

24th International Public Relations Research Conference

March 4-6, 2021

To be held virtually

ORDER OF PRESENTATION BY DAY AND SESSION

ALL TIMES ARE EASTERN STANDARD TIME (EST)

Wednesday, March 3, 2021

6:00 p.m. EST Opening Social

Thursday, March 4, 2021—All times are Eastern Standard Time (EST)

Opening Session: 7:45 a.m. EST Zoom: Don W. Stacks, Presiding

Session 1: 8:00–9:15 a.m.

Room

1

Elaborating Move-Countermove Contingency Factors: The Interplay Between Organization Stance, Public Stance, and Organization Size

Soojin Roh, Peking University HSBC Business School, CHINA, and *Hyun Jee Oh*, Hong Kong Baptist University, CHINA

Looking at the power play among the key players in the organization–public relationship (OPR) and its impact on publics’ evaluation of the organization’s crisis mitigation efforts in a socially-mediated crisis context, this study provides a new perspective on how to utilize the organization–publics relationship information for best crisis management practices.

2

Meta-Analysis in Public Relations: Topic, Theory, and Method in the 21st Century

Seon-Woo Kim and *Yangzhi Jiang*, Louisiana State University

This study reveals major PR theories, methods, and topics. PR researchers and instructors can refer to this paper to teach and research PR in terms of the research trend.

3

Closing the Leadership Gender-Gap in Public Relations Starts During the First Five Years of Employment: A Qualitative Analysis of Early-Career Women’s Socialization Experiences

Danielle LaGree and *Katie Olsen*, Kansas State University

Grounded in organizational socialization theory, interviews with 31 women in their first five years of public relations employment explored participants’ proactivity behaviors and organizational tactics used to successfully (or unsuccessfully) adjust to roles and organizations. Results indicate organizational strategies to retain young women and advance them to leadership positions.

4

Relationship Cultivation via Social Media During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Cross-cultural Comparison between China and the U.S.

Qiongyao Serena Huang, Hong Kong Baptist University, CHINA; *Benjamin J. Lynn*, University of Florida; *Chuqing Dong*, Michigan State University; and *Shijun Ni*, Hong Kong Baptist University, CHINA

**Institute for Public Relations Ward White Award of Practical Practice
and**

Koichi Yamamura International Communication Award

The study provides strategic guidance on how companies might sustain quality relationships with their publics during widespread economic disruptions. Specifically, the findings suggest that companies should take note of how publics in China and in the US react differently to COVID-19-related content in order to tailor their strategies to their own cultural settings. Generally, companies should also be more accessible to their publics because accessibility was found to lead to increases across all three engagement constructs in both China and the US. If organizations enter a pandemic equipped with these strategies for maintaining and strengthening their relationships, it might help them return to economic viability more quickly post-pandemic.

Session 2 9:20–10:35 a.m.

Room

1

Social Media May Flip the Spiral of Silence Theory and Mislead the Organization

Devin Knighton, Chris Wilson, and Alycia Burnett, Brigham Young University

This study examines whether the opinions on social media actually represent the opinions of most people. If they do not, then organizations that put too much trust in social media signals could be misled in their understanding of their stakeholders. The theory used in this study is the Spiral of Silence, which shows that individuals who hold an opinion contrary to the perceived majority tend to remain silent. The question is whether social media is flipping that theory upside down, meaning individuals who hold an opinion like the majority choose to remain silent to the perceived hardcore minority.

2

Connecting Pedagogy to Industry: Social and Digital Media Practice as Research in Public Relations Education

Christopher J. McCollough, Jacksonville State University; Adrienne A. Wallace, Grand Valley State University; and Regina Luttrell, Syracuse University

The role of social and digital media in the public relations industry continues to grow and evolve. Likewise, we see a growth in social media research, content creation, and strategic application at accredited academic programs offering public relations degrees. The authors use qualitative analysis to identify key themes, content elements, and approaches to teaching and learning in social media courses. The practical value for practitioners and educators in public relations lies in identifying what accredited programs are presently offered, what might be absent from course offerings, and how we can strive to better align course content with our current profession.

3

Engaging Employees through Corporate Social Responsibility Programs—Aligning Corporate Social Responsibility and Employee Engagement

Paula Bernardino, Credibility Institute, CANADA

The message is clear: people want to work for organizations where they feel they are engaged and learning. Recently, the organization Benevity in Canada stated that "Today's employees are expecting a greater sense of purpose in the workplace. In fact, 83% of Millennials say they would be more loyal to their employer when they feel they can make a difference on social and environmental issues at work." Companies that engage in social and environmental stewardship also benefit from employees who are more aware and involved.

4

Catharsis in Crisis Communication on Social Media: How People Process a Crisis with Publics' Emotions and Secondary Crisis Communication?

Hayoung Sally Lim, University of Texas at Austin

This research will provide a theoretical bridge between catharsis on social media and emotions in crisis communication, but also offer practical insights for effective crisis communication management on social media. Specifically, it will enhance our understanding of crisis emotion contagion on social media and its effect on public's secondary crisis communication engagement.

Session 3: 10:40–11:55 a.m.

