentioned in 91% of the non-crisis related and in only 15% of the crisis related articles. It was still important for Whole Foods to reassure its stakeholders that this crisis would not adversely affect its operation.

The American Red Cross' non-crisis stance was amicable but very unemotional in its Web site communication. Its crisis stance found in press releases and newspaper articles was filled with urgency and desire to resolve the issue at hand. During normal communication, the American Red Cross only needed to deliver messages that appealed to donors. But, when the people it promised to help were suffering because of the actions of the American Red Cross, it sprang into action. It needed to communicate how the issue was being resolved and reaffirm its commitment to stakeholders. The most dominant ethical duty for the American Red Cross, justice, had a small shift from being mentioned in 85% of the non-crisis related articles to 64% of crisis related articles. The more constant communication of justice indicates that the American Red Cross found it imperative to clearly incorporate its mission at all times.

Greenpeace's Web site communication projected an uncomplicated, receptive stance, which shifted only slightly, to one focused on the threat of the issue and how to

balance its interests with those of the public(s) in press releases and newspaper articles. Greenpeace seems to always be on the offense, ready for a crisis to strike and that would explain why there was only a slight shift in the study. Like the American Red Cross, justice was Greenpeace's most dominant ethical duty. The prevalence of justice shifted from being mentioned in 83% of the non-crisis related articles to only 19% in the crisis related articles. Sticking to its mission is a priority for Greenpeace in everyday communication and crisis related communication.

These shifts in stances support contingency theory since each organizations' stance changed over the life of the crisis. In all but the Greenpeace case, there is a noteworthy shift in the tonality of the messages delivered in everyday communication from that of the crises. Greenpeace maintained the straightforward communication but added a greater sense of urgency and importance to their communication. Also, the American Red Cross maintained its ethical duty of justice in communication better than the other organizations. It is interesting to point out that the two not-for-profit organizations maintained elements of their original stances when moving from the proactive to reactive phase of the crisis life cycle.

Each case also supports the idea that practitioners can be ethical advocates. Since the organization agrees that ethics should be a part of their everyday communication, then that opens the door for practitioners to base future communications in ethical reasoning. Yet, communication is often just the first step in addressing a crisis. Action by an organization is also required to resolve a crisis. As the Google case illustrates, communication is not the same as action. Instead ethical communication should accompany ethical actions by an organization during a crisis. To determine if

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practitioners are acting as ethical advocates the literature points to Fitzpatrick's ethical

advocacy of practitioners. Still, only externally available information on each

organization was analyzed, which limits the exactness of the evidence for practitioners

acting as ethical advocates. Statements from news articles, press releases and information

from Web sites do provide a snapshot of the written actions of public relations

practitioners.

Each case supports aspects of ethical advocacy but not all of it on a large scale.

Each of the duties is essential to ethical advocacy, but could not always be identified in

the communication. Google and Whole Foods identify and compare the potential benefits

(beneficence) for the organization and its public(s) in the majority of their external

communication gathered. This ethical tonality would be similar to advertising and other

promotional messages corporations use to encourage customers to make purchases or

build brand loyalty. Messages from all organizations expressed how benefits are equally

distributed among its public(s) at significant levels (justice). All organizations, for-profit

or not-for-profit, need to ensure that actions and communications adhere to all laws and

values. Fidelity dominated the communication for Whole Foods, American Red Cross

and Greenpeace since their messages found in news articles, press releases and Web sites

were often dominated by the promise to support the respect and dignity of their public(s).

Gratitude seemed to be ignored in all cases since expressing thanks to any public

never dominated the communication delivered by any organization. This finding is

somewhat shocking and should be addressed. Saying thank you to customers and

employees may be one of the simplest things to communicate; yet, organizations are

forgetting to do it. Corporations should support recognition programs to ensure that

gratitude becomes a part of everyday communication. That way, when a crisis occurs, the organization is accustomed to showing gratitude. In addition, none of the organizations focused their communication on the potential harms the public(s) may encounter (non-maleficence). Expressing this ethical duty would be impetrative during a crisis to reassure stakeholders that the issue is under control and they will not be hurt (physically and financially) because of the crisis.

