How do politicians' responses to scandals differ on social media? An evaluation of

three case studies using the contingency theory

University of Missouri Graduate Project

Gregory Steven Young

May 2014

Chair: Dr. Glenn Cameron

Acknowledgements

Throughout my tenure at the University of Missouri, I have been preparing and training for the moment that I will enter the workforce. I have used college, and specifically my tenure in the journalism school as a way for me to learn the key skills needed to help make an impact in my chosen field and develop my work ethic and maturity.

In many ways, I am grateful to the University of Missouri for giving me a wide swath of opportunities so I could learn about a variety of topics. Before coming to the University of Missouri, I knew that I wanted to find a way to morph my two biggest passions: advertising and public policy. However, through this school, I have been able to narrow down on the specific type of career I want and learn the skills to help me get to my goal. It is a testament to the hard work, high knowledge level and, frankly, high patience level of MU professors that have allowed me to grow both professionally and personally.

Looking back on my time at this school, there are a few professors and classes that have really shaped and enhanced my knowledge of advertising and journalism and who have helped me develop as a person. Specifically, I would like to start by thanking Professor Stephanie Padgett, who has served as a kind and understanding mentor throughout my undergraduate and graduate years at the Missouri School of Journalism. It has been a pleasure to work with her not just in her media planning classes, but also to work under her leadership during my time working at MOJO Ad. Under Professor

Table of Contents

Chapter 1

Throughout my tenure at the University of Missouri, both as an undergraduate and graduate journalism student, my specific journalism emphasis and potential career paths have changed, while my underlying interests have remained remarkably stable. When I first came to the University of Missouri as a freshman in August of 2008, I knew the United States political process fascinated me, especially how it revolved around the political media. Even though I shifted from print journalism to strategic communications, the basic idea of how the media interacts with the political process has always been a interesting topic to me.

Thus, it made sense to keep my graduate focus in the realm of politics and the political media in DC. Additionally, as a strategic communication student, focusing on how politicians utilize certain forms of media, especially new media, is a particularly fertile area of research that helps to encapsulate how the media landscape is changing. After putting myself in this topic area, it became apparent that studying how politicians responded to sex scandals was of particular interest. Specifically, as social media usage among politicians and political candidates has increased, it makes sense to study how they utilize social media outlets, such as Twitter, to respond to scandals.

With this topic area defined, it was important for me to find a support system to help me complete my project. As the various options were studied, the Missouri School of Journalism's Washington Program became the easy choice. Through the Washington Program, I had the opportunity to learn exactly how the political media interacts with

the political scene, especially through the various seminars that took place throughout the week. Additionally, it provided a highly valuable complement to my other internship experiences in DC, which had taken place within the political arena, including at a think tank (the Center for American Progress) and on Capitol Hill (with Democratic Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi and Representative William Clay).

After enrolling in the Washington Program, I needed to find an internship that would not only be relevant to the project, but also help provide me with the extensive knowledge necessary to complete it. Considering that my project is largely focused on the communications efforts of politicians, finding an internship in the role of public relations became the obvious choice. At a public relations firm, I could learn not only how to effectively communicate with key stakeholders in the media, but I could also determine which communications tools are most effective in doing so. There are only a few major public relations offices that have major ties to the DC area, including extensive influence in the DC political scene. One of those firms is FleishmanHillard. FleishmanHillard is a full-service public relations firm with offices in several major countries and cities, including a 100-person office in Washington, D.C. After researching the client list and the senior leadership at FleishmanHillard, it was clear that interning at FH not only represented a great career move, but it would also provide an experience that would help facilitate the process of writing my topic for the research component of this assignment. At FleishmanHillard, I learned how to effectively communicate in a wide variety of situations, including crisis circumstances. Additionally, FleishmanHillard has an entire wing dedicated to digital analytics, a group that teaches how to properly

conduct and monitor social media activity. After I was accepted into the FH spring 2014

internship program, everything from their social media presence to their leadership and

client list led me to realize that accepting the internship was the perfect way to

supplement my project activities.