Room

1

Tweeting a Pandemic: Communicating #COVID19 Across the Globe

Jeanine Guidry, Virginia Commonwealth University; *Shana Meganck*, James Madison University; *Nicole O'Donnell*, Virginia Commonwealth University; *Alessandro Lovari*, University of Cagliari, Italy; *Vivian Medina-Messner*, *Aloni Hill*, and *Marcus Messner*, Virginia Commonwealth University

**Institute for Public Relations Ward White Award of Practical Practice
and
International ABERJE Award**

This research project's primary impact will be on the practice of public relations related to the field of international public health. It will provide a greater insight on how PR/public affairs departments of national health departments worldwide have communicated with their stakeholders about the COVID-19 pandemic.

2

Studying the Current State of the Public Relations Industry

Arunima Krishna, *Donald K. Wright*, and *Raymond Kotcher*, Boston University

This paper reports on the 2018, 2019 and 2020 PRWeek Bellwether Survey Research Project that was designed to examine the current state of the public relations industry. The study involved a web-based survey that approximately 5,000 PRWeek subscribers were invited to complete. The 2020 measuring instrument consisted of 135 closed-ended, four open-ended and five demographic questions. This paper provides analysis based upon 2,058 responses to the 2020 survey; 1,633 usable responses of the 2019 study and 1,500 usable responses from 2018.

3

Carving Startup Characters: Effects of Symmetrical Communication on Startup-Customers Connection, Relationship Outcomes, and Customer Advocacy

Yi Grace Ji, Boston University, *Zifei Fay Chen*, University of San Francisco, and *Linjuan Rita Men*, University of Florida

This study examines how startups carve their company characters to nurture customers-startup relationships and garner customers support. Results from an online survey with 641 startup customers in China revealed the importance of practicing symmetric startup communication, which effectively help shape startup characters and build startup-customer connections.

4

Social Media Influencer (SMI) Strategy for a Non-Profit Organization: Effects of Levels of Issue Involvement, Guilt Appeal Intensity, and SMI Legitimacy on Disaster Relief Donation Intention,

Surin Chung and *Euirang Lee*, Ohio University; *Sang-Hyun Cho*, University of Ulsan, KOREA.

The findings from this study contributes to developing the knowledge of how Normative Activation Model (NAM) can be applied into the context of disaster relief fundraising. Also, this study will provide a practical

insight of how non-profit organizations can develop more effective social media influencer (SMI) strategies to encourage publics to participate in fundraising activities in a post-disaster situation.

BREAK Noon to 2:00 p.m.

Session 4 2:00–3:15 p.m.

Room

1

Does Being Real Pay Off? Examining the Impact of Perceived Authenticity in Crisis Communication

Mikkel Soelberg Christensen, Georgia College and State University

Through two quantitative experiments, this research tests whether authentic crisis responses lead to more successful crisis outcomes, and if so, under what conditions they do so. The findings from this study can help public relations practitioners make more informed decisions when they navigate through crisis situations, which eventually will lead to more successful crisis outcomes.

2

Analyzing the Effects of Visual Information and Crisis Response on Attribution through Relationship, Credibility, and Reputation

James F. Stenger, David Morris, Katherine Diener, and Andrew Bertucci, San Diego State University

Research shows organizations engaged in a crisis can employ strategies to mitigate damage to their credibility and reputation. Currently, not enough research exists to justify using certain crisis response strategies following a military interaction between two nations. As military public affairs officers, the researchers desire to use crisis communication theory as a framework to further refine U.S. Navy public relations tactics and to share lessons with civilians who may be responding to a crisis.

3

Hotels' Response to COVID-19: Top 50 Worldwide Hotel Groups' Online Communication Amid COVID-19 Pandemic

Andrea Cabrera and Kyung-Hyan Yoo, William Paterson University of New Jersey

The findings of this study provide two major contributions. First, the content analysis results of hotel groups' online communication amid the COVID-19 pandemic help us to identify the crisis response strategies used during this unprecedented crisis that created novel challenges for PR practitioners. The results provide practical guidelines to respond to health-related crises. Second, this study extends the application of Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) to sticky crises, more complex and challenging crises than normal crises. By applying SCCT to the global pandemic crisis, this study examined whether advice generated by SCCT can guide crisis communication for the sticky crisis.

4

When Authentic Leadership Engages Employees: Testing Mediating Effects of Employees' Attributions of CEO Activism

Cheng Hong, California State University Sacramento, and Yi Grace Ji, Boston University

This study examines how authentic leadership affects employees' attributions of CEOs' motivations in activism campaigns and how attributions impact employees' attitudes and behaviors toward the company and campaign. Results show that to trigger genuine attribution from employees and thus enhance their connection and engagement with their employer (i.e., self-brand connection, brand advocacy, activism intention), CEOs need to reflect their self-image, present their authentic self, objectively survey all relevant voices, and act based on internal values to practice authentic leadership communication in CEO activism.