A duty that was prominent in all of the cases, self-improvement, is not recognized by Fitzpatrick and symmetrical public relations. Self-improvement, or improving one's condition based on virtuous or intellectual actions, can be difficult to recognize as an ethical or value-based action because it focuses on bettering the self. However, improving the self is not necessarily done in a manipulative or unscrupulous manner. In the field of public relations, self-improvement can include an organization making a more energy efficient product, which saves money for the consumer and improves the organization's image and bottom line.

Self-improvement dominated the non-crisis related communication of Google, Whole Foods, American Red Cross and Greenpeace. The dominance of the duty supports the idea that the current standards for ethical public relations outlined by symmetrical or excellence theory are incomplete. Self-improvement becomes less significant in the crisis related communication, since the organization may want to emphasize its actions specifically for its public(s) rather than itself. Yet, the decrease in self-improvement might also be a reflection of the overall decrease in frequency all the other ethical duties experienced in the case studies. Based on this reasoning and the research from this thesis,

self-improvement should be recognized as a component of ethical advocacy in public relations.

For-profit vs. Not-for-profits

Additional discoveries arose from comparing the organizations data by type (for-profit, not-for-profit). For the most part, all the organizations maintained some consistency with the duties found within communication from non-crisis and crisis related articles. An interesting trend was that for-profits maintained several of the same three dominant ethical duties but the frequency of them decreased. Yet, in the not-for-profits, just one of the three pre-crisis dominant duties (justice for both of the not-for-profits) dominated the majority of communication post-crisis. This seems to suggest that for-profits maintain the same duties during the life of a crisis, but the intensity of the duty's presence diminished. For-profits may recognize that each public sees the crisis differently. A stockholder would be more concerned about actions surrounding self-improvement since the future stock value might be in jeopardy if the crisis deters or stops innovation. In the Google case, the decrease in ethical duties may be a reflection of the lack official responses (crisis related press releases or content in newspaper articles) delivered by the organization. The priority for Google during this crisis was not addressing the issue or all its publics. Instead, Google somewhat conveyed to its customers that its service would not be affected by the crisis. Google also seemed to be preparing for legal action since some of the communication focused on justice for its publics. However, there was no widely-covered external communication related to sustainability, which would be critical to shareholders. In the Whole Foods case, the ethical duties decreased, but communication focused on how this merger would provide

better products and services to its customers. There was some assurance given to stakeholders since the stability of the organization was a part of the communication. Yet, no real promises were made related to the merger, and Whole Foods focused on how it was a win for customers at a high level. Similar to the communication tactics of Google, Whole Foods only speaks to two of its publics during the crisis and avoids fully addressing the potential costs and benefits of the merger.

The for-profit organizations' communication always seemed to contain self-improvement and beneficence. Subscribing to "doing good" for their publics and improving their own condition was the focus for ethical communication, regardless of the type of situation. These two duties seem to correlate well with two most common and important publics of a corporation, its customers and stockholders. It is important for the corporate communications of a for-profit organization to acknowledge how customers are being satisfied (beneficence) and express the sustainability of its stock value (self-improvement). Although these duties were most present in non-crisis related communication, remnants of beneficence and self-improvement could be found in crisis related communication. Yet, when organizations only communicate about the good things being done, publics might become wary that the organization is not being honest.