My acceptance into the Washington Program and FleishmanHillard appropriately

paralleled my long-term career goals. As mentioned earlier, one of my biggest

fascinations is the intersection of politics and media outlets, especially in the realm of

U.S. political and public policy issues. In the short term, my goal of getting a job fit

reasonably well with the internship at FleishmanHillard and my obtaining of a masters

degree from the University of Missouri. My long-term goals, however, are what make

this project so important to me. In the future, I view myself as a potential press

secretary or communications director for a major political campaign or organization,

roles that not only require a strong knowledge of politics, but also knowledge of how to

effectively communicate, especially in times of crisis. Given all of those factors, I think

this experience has given me all of the tools I need to not just be successful at my next

job, but to be successful throughout my working career.

Chapter 2

As mentioned in the previous section, the work component of my project involved me taking a internship at FleishmanHillard. After being placed on the healthcare team at FH, I worked on a variety of health-related accounts, including pharmaceutical companies like Abbvie and health-related organizations like the Food and Drug Administration. I even received the opportunity to work with private corporations with health-ties, such as the Corn Refiners Association and the American Hematological Society. As part of my internship (and due to my social media experience), I was also placed in the social media analytics team and therefore took on a dual role at the public relations firm. As a part of the social media analytics team, I utilized tools like Sysomos and Radian6 to help clients gauge their presence on social media and identify conversations about their products taking place online. The biggest company in this area was General Motors, as it was about to undergo a recall when it hired FleishmanHillard to do its advertising.

As a part of the Washington Program, I also participates in weekly seminars that informed me further about the politics and media. This entailed several visits to people that are extremely relevant to my topic area, including Sen. Claire McCaskill's communication director John LaBombard, lobbyist Terry Bracy, and former White House Press Secretary Mike McCurry. Through these seminars, I gained valuable insight of how the media helps shape and drive the political scene in Washington, D.C.

NOTE: Attached here are all my field notes from the semester. They consist of weekly reports sent to Washington Program chair Barbara Cochran and Fritz Cropp, Associate Dean for Global Programs.

Week 1 Field Notes

This week, I encountered the traditional challenge of having too much downtime. I figure that this is a pretty regular problem, as I'm still getting situated in the office and getting familiar with the other staff members. Even further, they're still getting familiar with having an intern again, as the healthcare section of this company hasn't had a specialized intern in a few months. As a result, I decided to set up meetings with my point person (Phenola Lawrence) and other people around the company. The work is likely to pick up, as several people have promised me projects at the start of next week.

In terms of progress in my research project, I've mainly dedicated these first three weeks at FleishmanHillard to getting familiar with the company and my roles as an intern. As I continue to meet new staff members, I'll start reaching out to them for interviews for my project. However, I've also started enhancing my literature review and finalizing all of the documents that were a part of my topic approval last fall.

I thought the weekly seminar and the orientation were both very interesting. First, I loved the opportunity to be able to meet and talk politics with Jeff Biggs. Specifically, I think he had a great deal of knowledge about the media's role in the legislative process, and it was especially neat to hear him talk about think tanks, as I

interned at one last summer. The NPR tour was also extremely useful. I appreciated the advice that Jessica Pupovac gave about constantly needing to network yourself out throughout the company and it was inspiring to hear about how she was able to get a job out of an internship at NPR. Lastly, I was struck by the sheer size and manpower behind NPR. I was still of the mindset that NPR was a few radio studios in downtown DC, but clearly they've expanded and grown significantly over the years.

Week 2 Field Notes

This was a fairly busy week over at FleishmanHillard! I accomplished a variety of tasks ranging from helping out on analytics research to doing health care databasing, even with some copy editing thrown in for good measure. I started out by helping different health care team members do some activities reports, which basically summarizes the work we did on an account for a client. Additionally, I worked with a staff member to start developing a comprehensive database of all FDA press releases and committee meetings, which I was able to mostly finish during the week. I also worked with another staff member to generate word clouds pertaining to certain issues and key words, which involved me going through Radian6 to sort thousands of tweets and Facebook posts. Finally, I helped out with quite a bit of copy editing, which everyone seemed to need.

I've also been working on my project off and on. I've started to compile sources for my second case study, and I'll continue to reach out to FleishmanHillard staffers to

start getting some interviews set up. My goal is to have the second case study written by the end of next week, so I'll only have one more to go after that.

I also loved the seminars this week. Talking to the McCaskill press staffers was absolutely fascinating; in particular, it was interesting to learn how they deal with negative publicity, both on social media and through more traditional media outlets. I also greatly enjoyed the tour of the Newseum, in particular, the newspaper archives were absolutely amazing to look through. In fact, I enjoyed it so much that I even went back the next day!