Room

1

Actions Speak Louder Than Words: Comparing the Effects of Different Corporate Social Justice Statements

Hao Xu and Bugil Chang, University of Minnesota Twin Cities

The practical implication of our study is twofold. First, we found that compared to “talking-only” statements, statements on external or internal actions generated more favorable outcomes, supporting the notion that “actions speak louder than words”. We suggest that companies should have concrete action plans in place when they engage in the social justice issues and incorporate the plans into their statements. Second, the differential effects of corporate statements were more pronounced among Democrats than non-Democrats, indicating a partisan gap. We suggest that nowadays practitioners need to devote more attention to impacts of the polarized political climate on corporate social engagement.

2

Bridge Over Troubled Water: Stewardship, Social Media Strategy and Building Trust in the African-American Community During a Public Health Pandemic

L. Simone Byrd, Alabama State University

The desired outcome of this study is to provide health communication practitioners with reasonable recommendations to expand their social media-based, strategic health messaging tactics so they are created and disseminated in such a way that they are culturally relevant to the African-American community. Additionally, this research seeks to assist these practitioners with methods to advocate for and promote continuous improvements to their overall strategic social media practices, as well as effectively doing their part to combat detrimental online misinformation among the communities they serve.

3

A Conversation Model for Computer-Mediated Public Relations

Tom Kelleher and Cen April Yue, University of Florida

Personalization, personification, and conversation have been shown to affect marketing, branding, and public relations outcomes, respectively. But what are the benefits of scaling communication with AI or mass communication versus scaling communication by employing more people or allotting more time for people to participate in online public relations? The conversation model forwarded in this essay sets the stage for future studies that predict and compare the relative benefit of actual human conversations to automated personalized interactions or personified symbolic representations of organizations.

4

How Avoidant Leadership Styles Turns Employees into Adversaries: The Impact of Laissez-Faire Leadership on Employee-Organization Relationships

Jie Jin, University of Florida

This study’s findings offer practical implications for organizational leaders and communication professionals as to what kind of leadership practices should be avoided and how positive strategic relationship management with employees can counter the negative impacts of laissez-faire leadership on organizational effectiveness. Also, since perceived organizational justice can buffer against the negative effects of laissez-faire leadership behaviors on the quality of EORs and employees’ positive megaphoning behaviors, the organization should enhance its fair treatment of employees by rewarding employees based on their performance and communicating with employees in a timely, polite, and candid manner.

Friday, March 5, 2021—All times are Eastern Standard Time (EST)

Session #1 8:00–9:15 a.m.

Room

1

Knowledge Mapping of Crisis Communication Research: A Visual Analysis Using CiteSpace

Tingjun Deng, Institute of Cultural and Creative Industry, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, CHINA

This study uses CiteSpace to analyze 4416 articles about crisis communication in Web of Science from 2010-2020. The study identifies the most influential authors, institutions, theories, papers, as well as hot topics and future trends for crisis communication research. Overall, this application results in comprehensive knowledge maps of crisis communication, which makes for a quick and better understanding in the development of crisis communication for both researchers and practitioners.

2

Exploring the Link between Internal and External Communication: How Supportive Organizational Culture Shapes Company-Public Relationships on Social Media

Michael Johann, University of Augsburg, GERMANY

This study provides evidence that supportive organizational culture is an essential antecedent for symmetrical and dialogic communication as well as the quality of relationships between companies and publics in social media. Consequently, promoting an internal culture of support seems promising for pursuing external PR goals such as relationship management. As dialogic communication turns out as crucial mediating variable, the study further highlights the relevance of the organizational and individual ability for mutual orientation and openness.

3

The Modern Chief Communications Officer: Managing Relationships and Unifying the Flows of Information, Influence and Communication in an Organization

Alexandre Sévigny and Josie Cassano Rizzuti, McMaster University, CANADA

Modern organizations deal in flows of information, whether they are technical, financial, operational, or communicative/relational. A CCO manages internal/ external flows of communicative/relational information. This role is currently often occupied by a Chief Marketing Officer. We argue all of the communicative/relational functions should report to a CCO.

4

Examining the Role of Issue Salience and Issue Proximity on Consumers' Supportive Behavior Related to Environmental CSR Initiatives

Nandini Bhalla, Washington and Lee University

The implication of the study is in understanding how organizations can communicate their environmentally friendly CSR programs related to salient/non-salient environmental issues implemented locally and globally to their consumers. As issue salience and proximity have different influences on consumers' situational motivation, it is important for MNCs to first understand whether their key stakeholders have any experience, and/or knowledge about the issue before investing and creating communicating strategies for their CSR initiatives related to that environmental issue. Furthermore, this study found that U.S. residents care for global environmental issues and are motivated to support environmental CSR initiatives in this regard.

Session #2 9:20–10:35 a.m.

Room

1

School Public Relations: An Examination of Student Perceptions on a University's Financial Aid Office, and its Strategic Communication Strategies

Courtney Colletti, Rowan University

The financial aid office holds an essential position in higher education. As school public relations professionals remain puzzled as to why students hold negative perceptions of the financial aid office, they stop reaching students effectively. My research investigates the background of financial literacy among counselors and students to provide valuable insight into student perceptions of the Office of Financial Aid, the strategic techniques the office employs and which of these techniques' students respond best to.