For the not-for-profits, one duty communicated in everyday messaging becomes the only ethical focus during crisis-related communication. A not-for-profit would likely recognize its various publics, but may only be able to communicate a single message due to financial restrictions. The American Red Cross crisis related communication contained the highest percentages of ethical duties as compared to the other organizations' crisis related communication. Since media coverage on Hurricane Katrina was so widespread,

the American Red Cross needed to make certain its official statements reflected the stance. The organization communicated primarily to donors and members about its mission of equal assistance during the crisis, which addresses how previous and current donations are being used. But, the American Red Cross also was certain to include how it was helping the volunteers and aid recipients and preventing any additional harm to the victims. More of the organization's publics were addressed during the crisis as more ethical duties were included in the communication. In the Greenpeace case, its mission and commitment to promoting fair and equal treatment of the planet were primarily addressed in the communication. This part of the communication was directed towards donors and appeals to the donors' need to know their financial contributions are going to good use. Unlike the American Red Cross, Greenpeace makes more promises in its crisis related communication to address the needs of the organization's more radical members who want to see action.

It is interesting to note that justice was identified as a prevalent ethical duty of not-for-profit non-crisis and crisis related communication. The pervasiveness of justice suggests that the most important aspect of ethical communication for not-for-profits is to be just by equally distributing happiness among the organization and its publics. This communication tactic of "everybody wins" is a way to pacify all parties involved. However, this approach to communication might not always be the best decision. If an organization only promoted justice in communication, it could appear that it is not committing to making the situation better (beneficence) or not opposing harm (non-maleficence). Depending on the crisis, ignoring these ethical duties could prolong the life of the crisis.

Ethics as part of Contingency Theory

After establishing how ethical duties are different and shift in non-crisis and crisis communication, an evaluation based on the contingency theory should occur. Philosophers contend that ethical actions are not very contingent; rather, the morally relevant facts of a situation may differ. However, the ethical demands of fidelity, gratitude, justice, beneficence, non-maleficence and self-improvement do not change except in response to changes in those morally relevant facts. Thus, one can expect that ethical values would be less contingent than the other variables of the contingency theory.

Currently there are 87 factors, both internal and external variables, which drive an organization's stance. This thesis addressed ethical duties as internal, predisposing variables that factor into the overall stance communicated by the organization. The ethical duties identified in the case studies set the overall tone for the message of the organizations' communication and could be another predisposing gauge in the evaluation process for communications. Identifying the ethical duties can more comprehensively describe the internal organizational characteristics.

Since the established variables of the contingency theory do not address ethics, the data gathered and analyzed in this thesis can serve as a way to close that gap in the research. Yet, until the ethical duties are applied in more studies and for different cases, the full impact of the duties in the contingency theory will not be understood.

Ethical duties act similar to other contingency variables in crisis communication; therefore, the presence of ethical duties could serve as additional guideposts to evaluate and determine an organization's stance. If ethics are considered to be part of the message, there may be more than 87 variables needed to truly determine an organization's stance.

Although the duties themselves did not really change over the life of the crisis, the frequency and prevalence of the duties did vary over time. The decrease in frequency and prevalence could be due, in part, to the organization's need to address non-morally relevant facts such as an impending lawsuit or government regulation. When an organization is handling a crisis, the communication of morally relevant facts could be ignored because of a lack of resources and/or support from the dominant coalition. If the CEO or executive director believes that non-morally relevant facts are most important during a crisis, those facts will be communicated first and dominate the messages.

As the research suggests, the evaluation of the ethical role for crisis communication should be a two step process. First, non-crisis related materials should be examined to determine what duties the organization normally subscribes to and how often they are dominant in communications. Then, for the crisis-related communication, the frequency of those duties should be examined. This will help determine if the organization maintains, decreases, or increases its commitment to ethical duties in a crisis. The consistency of the type and frequency of ethical duties communicated throughout the life of a crisis could become a measure of successful public relations

In addition to establishing an evaluation format for ethics in crisis communication, the research can serve as a set of guidelines for communicators. Each ethical duty should be present or considered in order to establish the communication as ethical. It may not always be possible to include all the duties in non-crisis and crisis related communication, but all should be at least considered or the ethical nature of the communication will be compromised.