Week 3 Field Notes

This was another busy week at FleishmanHillard, which has made working here infinitely more enjoyable. The big highlight this week was that I got to work on a major project for a client. More specifically, I was asked to generate an estimated economic value that automobiles bring to NYC. This was the real deal and it involved me having to research countless databases and calculate a variety of formulas using Microsoft Excel. In the end, my supervisor for this project was extremely satisfied with the result and we'll likely continue working on it next week. Additionally, I did some more social media analysis and copy editing, which has the tendency to fill up any days where I don't have a ton to do!

In terms of my project, I've continued to do research into the second and third case studies. I'm making steady progress and I'm easily on pace to finish the paper before my deadlines start really looming.

The seminar this week was pretty interesting. It was really fascinating to see the Bloomberg office and I think that the group did a really good job of peppering him with interesting and relevant questions. My only regret is not stealing a snack or two before we left!

Week 4 Field Notes

This was a fairly quiet week for me at FleishmanHillard, but mainly because I was at Mizzou from Wednesday-Friday, missing work and seminar in the process (I had already emailed Barbara Cochran an excuse well ahead of time.) However, I was able to accomplish a lot during those two days. My main task was helping do some research on Accountable Care Organizations, which were created as a part of the Affordable Care Act. Mainly, I researched prominent journalists who cover the issue and experts who talk about the topic regularly. Everyone in the office was thrilled with my work, especially because I was able to complete the project in under 5 hours.

In terms of my project, I've started collecting data for my second and third case studies, with my goal to complete data collection in two weeks. After that, I'll set up a call with everyone on my committee to get their recommendation for next steps and how I could go about properly analyzing the data. I was also able to meet with Stephanie Padgett on Friday too because of my trip to Columbia.

I missed the seminar this week. I had a great time at the Strategic Communications Career Fair though!

Week 5 Field Notes

This was a wild week for me at FleishmanHillard, as several things happened that led to me being likely to land a full time job there immediately upon graduation. First, I had a somewhat quiet initial week, as all I had to do was projects for an employee that involved basic media monitoring for a client about the Sochi Olympics. However, on Thursday, I met with an employee who has been my mentor-type figure for a routine resume overview, where he gave me some good suggestions about fixes and places I could apply for a job long-term. He then encouraged me to sit on a meeting with employees from TOGO Run, a FleishmanHillard sister company. After sitting in on the meeting and demonstrating my knowledge, TOGO Run decided that they wanted me to intern for them too, so I'm now likely to start pulling double-duty as an intern, not only doing my FleishmanHillard work, but also doing major analytics work for TOGO Run too. This work is likely to start, in full, on Monday.

In terms of my project, I've continued to collect data for the second and third case studies. My goal is to have all of the research done for them by early March, so I can send it off to my committee, get suggestions for different areas I can research, then hopefully start the analysis and conclusions process shortly afterwards.

No seminar this week, though I'm excited for the one next week!

Week 6 Field Notes

This was another crazy week at FH! As I detailed last week, I spent the week interning at TOGO Run, a sister company of FH that is focused on healthcare issues. In order to make a strong impression (and hopefully, land a job), I worked several 9+ hour

days, all to finish up a media audit for a major pharmaceutical client. This included coding and scoring hundreds of articles about the clients and developing recommendations based on the data. I even got to sit in on a major stakeholders meeting where the strategy behind this was developed! However, unfortunately, I'm going to have to return to FH next week, as they demanded I come back almost immediately. I plan to still do plenty of work for TOGO Run, if possible, though.

In terms of my project, I've continued to collect data for the second and third case studies, with the intent to send my committee a full update by the start of next week, that will include exact sources and information I've gathered from my other case studies.

I enjoyed the seminar this week. It was really interesting to hear about the roles of the Inspector General's office. I know that they are somewhat neglected in Washington, so it was important to hear about the important role that they play in ensuring ethical practices are followed on a government-wide basis.