2

Performative Activism and Public Relations: Theatrics and Validity in Social Media Interaction

Brian Smith, Staci Smith, and Amy Jensen, Brigham Young University

The recent rise of social media protests has also given rise to performative activism, wherein companies and influencers cash in on a cause. This paper analyzes 10,000 tweets featuring "performative activism" to identify imperatives for public relations when navigating organizational involvement in a social movement, including interaction with influencers. In a time when companies are commonly criticized for capitalizing on a social movement with hollow actions to show support (i.e., Blackout Tuesday, in which companies replaced their profile pictures with a black square to support Black Lives Matter), this study's results have particular value for efforts to build legitimacy online in a social movement and avoid the virtue signaling of performative activism. Furthermore, this study identifies factors for influencer relations to help practitioners differentiate between those cashing in on a social movement and those with legitimate involvement.

3

Normalizing the New Reality: Newsjacking, Brand Activism, and Something In-Between

Ekaterina Bogomoletc, North Carolina State University

University of Miami School of Communication Top Student Paper Award

The study demonstrated that when it comes to brands' COVID-19 responses, publics seemed to be concerned with the political side of the brands' communication. For companies, this might mean that publics are open to negotiating brands' place in the new, post-COVID19, reality without viewing their actions as opportunistic. At the same time, the campaigns were accused of promoting a certain political agenda, i.e., they were perceived as brand activism. The perception of organizations' COVID-19 communication as brand activism brings extra expectations in terms of authenticity of companies' efforts.

4

Analysis of State Press Release During COVID-19 Initial Crisis Phase Using Machine Learning

Sushma Kumble and Stella Tomasi, Towson University; and *Pratiti Diddi*, Lamar University

Results indicate that press releases did not frequently distribute efficacy messages. While it is important for states to direct business on how to operate efficiently during uncertain times, it is also important to repeat certain efficacy behaviors (like hand-washing, social distancing, etc.). In addition, machine learning can serve as a social listening tool for health organizations (Like CDC) to understand the general themes of press releases disseminated by state officials. It can further help health organizations to advise states on including health-related information to help with sensemaking during a health crisis.

Session #3 10:40–11:55 a.m.

Room

1

Leading Transitions in a Traumatically Changing Working Environment: Communication Professionals Adapt to COVID-19 Impacts

Juan Meng and Bryan H. Reber, University of Georgia; Bruce K. Berger and Karla K. Gower, University of Alabama; Tong Xie and Jeong Hyun (Janice) Lee, University of Georgia

The paper presents findings from an international survey of communication professionals on change leadership in communication during the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the strong impact brought by the pandemic, communication professionals adapt quickly in change management by using COVID-19 information to build knowledge, enhance trust, develop strategies and guide actions.

2

Gender, Politics, and the Glass Ceiling: Comparing News Coverage of Female and Male Politicians in 2020 US Primaries

Sofiya Tarasevich, Unaffiliated researcher; Ekaterina Romanova, Hadeel Alhaddadeh, Long Xiao, and Spiro Kioussis, University of Florida

This study aims to inform the practice of political PR and expand both academics' and PR practitioners' understanding of political agenda-building. Specifically, the study examines whether male and female politicians' PR messages have a different agenda-building potential due to gender bias in media coverage and whether they have a different chance of setting the news agenda ("being noticed" by media). The results of the study could be used not only by corporate political PR practitioners to inform their practice, but also by non-profits advocating for gender equality in politics and political communication professors while discussing gender bias in political communication.

3

Building Trust with Digital Seniors: Exploring How Older Adults (65+) Determine Online Information Sources and Communication about Health to be Trustworthy and Credible

Alison Gelata, McMaster University, CANADA

The results of this study led to the development of an early-stage framework to enable health communicators to better inform and engage older adults. Content authorship and expertise, emphasis on B2B2C strategies, improved sector collaboration, barrier reduction in usability, and a focus on education to bridge health literacy and digital literacy, were among the final recommendations to improve the practice of public relations in the private, public and not-for-profit organizations.

4

United States Military (U.S.M.) Relationship Management During #IamVanessaGuillen: I Can't Remember a Time in the Military When I Wasn't Sexually Harassed

Victoria McDermott, University of Maryland

This case study examined the communication between the United States Military (USM) and publics regarding the murder of soldier Vanessa Guillen. Grounded in relationship-management and dialogic theory press releases, articles, and tweets were analyzed. Findings indicate that exclusionary organizational cultural norms led to breakdowns within dialogic communication from USM's Public Affairs Officers (P.A.O) that negatively impacted the military's relationship with diverse publics. Thus, a shift in organizational culture may help the USM engage in the five dimensions of relationship management. Additionally, through the use of dialogic theory, the USM can begin to rebuild trust with diverse publics.

BREAK Noon to 2:00 p.m.

Session #4 2:00–3:15 p.m.