Media's Role in the Decrease of Ethical Duties

Since there was such a substantial difference in the ethical duties mentioned in non-crisis related articles as compared to crisis related articles, it would be important to see if there is a difference between duties in press releases and newspaper articles. If the ethical duties mentioned in the crisis related articles came primarily from the organization's press releases, it could suggest that the media may be framing the crisis without ethics.

In the Google case, 28 newspaper articles and no press releases were written about the crisis. Therefore, no analysis about the media's influence on the coverage of ethical duties could be conducted.

For Whole Foods, 18 newspaper articles mentioned fidelity 11%, justice 6%, beneficence 11%, and self-improvement 17%. The eight crisis related press releases mentioned justice 13% and beneficence 25%. The presence of ethical duties in newspaper articles and press releases seemed to be fairly well distributed.

The American Red Cross only had four press releases as part of the crisis related articles as compared to 24 newspaper articles. The newspaper articles mentioned fidelity 8%, justice 67%, beneficence 16%, non-maleficence 29% and self-improvement 8%. In the crisis related press releases, fidelity, justice and non-maleficence were all mentioned 50%. Again, the presence of ethical duties seemed to be equally distributed among the press releases and newspaper articles in the crisis related articles.

When the crisis related data was broken-down for Greenpeace, the newspaper articles hardly mentioned any ethical duties. In the 14 newspaper articles, only justice was mentioned 7%. The 34 crisis related press releases mentioned fidelity 15%, gratitude

9%, justice 24%, beneficence 9% and self-improvement 3%. This case suggests that the ethical duties expressed by Greenpeace were present in its press releases but not in the related newspaper articles.

From this brief analysis, there are no real conclusions about the role of the media in covering the communication of organizations during a crisis. More information on how often the media outlet includes ethical duties in articles or how it traditionally covers corporations and not-for-profits would be beneficial to uncover any potential bias. However, the current study does suggest that there may be a connection between the media outlet covering the crisis and the organization involved worth exploring in further research.

Further Research

The conclusions gathered from this thesis addressed the proposed research questions but also raise several additional questions that should be explored. Since ethical duties are present in communication, does the general public recognize them? The nature of content analysis encourages coders to really look for the variables within the content. Yet, would an unprompted individual identify an ethical duty in a message delivered in a newspaper article?

The major part of the Whole Foods crisis coverage ended after the lawsuit from the FTC was challenged. Yet, around the time the merger with Wild Oats was approved, additional information about the actions of the CEO became headlines. Since the Whole Foods case became more dynamic after the time frame of coded data, an expansion of the study could shed some light on how CEO actions affect the course of a crisis and has the potential to create a separate, related crisis. Similar to the Enron case, an investigation

into the communication actions of the corporation and its leader would be insightful to a discussion on the role of ethics in public relations. Why does the executive of an organization choose to act in accordance to non-morally relevant facts rather than subscribe to ethical duties supported by morally-relevant facts?

Also, Meyers (2003) brought up the idea that each case has an individual moral context that can result in different actual duties. This assumption could lead to a larger research project that would explore if ethical duties depend more on the severity of the crisis than the normal actions of the organization. This notion also speaks to the change in the morally relevant facts and would require that ethics be examined as a conditional variable instead of a predisposing variable.

Four organizations are a start to understanding how the role of ethical duties affect organizational stance during a time of crisis. A study outlined like this thesis, but with a greater number of organizations, could provide more specific statistics and evaluative data. Gathering similar data from the Fortune 50 could provide an overview of how the largest corporations currently incorporate ethics.

In addition, gathering data and information from inside of an organization during a crisis would provide a more accurate assessment on what motivates a stance or message and the role that ethics plays in the decision-making. A long-term case study of one organization could provide valuable insight into how an organization communicates on a regular basis and how that shifts or changes when a crisis arises.