Week 7 Field Notes

This was an infinitely quieter week at FleishmanHillard, much to my frustration (especially considering that I thought I'd turned the corner in terms of workload.) The only two major tasks I did this week was a project for the American Society of Hematology, where I updated the media tracker, and finishing up a project for GM, where I added to my earlier report on the net economic value of cars. This was a bit frustrating considering that I'd had Fleishman's health team refuse to let me leave to

work for TOGO Run, despite the fact that I'd been underworked at Fleishman. However, I'm keeping on top of absolutely everything here, which at least is a (somewhat) satisfying feeling.

My project has been coming along nicely. I've continued doing work on the second and third case studies, which will be Bob Filner and Herman Cain. I should be on track to easily have a respectable final product by the time defenses roll around.

First, I did really enjoy getting the opportunity to visit MTP and hearing Anna Palmer speak. In particular, I found Anna Palmer extremely fascinating, as she's highly knowledgeable about the way Washington works, all while keeping a relative distance from it.

Also, I think I should probably clarify about my positions on the seminar and Sunday shows this week. Yes, I think that Sunday shows are poorly run in their current format, but I do support the idea of required public affairs television for major broadcasting networks that focus on the current state of politics in Washington. My point is that I think they are done poorly (across the board) and need to be drastically updated, which I think that the vast majority of people my age agree with. Here's a pretty good summary of my thoughts this:

http://www.salon.com/2012/12/20/hack_list_no_4_the_sunday_shows/

Week 8 Field Notes

This was another relatively quiet week here at FH, though it was a bit more enjoyable then the week prior. My main task this week was doing research for a potential new business client called Apexus, which is involved in the 340B medical

program. I did a basic summary and news scan of the client, which earned positive reviews around the office and requests for multiple follow-ups. Additionally, I worked on categorizing the coverage of the American Society of Hematology conference, which will build to me doing a final report next week.

In terms of the project, I'm in the midst of writing the second and third case studies. I've compiled all of the relevant tweets and news articles I'm going to analyze, so now I've just got to write the darn thing!

The seminar this week was very interesting. As a former lobbyist myself (with the Associated Students of the University of Missouri), it was great to hear two seasoned professionals talk about their craft and how it has changed over the years. I also think that it was great to hear them talk about how the power has shifted from Congress to the federal bureaucracy, as I think it changes both the structure of government and (somewhat) reduces the accountability of legislating.

Week 9 Field Notes

This was a relatively eventful week at FleishmanHillard. The main update is on my job hunt, as I had my interview last week with TOGO Run, the healthcare communications firm that is a sister company with FleishmanHillard. Although this is only for an internship, it would also be a for-hire position, so I'd be on the short-path to get a job. In terms of my internship work at FleishmanHillard, I had a few different projects this week. For one, I did a massive report on 340B Medicaid drug programs as background research, as our company is focusing on trying to win a new business

account that is associated with the program. Additionally, I did another large report on the Co-ops started in the Affordable Care Act for another potential client.

In terms of my project, there were a few positive developments. For one, I found a wonderful tool that will help me further analyze tweets in the past called Topsy. As a result, I've been going back through my paper and editing the case studies, which should be submitted to my committee by the end of the week (which is 3 weeks ahead of schedule.) Additionally, I've been trying to coordinate with my committee to find an oral defense time, though my goal is to have the paper in good enough shape to where I'll be in great shape for the defense.

No seminars because of spring break, though I missed it!

Week 10 Field Notes

This wasn't a particularly busy week for FleishmanHillard, as the healthcare team leader was out in NYC for the week. My main project was working on an FDA proposal, which involved how to educate tobacco retailers in various states. I also did a massive report on Co-ops, which were created in the Affordable Care Act. For that, I researched all 23 of the Co-ops and figured out how successful they were (this project was for a potential new business client.)

I'm still chugging along on my project. My goal is to have a rough draft to everyone on Thursday, which still gives my committee two and a half weeks to give their input. I've now finished the second case study on Herman Cain, so I've just got to write the third one, write a conclusion, organize everything and I'm good to go!

No seminars because of a strep throat scare, but I'm excited for the seminar this Friday!

Week 11 Field Notes

This was an extremely busy week at FleishmanHillard, with numerous large projects for me to tackle throughout the week. My first big project involved creating an outreach guide for Hispanic Americans for health related issues. This involved a massive amount of research into which diseases Hispanics are more prone to and how to effectively communicate health messages to Hispanics. Additionally, I also did a significant amount of work on health care issues in New Hampshire, as a new business client may be interested in teaming up with FleishmanHillard to promote healthcare coverage.