Room

1

Case Study of Southwest Airlines Flight 1380 Crisis Management: Employee Hero Narrative Effectiveness in the Era of Misinformation

Rebecca A. Schriener and YoungAh Lee, Ball State University

The case of Southwest Flight 1380 stands as a strong example of shaping positive public response of a national corporate crisis due to narrative construction. Despite the death of the passenger, as the flight crew shared their stories, the media portrayed the employees as heroes and overshadowed the tragedy with praise for the crew's handling of the situation. The current study will enrich corporate crisis communication research both theoretically and pragmatically through providing empirical evidence of employee narrative effectiveness and a professional crisis management playbook with details of when and how to use employee voices to combat misinformation.

2

A Corporate Activism Model of Public Relations: Understanding the Effects of Corporate Activism Type and Activism Motives

Ying Xiong, University of Rhode Island

This study contributes to understanding the impact of corporate activism motives (corporate-oriented motive vs. public-oriented motive) on communication outcomes. It provides guidelines to public relations practitioners regarding which type of corporate activism should be chosen to get the best OPR outcomes and social media engagement during the chaotic society.

3

Corporate Social Advocacy: Analyzing Corporate Responses to Black Lives Matter

Melissa D. Dodd and Asianna Elston, University of Central Florida

Stakeholders hold heightened expectations for corporate engagement in social justice issues. More than that, stakeholders seek for authentic engagement with issues. Companies that issued a supportive stance toward Black Lives Matter, but do not exhibit diversity in leadership and/or do not take further action toward greater racial equality, are viewed as hypocritical by stakeholders, and, thus, through the lens of organizational legitimacy theory, their efforts toward the issue may be deemed illegitimate as corporate social advocacy. The practical significance of this research is in the thematic analysis of corporate statements with recommendations for content, sentiment, hypocrisy, and actions for CSA.

4

Supporting Corporate Social Advocacy through Collective Action: The Role of Shared Group Anger, Efficacy, and Politicized Identity

Anli Xiao and Holly Overton, University of South Carolina

Arthur W. Page Center Benchmarking Award

Study results provide meaningful insights for practice, specifically with regard to factors that drive individuals to not only support CSA through PWOM or donations but also to engage in collective action to facilitate change. Results highlight the strength of shared group efficacy as a predictor of collective action, suggesting that companies' CSA messages should focus on increasing publics' efficacy and their CSA-related identity in order to encourage actions. Practitioners then can design more effective strategies to further mobilize their supportive publics and enhance the collective ties between the company and its supporters.

Session #5 3:20–4:35 p.m.

Room

1

CEO as “Chief Crisis Official” Under Covid-19: A Content Analysis of CEO Open Letters Using Structure Topic Modeling

Jiangmeng Helen Liu, Seattle University; *Bora Yook*, Fairfield University; and *Cheng Hong*, California State University Sacramento

The current study examines how companies respond to the Covid-19 pandemic via CEO letters sent to various publics. Our results will illustrate how organizational leaders can strategically communicate with internal and external publics during a global crisis. Through a comparison of topics and communication strategies identified in the letters between companies of high (vs. low) reputation, the current research will provide practical implications for both leadership crisis communication practices and reputation management.

2

Corporate Apologies across Cultures: A Mixed Method Approach to Compare American and Korean Apologia during Corporate Crises

Jeongwon Yang, Syracuse University

Peter Debreceny Corporate Communication Award

Explorations and comparisons of corporate apologies of American and Korean companies provide PR practitioners with novel insights into what typologies were employed and how they were used similarly or differently across cultures. Concerning the rise of multinational corporations and growing needs for effective strategic communication with international stakeholders, it is imperative for PR practitioners to learn culturally appropriate and effective way of apologizing to the dissimilar public. The study has both theoretical implications in the field of public relations as it expands the Benoit’s image restoration theory (IRT) by testing it under an Eastern context and practical implications as taking culture into account, for PR practitioners, is a way to improve two-way communication with stakeholders by taking an audience-oriented approach in communicating a crisis.

3

Fostering Social Media Influence Across Crises: Examining the Communicative and User-specific Antecedents

Xinyan Zhao, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and *Mengqi Monica Zhan*, University of Texas at Arlington

Our findings provide ecologically valid and generalizable implications regarding effective crisis communication for organizations across crises. Overall, our results suggest influence of crisis communication differs in crisis types, frames, dialogic interaction, and sources. First, both corporations and government agencies can adopt solution and action frames for maximizing their proactive outtake and network positioning during crises. Second, corporations can use dialogic interaction to increase message reach and influence during private-sector crises. Third, traditional media are still the most influential source in the social media era, so organizations should still proactively build relationships with news media.

Employee Perceptions of Ethical Listening in U.S. Organizations

Marlene S. Neill, Baylor University, and Shannon A. Bowen, University of South Carolina

University of Florida Employee Communication Research Award

We found that women, nonmanagers and low-level managers all rated their organizations low on factors associated with listening in the areas of transparency, EOR and communication climate. They also expressed dissatisfaction with their organization's commitment to listening to employees like themselves. These perceptions can lead to less commitment and engagement. Since employees tended to perceive channels such as meetings with their direct supervisors and departmental meetings as most effective, we recommend that managers use those channels to seek regular feedback. If organizations do conduct annual and pulse surveys, they need to do a better job of implementing the feedback and communicating to employees that they have listened.

SATURDAY, March 6, 2021—All times are Eastern Standard Time (EST)

Session #1 8:00–9:15 a.m.