As stated in the literature review, ethics for practitioners are difficult to enforce. Yet, it would be interesting to see how an ethical guide to communicating based in duties would function in an organization.

Non-crisis Related Codebook

Background Information

1. Case:
       1: Google
       2: Whole Foods
       3: American Red Cross
       4: Greenpeace

2. Stage:
       1: Pre-crisis
       2: Post-crisis

3. Publication:

       99: N/A

4. Date of Publication: MM/DD/YY or 99 for N/A

Organization characteristics

Examine only official statements and quotations (ones made by a spokesperson, CEO or senior manager from the organization). Determine the degree of each variable's presence within all official communication in each article.

- ❑ 5. Organizational culture: The official communication of the organization express the attitudes, experiences, beliefs and values of the organization in an
    - ○ 1: open manner (communication is transparent)
    - ○ 2: somewhat open manner
    - ○ 3: neither open or closed
    - ○ 4: somewhat closed manner
    - ○ 5: closed manner (communication is ambiguous)
- ❑ 7. Level of technology the organization uses to produce its product or service
    - ○ 1: Low-tech (involve techniques that are no longer cutting-edge)
    - ○ 2: somewhat low-tech
    - ○ 3: moderate tech use
    - ○ 4: somewhat high-tech
    - ○ 5: High-tech (involves the most advanced technology available)
- ❑ 8. Officials involved are:

- o 1: Homogenous (all of similar race, gender, educational background)
- o 2: somewhat homogenous
- o 3: seemingly mixed
- o 4: somewhat heterogeneous
- o 5: Heterogeneous (all of various races, gender, educational background)
- o 99: N/A due to lack of information
- ❑ 9. Value placed on tradition: The pervasiveness of traditional or historical business methods
  - o 1: traditions are valued
  - o 2: traditions seem valued
  - o 3: traditions are not valued
  - o 99: N/A
- ❑ 10. Speed of growth in the knowledge level the organization uses
  - o 1: Low growth (education is not promoted by executives)
  - o 2: restrained growth
  - o 3: growth
  - o 4: moderate growth
  - o 5: High growth (ongoing education is highly promoted by executives)
  - o 99: N/A
- ❑ 11. Economic stability (profitability, Wall Street projections, industry analysts) of the organization
  - o 1: financially stable
  - o 2: financially unstable
  - o 99: N/A
- ❑ 12. Presence of issues management officials or program
  - o 1: Existent
  - o 2: Not-present
- ❑ 13. Distribution of decision making power
  - o 1: Concentrated among few individuals
  - o 2: Dispersed throughout organization
  - o 99: N/A
- ❑ 14. Formalization: Roles or codes defining and limiting the job
  - o 1: present
  - o 2: not present
- ❑ 15. Structure of positions
  - o 1: Stratified
  - o 2: Hierarchical
  - o 99: N/A
- ❑ 16. Influence of legal department on communication
  - o 1: low (no obvious influence on actions of communication team)
  - o 2: high (consulting with communication team and or making statements for the corporation)
- ❑ 17. Business exposure: how exposed the organization is to the general public, their expected responsibility to the public, and how often it is targeted by interest groups.

Companies that produce a majority of products or services regarded as necessities for the consumer will have a high exposure to the corporate social environment.
  - o 1: low exposure (little expected responsibility and not targeted by interest groups)
  - o 2: medium exposure
  - o 3: high exposure (high expectation of responsibility and often targeted by interest groups)
- ❑ 18. Corporate culture has presence in communication
  - o 1: Yes
  - o 2: No

Ethical Duties

Examine only official statements and quotations (ones made by a spokesperson, CEO or senior manager from the organization). Determine the degree of each duty's presence within all official communication in each article.