My case studies are completely FINISHED! I'm going to work on the discussion portion of my project then have a rough draft submitted at some point during the week. This is still a full two weeks before my oral defense, so I have plenty of time to make the necessary changes. Additionally, my entire paper has the sources cited and the works cited portion is done, so it should be (relatively) smooth sailing from here.

I enjoyed the seminars this week, especially hearing Clarence Page talk earlier in the day. I think he had a lot of interesting things to say about reporting in Washington, and I also found his discussions on race and journalism in DC to be particularly interesting. Additionally, I thought Fred Barnes was useful to hear speak. Although I

hardly agree with anything he said about liberal bias in journalism, I did think it's

important to hear all perspectives about how journalism works in DC.

Chapter 3

Overall, I think that my work at FleishmanHillard was of an extremely high caliber throughout the entire course of the internship. Because I was able to stay busy across a wide variety of accounts and various teams, I was able to consistently produce work for a variety of clients, whether the clients were in healthcare or the digital analytics team. For healthcare, my work was primarily focused on two accounts: the American Hematological Society and prospective new business accounts. For the American Hematological Society, I was put in charge of compiling and writing the entire media report for their 2013 conference. Although I was unable to show the final report here due to confidentiality reasons, I not only researched all of the media coverage of the conference, I synthesized all of the data and utilized Excel to produce charts and graphs to complement my report. For the new business clients, I was largely focused on conducting research assignments for potential clients. This included regularly providing overviews of the companies that were potential clients, reviewing the media coverage of those clients and spotting opportunities to improve the clients' image and reputation.

For the digital analytics team, I was primarily tasked with data analysis. This included my biggest project while at FleishmanHillard, figuring out the net economic value of cars in New York City, Chicago and Los Angeles for General Motors. This project, which is further described in chapter 4 and attached as a separate file, involved database researching the various inputs and categories, then utilizing Excel to create formulas to further analyze the data. After that was run, a final PowerPoint was created to demonstrate some of the key facts and figures from this calculation, along with some

examples of the inputs. Aside from the major project with General Motors, I also helped

with social monitoring, which included utilizing tools like Sysomos and Radian6 to help

analyze social media data for a wide variety of clients, including Samsung and the Corn

Refiners Association. I also did some routine research into various laws and legislative

acts, including the CANSPAM act.

Finally, I believed I learned a great deal from this semester. For one, I think I

learned a lot about professional conduct in a corporate environment. Although I'd been

involved in political climates before, FleishmanHillard represented the first real

opportunity I had to work in a private, for-profit company. I learned that the standards

are often higher and there is little room for error, as mistakes can lead to dropped

accounts and for finances to be severely affected. Aside from conduct, I also learned a

great deal about the world of public relations. I had the perception going in that public

relations was a bit of a fluffy field that rarely involved hard data and quantitative

research. However, this perception quickly changed, as I learned that in order to

properly represent a company, it is crucial to understand all of the details about the way

that company functions. In the end, I learned that the best communication has

substance and style behind it and that a great public relations firm can specialize in both

areas.

Chapter 4

In this section are my work products. Due to the difficulty of getting materials

approved to be in this section due to working for paying clients, there are four major

work sample pieces that I am going to show. The first one is research done for Apexus, a

major participant in the Medicaid 340b prescription drug program. It involves research

about the company and the relevant media outlets that are covering it. The second

piece is research done about the Co-Ops under the Affordable Care Act for a potential

new business client, though the account was never won or fully disclosed to

FleishmanHillard. The third work sample was done to aid the Hispanic outreach at

FleishmanHillard and is a comprehensive guide to Hispanic outreach around healthcare

issues. This file was attached as a separate file due to formatting issues with the word

document. Finally, the biggest project is attached to this as a separate multimedia file.

This project involved a calculation of the net economic impact of cars in New York City,

Chicago and Los Angeles, which was a project for General Motors. This involved utilizing

several databases and even produced a final Powerpoint that the head of General

Motors in New York City utilized. Both the Excel file and the Powerpoint are in a

separate document.

First Work Sample

    Apexus.

    What is Apexus.