Room

1

HR Mix for Better PR Performance: An Attempt to Build a Conceptual Model for an Effective PR Department

Koichi Yamamura, TS Communication, JAPAN, and *Junichiro Miyabe*, Hokkaido University, JAPAN

Drawing upon knowledges in surrounding disciplines such as management, the current research attempts to build an HR mix model for better performance of corporate PR departments. The model introduced in this model will provide corporate PR managers with new ideas for not only enhancing its practice, but also for expanding the field in which practitioners can nurture and demonstrate their abilities.

2

Evaluating the Professional Status of the U.S. Army's Public Affairs Program

Chase Spears, Kansas State University

Best Paper on the 24th IPRRC Theme Award

This paper provides a framework for enhancing the professionalism of organizational communication officers. Using qualitative analysis, this study surveys and compares methods of developing communication leadership talent across the U.S. Army's public affairs community and the civil community of corporate public relations practitioners. Findings suggest that today's civil and military communicators function in a manner reflective of a vocational, rather than professional, model of service within the parameters of institutional theory.

3

Towards a Research Agenda for CommTech and Digital Infrastructure in Public Relations

Ansgar Zerfass and *Jana Brockhaus*, Leipzig University, GERMANY

The Covid-19 pandemic and recent technological developments have accelerated the digital transformation of workflows within public relations. The authors will present a novel framework which differentiates digital technologies in three conceptual layers, building on literature from information systems, management, marketing, and communication research. Public relations practitioners can use the proposed framework to (1) reflect upon and analyze the current use of digital tools and software applications in their organization (e.g., for virtual collaboration, producing content, or tracking resources), (2) identify (further) communication processes which can be transformed by digital technologies, and (3) to support decision-making for investments into digital infrastructure.

4

USS Theodore Roosevelt COVID-19 Crisis: Effects of Ambiguous Social Moral Licensing on Organizational Reputation

Courtney M. Callaghan, U.S. Navy

Social moral licensing, also known as third party moral licensing, occurs as a media effect when an observer reduces their condemnation for the actor based on information or previous good deeds provided by the news media. Research shows that employees at organizations held to a higher moral or professional standard (e.g., airline pilots, firefighters, servicemembers) are susceptible to the effect. The present study informs public relations practitioners of the impact on organizational reputation when the organization's response to an employee's public, ambiguous behavior is contrary to the court of public opinion during a crisis.

Session #2 9:20–10:35 a.m.

Room

1

Relational Cultivation Strategies and Community Building on Fortune 500 Company Corporate Blogs

Tugce Ertem-Eray, University of Oregon, and *Eyun-Jung Ki*, University of Alabama

By examining how Fortune 500 companies have used relationship cultivation strategies on their corporate blogs, this study suggests that organizations should use their corporate blogs as relationship management channels. In the sense of community building on corporate blogs, organizations should create a sense of community among their publics to build and maintain stronger relationships with them.

2

True impacts of Organization-Public Relationship (OPR): A Meta-Analysis

Seoyeon Celine Hong and *Bokyung Kim*, Rowan University; *Seoyeon Kim*, University of Alabama; and *Sungwook Kim*, University of the Science at Philadelphia

This meta-analysis explores the relationship between Organization-Public Relationship (OPR) and its PR outcomes. Examination of the literature (N = 1,001) containing quantitative measurements of OPR produced solid evidence of its effects across the research projects.

3

Gender and Ethnic Diversity in Corporate Boardrooms: Exploring the Relationship among Board Diversity, Corporate Social Responsibility, and Corporate Reputation

Nur Uysal and *Jennifer Honeycutt*, DePaul University

The multi-faceted and mounting pressures to gender and ethnic diversification in corporate boards make it a rich event of institutional change and corporate communication, while the topic remains largely understudied and generally confined to studies of the relationship between diversity indicators and firm performance in the management and finance scholarship and largely missing in the public relations scholarship. This study will help PR scholars and practitioners better understand how gender composition and ethnic diversity among board directors affect CSR and corporate reputation and suggest new directions for future research on the relationship between board diversity and public relations.

4

Non-Violent Communication in Brazilian Organizations

Paulo Nassar and *Victor Pereira*, University of São Paulo (ECA-USP), BRAZIL

Structural violence permeates interpersonal relationships, including the relations in the work environment, but communication based on self-knowledge and empathy can help to dismantle this gear. Nonviolent Communication can promote, in a work environment, sufficient connection so that people can better serve the reason and purpose of being there.

Session #3 10:40–11:55 a.m.

Room

1

Contributing via Internal Social Media towards a better CSR Communication at the Top and Throughout an Organization. Theoretical Foundations and New Results from a Qualitative Case Study and an additional Quantitative Interview Survey in Germany

Holger Sievert, *Riccardo Wagner*, and *Tobias Weiler*, Macromedia University, GERMANY

This paper shows how internal social media might be reshaping communication regarding Corporate Social Responsibility at the top as well as throughout an organization. Based on a two-pronged methodological approach, it provides recommendations especially for corporations how CSR communication within organizations in general can be successful and even more which role internal social can play in this context.