19. **Fidelity** – An organization is relying on fidelity when its communication is focused on promises (implicit and explicit) made or discussing incidents in the past when they violated a public's trust. Statements focused on fidelity might look like: "we promise to make changes…" "we acknowledge that the incident years ago make you uncertain…" "we renew our commitment to…"
    1. Not evident at all (not mentioned)
    2. Not evident (hinted at)
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    4. Evident (mentioned more than once)
    5. Very Evident (majority of communication)

20. **Gratitude** – An organization is exercising gratitude when its communication is focused on thanking the public(s) for previous actions and/or current efforts or actions. Statements focused on gratitude might look like: "we are grateful for your support…" "thank you for being patient…" "we recognize your efforts…" "we appreciate your commitment…"
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23. **Non-maleficence** – An organization is exercising non-maleficence when its communication is focused on the organization's own obligation to not cause the public harm in order to benefit themselves. Statements focused on non-malefience might look like: "we will not ignore your needs…" "these actions were not intended to cause harm…" "our own success will be compromised to prevent…" "your happiness will never be compromised in order for…" "it is our obligation to not cause you harm…"
    1. Not evident at all (not mentioned)
    2. Not evident (hinted at)
    3. Somewhat evident (mentioned once)
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24. **Self-improvement** – An organization is exercising self-improvement when its communication is focused on how their own condition is improved through virtuous or intellectual actions. Statements focused on self-improvement might look like: "we acted based on ethical means…" "these actions came about through much research…" "our moral obligation is to…" "after much thought and consideration…" "various industry experts were consulted on the issue…"
    1. Not evident at all (not mentioned)
    2. Not evident (hinted at)
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    4. Evident (mentioned more than once)
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Crisis Related Codebook

Background Information

1. Case:
> 1: Google
> 2: Whole Foods
> 3: American Red Cross
> 4: Greenpeace

2. Stage:
> 1: Pre-crisis
> 2: Post-crisis

3. Publication:
> 1: New York Times
> 2: Wall Street Journal
> 3: Washington Post
> 4: LA Times
> 5: USA Today
> 6: Press Release

4. Date of Publication: MM/DD/YY

Crisis characteristics

Examine only official statements and quotations (ones made by a spokesperson, CEO or senior manager from the organization). Determine the degree of each variable's presence within all official communication in each article. If any of the questions cannot be coded because of lack of information, code that question as 99: N/A

- ❑ 5. Urgency of Situation: The potential for the situation to become negative for the organization.
  - o 1: negative situation very possible
  - o 2: negative situation is somewhat possible
  - o 3: negative situation may or may not occur
  - o 4: negative situation not likely
  - o 5: negative situation will not occur
- ❑ 6. Threat to the organization: The situation poses what level of threat to the organization's goals and/or reputation. Threats may include negative publicity, government regulation or litigation.
  - o 1: The crisis has nothing to do with the organization's goals, and is not likely at all to put the organization operation and reputation in danger.
  - o 2: The crisis is indirectly related to the organization's goals, which harms the organization at a minimum level.

- o 3: The crisis is directly related to the organization's goals with somewhat relevance.
- o 4: There is evidence that the crisis is related to the organization's goals but not closely related to the operation and/or reputation of the organization.
- o 5: The crisis is somewhat closely related with the organization's goals but not essentially relevant to the operation and/or reputation of the organization.
- o 6: The crisis is very closely related with the organization's goals, which seriously impact the organization's survival.
- o 7: The crisis hits the organization's goals and creates devastating damage.
- o 99: Issue not addressed in the stories
- ❑ 7. Potential costs/benefits to strategies: The organization makes decisions based on why kind of cost/benefit ratio they can obtain for themselves. Costs being what the organization has to give up, or what the public will likely gain from the strategy.
  - o 1: Highest benefits, minimal or no costs
  - o 2: High benefits, low costs
  - o 3: Balance of benefits and costs
  - o 4: Low benefits, high costs
  - o 5: Little or no benefits, very costly
- ❑ 8. Balancing of interests: Organization commitment to balance its own interests with the interests of various publics and the general interests of society.
  - o 1: Low commitment to balance (organizations' own interests are most important)
  - o 2: Moderate commitment to balance (organization considers the interests of the public(s) and society)
  - o 3: High commitment to balance (organization works at balancing all interests)