Based in Irving, Texas, [Apexus](#) is only "prime vendor" for the 340B drug program, meaning that they are the only program that can directly contact and distribute the drugs to the hospitals/community health centers (more on the drug program below.) They have three primary responsibilities, which include:
1. Negotiating sub-ceiling prices on major drugs from pharmaceutical companies
2. Working with public hospitals and other community health centers to enhance distribution of these drugs
3. Providing discounts to hospitals on other "pharmacy-related products," including vaccines, vials and various software solutions

You can see more about the benefits that Apexus provides to hospitals from their [About Us](#) page. Keep in mind that Apexus deals with community health and public hospitals, not private, for-profit ones (which is required by the design of the 340B program.) In addition to the providing of drugs, Apexus will also work with the suppliers to help enhance their supply chain efficiency around this program, so that pharmaceutical companies can still make profits on the drugs, even if they are selling their products at below-ceiling rates.

Any news coverage?

Typically, the 340B program and Apexus in particular, doesn't receive much prominent media coverage. Although Apexus features a [news archive](#), it features stories about the 340B program, not about the company itself. However, it did receive a mention [at the end of a recent press release](#) from the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists as one of the sponsors of the ASHP Ambulatory Care Conference and Summit last week.

What is the 340B program?

The 340B program was first passed in 1992, a provision in an otherwise totally unrelated veterans bill. Essentially, the bill requires that pharmaceutical companies provide drugs to [eligible public hospitals and community health centers](#) at steeply discounted rates. Apexus fits into this as the primary contractor; they are contracted by HHS to negotiate with the drug companies and distribute the drugs to hospitals efficiently.

Why was it created?

The reasoning for the program actually stemmed from the 1990 Medicaid Drug Rebate bill, which required pharmaceutical companies to provide rebates to Medicaid customers who purchased prescription drugs. These rebates were calculated by the "best price" of the bill, which was largely determined by pharmaceutical companies. However, this program led to pharmaceutical companies to not lower their prices in non-Medicaid markets, to help make up for any lost revenue required by the rebates. In particular, lower income hospitals and community centers were dramatically affected by this legislation, because previously, they had directly negotiated lower prices with pharmaceutical companies, which changed due to the legislation. Thus, it became

apparently by 1992 that a change was needed to ensure that community health centers and lower-income hospitals could continue to provide their patients with reasonably prices drugs.

[Further detail about this can be found here.](#)

Who is eligible?

All public hospitals and community health centers are eligible, though only about a third of hospitals participate. The program was largely designed to target low income and otherwise underprivileged communities, which struggled to pay the high costs required for pharmaceutical drugs.

Media coverage?

Although Apexus doesn't receive much media coverage, the 340B program does receive some, typically from trade journals. A sample of these articles is below:

- [From Private Practice to Hospital Employee](#), Clinical Oncology News, February 1, 2014
- [2014 May Be a Game-Changer for the 340B Drug Discount Program,](#) National Law Review, February 10, 2014
- [Drug shortage policies still come up short](#), Washington Examiner, March 7, 2014

Second Work Sample

ACA Co-op Health Plans

How were they created?

During the Affordable Care Act legislative process, there was considerable debate about a public option, which would have been a government sponsored competitor for the health insurance companies on the exchanges. Although this wasn't included in the legislation, Co-ops, proposed by former Sen. Kent Conrad (D-ND), were established with the design to bring a non-profit competitor into the exchanges.

When the legislation originally passed, they were given a $6 billion budget, though that has been slashed in recent years to below $2 billion. As a result, although the legislation originally intended for each state to receive federal loans to create a Co-op, only 23 states have actually received loans for them(note that Oregon has 2 Co-ops and the states shaded in light blue are scheduled to start operating one in 2015.)

How are they supposed to operate?

Essentially, these Co-ops start as private, non-profit entities that submit proposals that CMS can either accept or reject (specifically, a board called the Center for Consumer Information & Insurance Oversight board issues recommendations on which start-up

loans to approve.) These are typically stakeholder groups and have ranged from farmers unions to urban community health groups.

After the program gets approved and the loan gets accepted, the company then can appear on the exchanges alongside the private insurance companies. The first set of Co-ops were approved in December of 2013.

How does funding work?