2

Force Multiplier? An Analysis of How Military Leaders Communicate on Twitter

Marc Vielledent, University of Florida

This research analyzes social media content from the U.S. military's senior-most representatives. This analysis is overdue in equipping DOD decisionmakers with data to inform policy in support of the nation's security posture and maintaining the sanctity of the civ-military relationship. These findings also inform social presence, dialogic, and interpersonal communication through the lens of engagement as a construct to better understand how military leaders communicate on Twitter.

3

Citizen Brand: The Emergence of Brandstanding as Organizational Engagement, Voice, and Civic Duty

Luke Capizzo, James Madison University

Increasingly, organizations are taking public stances on polarizing social issues. This essay defines the phenomenon as brandstanding and breaks the concept into three components: (1) organizational and stakeholder values, (2) authenticity, and (3) engagement. Understanding the role of each can help PR practitioners guide organizations toward informed participation in civic discourse. While some have encouraged an approach that minimizes contention (i.e. Argenti, 2020), this essay uses moral decoupling theory to argue that authenticity—the continuity, credibility, integrity, and symbolism of an organization's stance (Morhart et al., 2015)—should be the most crucial factor in engagement decisions.

4

Advancing our Understanding of Public Relations: Improving Crisis Communication through AI

W. Timothy Coombs, Texas A&M University; *Gaugarin Oliver*, Fullintel; and *Katie Delahaye Paine*, Paine Publishing

This paper presents the results of a project that combines crisis communication research and research with AI to produce a tool that can identify and classify crises by specific types as well as provide data on how effective various crisis responses would be at returning public and media sentiment to neutral. The tool is a valuable resource to help practitioners better identify crises and to provide guidance on the viability of various crisis response options. The project is an example of how academics and the practice can combine forces to advance our understanding of PR.

BREAK Noon to 2:00 p.m.

Session #4 2:00–3:15 p.m.

Room

1

Organizational Overclaiming and Underclaiming: Public Perceptions, Reactions, Organizational Reputation and Behavioral Intentions

Arthur W. Page Center Benchmarking Award

Anli Xiao, University of South Carolina, and *Michelle M. Maresh-Fuehrer*, Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi

Public relations practitioners may use these results to guide and support communication strategy that maintains authenticity and ethical standards when communicating information to publics. In addition, practitioners can better gauge how publics will react to inaccuracies in corporate messaging, as well as how these messages lead to changes in reputation and consumer decision-making, thus guiding proactive crisis response strategy. Moreover, the gain vs. loss perspective provides an explanation for publics' reactions. These insights may help practitioners demonstrate to employers and/or clients the lack of return on investment of such behaviors, thus proactively minimizing the potential for crisis.

2

The Effects of Affective and Situational Factors on Risk Communication: Risk Information Avoidance of Electronic Cigarette Users

Eugene Kim, Indiana University Bloomington

The current study aims to account for which electronic-cigarette users avoid information regarding risks of using electronic cigarettes (ECs). For this purpose, this study explored the predictors of their risk information avoidance (RIA). EC users are individuals who are purposely engaging in the risky behavior (i.e., using ECs), even though messages regarding the risks of the use of ECs are widely available. This study provides guidelines for public health authorities to (a) identify specific predictors of RIA, in the context of ECs, and (b) design effective communication strategies targeting individuals who may avoid risk information from the organizations.

3

Communicating About Mental Health During a Pandemic: An Examination of Social Support on Twitter

Jesse King, University of California Santa Barbara; *Audrey Halversen* and *Olivia Morrow*, Brigham Young University; *Whitney Westhoff*, Harvard University; and *Pamela Brubaker*, Brigham Young University

Boston University Award for the Top Paper about Public Relations and the Social and Emerging Media

Public relations practitioners can act as a bridge between healthcare organizations and patients during crises, and as such should engage in strategic planning to effectively disseminate social media messages during these times. Practitioners can take an active role in using Twitter to help spread messages that will reduce stigma about mental health (Giustini et al., 2018), which may improve their image with the public. For mental health clinics, hospitals, and other such organizations to have a strong voice on mental health during a pandemic, they should consider including personalized experiences and targeting laypeople and influencers who can spread their messages.

4

Understanding How Organizational Identification and Communication Channel Selection Impact Employee's Post-Crisis Reactions

Chelsea Woods and Brandi Watkins, Virginia Tech University

Although most employees receive information about crises involving their employers via mass media channels, we know little about how the channel used to disseminate crisis-related information to employees affects this critical public. This study will illuminate how an organization's communication channel selection, along with employees' pre-crisis organizational identification levels, impact employees' perceptions of their employees' reputations, job satisfaction, and voluntary turnover intentions after a crisis. The findings provide practical implications by understanding the effects of pre-crisis relationships and channel selection on employees, and we offer internal crisis communication recommendations.

Session #5 3:20–4:35 p.m.

Room

1

Unveiling Disinformation: Increasing Ethical Concerns and Moral Outrage Towards Practice

Courtney D. Boman, University of Alabama

**Baylor University Department of Journalism, Public Relations & New Media
Top Ethics Paper Award**

Pre-bunking has been touted as a potential solution to disinformation. However, there has been little empirical research examining its effectiveness. Results from this experimental design study provide a conceptual framework for organizations using pre-bunking and debunking messages to enhance concerns of ethical malpractice, along with moral outrage, towards disinformation attacks.