Publics Characteristics

- ❑ 9. Public being addressed by organization:
  - o 1: employees
  - o 2: shareholders
  - o 3: government
  - o 4: media
  - o 5: general public
- ❑ 10. The organization takes Action-Based Stance toward the public (The organization is willing to: yield to the public's demands; OR agree to follow what the public proposed; OR accept the publics' propositions; OR agree with the public on future action or procedure; Or agree to try the solutions suggested by the public.)
  - o 1: Organization strongly mentions that it is not willing to do any of the above.
  - o 2: Organization states that it is not willing to do any of the above, with slightly less strong tone.
  - o 3: Organization states that it is not willing to do most of the above, but leave it open for alternative accommodations.
  - o 4: Organization remains neutral and does not seem to be willing, nor unwilling, to take the above stances.

- o 5: Organization is willing to do at least one of the above.
- o 6: Organization clearly states its willingness to take the above stance.
- o 7: Organization is extremely willing to do whatever they can among the above options.
- o 99: Issue not addressed in the stories
- ❑ 11. The organization takes Qualified-Rhetoric-mixed Stance toward the public (The organization is willing to: express regret or apologized to the public; Or collaborate with the public in order to solve the problem at hand; Or change my own position toward that of the public; Or make concessions with the public; Or admit wrongdoing. Or any combination of these.)
  - o 1: Organization strongly mentions that it is not willing to do any of the above.
  - o 2: Organization states that it is not willing to do any of the above, with slightly less strong tone.
  - o 3: Organization states that it is not willing to do most of the above, but leave it open for alternative accommodations.
  - o 4: Organization remains neutral and does not seem to be willing, nor unwilling, to take the above stances.
  - o 5: Organization is willing to do at least one of the above.
  - o 6: Organization clearly states its willingness to take the above stance.
  - o 7: Organization is extremely willing to do whatever they can among the above options.
  - o 99: Issue not addressed in the stories

Organizational Crisis Response Strategy

- ❑ 12. The Primary crisis response strategy taken by the organization:
  - o 1. Attack the accuser. The party that claims a crisis exists is confronted and its logic and facts are faulted. Sometimes a lawsuit is threatened.
  - o 2. Denial. The organization explains that there is no crisis.
  - o 3. Excuse. The organization minimizes its responsibility for the crisis. Any intention to do harm is denied, and the organization says that it had no control over the events that led to the crisis. This strategy is often used when there is a natural disaster or product tampering.
  - o 4. Justification. Crisis is minimized with a statement that no serious damage or injuries resulted. Sometimes, the blame is shifted to the victims, as in the case of the Firestone recall ….This is often done when a consumer misuses a product or when there is an industrial accident.
  - o 5. Ingratiation. Actions are taken to appease the publics involved. Consumers who complain are given coupons or the organization makes a donation to a charitable organization. Burlington Industries, for example, gave a large donation to the Humane Society after the discovery that it had imported coats from China with fur collars containing dog fur instead of "coyote" fur.
  - o 6. Corrective action. Steps are taken to repair the damage from the crisis and to prevent it from happening again.

- o 7. Full apology. Organization takes responsibility and asks forgiveness. Some compensation of money or aid is often included.
- o 99. Issue not addressed in the story.