2

Listening and Inclusive Dialogue with Marginalized Stakeholders Following a Crisis

Julie O'Neil, Ashley E. English, and Jacque Lambiase, Texas Christian University

Based upon 25 in-depth interviews with a purposive sample of diverse city stakeholders—19 of whom identified as Black—this research examines the city of Fort Worth's attempts to listen and engage with marginalized stakeholders following the shooting of an innocent Black person by a White police officer. Theoretically, results elucidate and expand upon the foundational elements of an architecture of listening first explicated by Jim Macnamara. Results have practical implications for how city and public communicators can create an architecture of listening in order to actively and genuinely listen to its diverse city stakeholders.

3

Engaging Startup Employees via Charismatic Leadership Communication: The Importance of Communicating Vision, Passion, and Care

Linjuan Rita Men, Yufan Sunny Qin, and Renee Mitson, University of Florida

Plank Center Award for Leadership in Public Relations

Organizations, particularly high-risk startup organizations who suffer disproportionately when an employee leaves or fails to produce quality output, benefit greatly from a roadmap of how to help retain their most important stakeholders, satisfy their needs, engage them to bring passion and productivity to the workplace, and foster a sense of community and collective vision for achievement. Utilizing this study, organizations may develop leadership development best practices and specifically highlight the importance

of charismatic leadership communication within their organization in order to motivate, engage, and include their people, and help them to bring their best to work each day.

4

Do Regularly Scheduled Press Conferences on Coronavirus Increase Perception of Transparency and Trust?

Brad Rawlins, Arkansas State University

This study provides perspective on the efficacy of providing constant information in the form of press conferences and updates on COVID-19 on the perception of transparency and trust. In particular, which dimensions of transparency are perceived to be in place and do those dimensions increase trust.

Transparency and trust are especially important in times of crisis and uncertainty and this study tests whether the efforts are successful.

AWARDS CEREMONY 5:00–6:00 p.m.

Arthur W. Page Center Benchmarking Award (\$1,000)

Supporting Corporate Social Advocacy through Collective Action: The Role of Shared Group Anger, Efficacy, and Politicized Identity

Anli Xiao and Holly Overton, University of South Carolina

Best Paper on the 24th IPRRC theme (\$1,000)

Evaluating the Professional Status of the U.S. Army's Public Affairs Program

Chase Spears, Kansas State University

Boston University Award for the Top Paper about Public Relations and the Social and Emerging Media (\$1,000)

Communicating About Mental Health During a Pandemic: An Examination of Social Support on Twitter

Jesse King, University of California Santa Barbara; Audrey Halversen and Olivia Morrow, Brigham Young University; Whitney Westhoff, Harvard University; and Pamela Brubaker, Brigham Young University

Baylor University Department of Journalism, Public Relations & New Media Top Ethics Paper Award (\$1,000)

Unveiling Disinformation: Increasing Ethical Concerns and Moral Outrage Towards Practice

Courtney D. Boman, University of Alabama

Institute for Public Relations W. Ward White Awards for Top Two Papers of Practical Significance (\$1,000 each)

Relationship Cultivation via Social Media During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Cross-cultural Comparison between China and the U.S.

Qiongyao Serena Huang, Hong Kong Baptist University, CHINA; Benjamin J. Lynn, University of Florida; Chuqing Dong, Michigan State University; and Shijun Ni, Hong Kong Baptist University, CHINA

Tweeting a Pandemic: Communicating #COVID19 Across the Globe

Jeanine Guidry, Virginia Commonwealth University; Shana Meganck, James Madison University; Nicole O'Donnell, Virginia Commonwealth University; Alessandro Lovari, University of Cagliari, Italy; Vivian Medina-Messner, Aloni Hill, and Marcus Messner, Virginia Commonwealth University

International ABERJE Award (\$1,000)

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Koichi Yamamura International Strategic Communication Award (1,000)

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Peter Debreceny Corporate Communication Award (\$500)

Corporate Apologies across Cultures: A Mixed Method Approach to Compare American and Korean Apologia during Corporate Crises

Jeongwon Yang, Syracuse University

Plank Center Award for Leadership in Public Relations (\$1,000)

Engaging Startup Employees via Charismatic Leadership Communication: The Importance of Communicating Vision, Passion, and Care

Linjuan Rita Men, Yufan Sunny Qin, and Renee Mitson, University of Florida

University of Florida Employee Communication Research Award (\$1,000)

Employee Perceptions of Ethical Listening in U.S. Organizations

Marlene S. Neill, Baylor University, and Shannon A. Bowen, University of South Carolina

University of Miami School of Communication Top Student Paper Award (\$1,000)

Normalizing the New Reality: Newsjacking, Brand Activism, and Something In-Between

Ekaterina Bogomoletc, North Carolina State University

CLOSING SESSION 6:00 p.m. or immediately after Awards Ceremony

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 2022 and hopefully in person!

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