Crisis Messaging Strategy

- ❑ 13. The Message sent by the Organization in addressing the crisis is largely: From defensive (1) to accommodative (7)
    - o 1: Organization denies the occurrence or existence of the questionable issue of the above, with slightly less strong tone.
    - o 2: Organization admits there is a crisis but denies that the organization is the cause of the crisis.
    - o 3: Organization states that the organization is only part of, if not at all, cause of the crisis.
    - o 4: Organization remains neutral and does not seem to be overly defensive or accommodative.
    - o 5: Organization agrees that the crisis occur or that it actually caused the crisis.
    - o 6: Organization expresses the willingness for remediation, rectification and proactive works.
    - o 7: Organization changes corporate policy, or/and provides adaptive and/or instructive information.
    - o 99: Issue not addressed in the stories
- ❑ 14. The Message sent by the Organization in addressing the crisis is largely: From ambiguous (1) to specific (7)
    - o 1: Organization tries to put the issue "to rest" or distract public/media attention by creating a different issue. (e.g. new issue, which is not related to the issue in the crisis)
    - o 2: Organization temporarily eases public's feelings by showing regards. (e.g., "I feel pity that…")
    - o 3: Organization distinguishes its act from other similar but more offensive actions. (e.g., the crisis seems not as bad as the public thinks)
    - o 4: Organization remains neutral and does not seem to be overly ambiguous or specific.
    - o 5: Organization talks about the issue in a general sense without going to the details, focusing more on how others involve in this issue.
    - o 6: Organization mentions about the issue, but focusing on the feelings, attitudes of the organization without detailed information and policy.
    - o 7: Organization talks about the issue point by point and directly mention the organizational policy and reactions regarding the specific issue or needs of the public.
    - o 99: Issue not addressed in the stories
- ❑ 15. The Message sent by the Organization in addressing the crisis is largely: From emotional (1) to factual (7)
    - o 1: Organization specifically uses strong emotional descriptors to show its feelings toward the issue or the publics involved.

- o 2: Organization talks about its emotions or the emotions of the public conjured by the issue, using a few (or less strong) emotional descriptors.
- o 3: Organization provides general affective actions to show their positive/negative attitudes in the situation toward the issue/public.
- o 4: Organization remains neutral and provides balanced emotions related and facts about the issue.
- o 5: Organization focuses on the fact of the crisis, and sometimes referring emotions of the public.
- o 6: Organization focuses on the fact of the crisis, briefly mentioning attitudinal aspects of the issue.
- o 7: Organization talks only about the fact issue with no emotional descriptor or any expression of attitude and evaluation.
- o 99: Issue not addressed in the stories

Organizational Involvement

- ❑ 16. Organizational Resource (Time/Finance/Knowledge/Management) is prioritized to be allocated for handling the crisis
    - o 1: Organization is not willing to address the issue. For e.g. No comment answers
    - o 2: Organization does not initiate the address of issue until it's confronted or queried.
    - o 3: Organization addresses the issue vaguely. For e.g. does not answer questions raised directly but go in a roundabout way
    - o 4: Organization remains neutral and does not seem to be willing, nor unwilling, to address the issue. For e.g. it does not present a solution to the issue raised.
    - o 5: Organization is willing to address the issue. For e.g. it is willing to consider utilizing its resources to address issue when confronted or queried
    - o 6: Organization is proactive in addressing issue. For e.g. it *offers* to utilize all its resources to deal with the issue
    - o 7: Organization is extremely proactive in addressing issue. For e.g. it *promises* to utilize all its resources to deal with the issue
    - o 99: Issue not addressed in the stories
- ❑ 17. The organization is NOT contingent on external support/advice/help
    - o 1: Organization is totally dependent on external help with clear statement that they are looking for/waiting for external support, which is vital for addressing the situation.
    - o 2: Organization is very dependent on external help, which will be combined with its internal resource.
    - o 3: Organization is somewhat more dependent on external resource than on internal resource.
    - o 4: Organization remains neutral and there seems a balance of dependence on both external and internal resource.

- o 5: Organization is somewhat more dependent on internal resource than on external resource.
- o 6: Organization has sufficient internal resource, combined with some need of external help.
- o 7: Organization is extremely sufficient in terms of internal resource, and clearly states that there is no need for external help.
- o 99: Issue not addressed in the stories

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