After they are approved and receive federal money to start-up, rules dictate that the sponsors must provide at least 40% in the Co-op funding and cannot receive more than 40% of their funding from state or local governments. Even further, then can only receive up to 25% of their funding from insurance companies that existed prior to July 16, 2009.

What's been happening recently?

As shown in the map above, the federal government has only approved 24 Co-ops, one of which has since folded. There has been decidedly mixed reviews about the Co-ops for a few reasons:

- Due primarily to the healthcare.gov technical struggles early on, people had a tough time gaining awareness and signing up for co-ops.
- Because of the website struggles, the Co-ops have faced a tough time generating enough revenue to hire enough employees to make the Co-ops viable.
- Also partially due to the lack of an established presence, the Co-ops may face challenges in making their provider network large enough to meet their customer's needs.

However, certain health Co-ops have been seeing relatively high success recently, with Co-ops such as Inhealth (based in Ohio) reporting that they're expecting to double their initial projected enrollees. Other success stories include HealthyCT, a Co-op in Connecticut that has been extremely successful in enrolling people on the exchanges. Additionally, John Morrison, who runs the Montana Health Co-op, has reported that his group is easily beating the prices of the other insurers on the Montana health exchange and the Kentucky Health Cooperative recently announced that 75% of the purchases of plans in the Kentucky exchange belonged to them.

Even further, three of the Co-ops are planning to expand into more states, including "Montana Health CO-OP [which is] setting up business in Idaho. Minuteman Health in Massachusetts is moving into New Hampshire. Kentucky Health Cooperative will start selling in West Virginia."

For further reading on these issues, there is a large health policy brief from Health Affairs that details these potential problems.

Relevant media coverage:

After a report detailed potential problems in the Co-op funding *last October*, there was a round of media stories critical of the Co-ops, including ones in the [Washington Post](#) and [FierceHealthPayer](#).

As the Co-ops have started to gain more customers and become solvent, there has been much more positive media coverage *in the last month* about Co-ops, including from [Bloomberg](#), [Kaiser Health News](#) and [ModernHealthcare.com](#). Even further, [a recent article from FiereceHealthPayer](#) called them a "lopsided" success.

However, it is important to note a [large article in the New York Times](#) last month, which took a relatively neutral stance on the Co-ops, saying they were having "mixed" success.

Key takeaways:

- Although the initial coverage about the Co-ops was mixed-to-negative, as the months have moved on and more people are enrolling in the exchanges, coverage has become more positive.
- Even more important, the coverage has reflected that the Co-ops prices are extremely competitive with other insurers on the exchanges.
- As will be shown below in the evaluation of the individual Co-ops, the media coverage around individual Co-ops primarily focuses on their efforts to encourage citizens to enroll on the exchanges.

Who got loans from CMS?

(NOTE: [all of this information was gathered from CMS.gov](#))

1. [Compass Cooperative Mutual Health Network, Inc](#)
   a. State: Arizona
   b. Size of loan: $93,313,233
   c. Sponsor: Local partnership (Founding member Dr. Selvoy Fillerup, an otolaryngologist.)
   d. Media Coverage:
      i. [Arizona Daily Star, March 21,](#) "Fair, other venues offer insurance enrollment help."
         1. Was primarily about how Compass Co-op is trying to encourage more people to enroll in the healthcare exchanges.
2. [Colorado Health Insurance Cooperative, Inc](#)
   a. State: Colorado
   b. Size of loan: $72,335,129
   c. Sponsor: Rocky Mountain Farmers Union
   d. Media Coverage:
      i. [New York Times, March 24](#), "Insurers Push to Enroll People as Health Care Deadline Nears"
         1. Primarily focused on how the Colorado Co-op is encouraging people to enroll in the exchanges.

  ii. [USA Today, March 26](#), "Analysts say 6 million health care enrollees in sight"
   1. Features a picture of the Colorado Co-op, also about enrollment efforts.

3. [HealthyCT](#)
 a. State: Connecticut
 b. Size of loan: $79,553,768
 c. Sponsor: Connecticut State Medical Society
 d. Media Coverage:
  i. [The Day, March 27](#) "Affordable Care Act sign-ups near deadline in Connecticut"
   1. Focused on the enrollment efforts of HealthyCT

4. [Land of Lincoln Health](#)
 a. State: Illinois
 b. Size of loan: $160,154,812
 c. Sponsor: The Metropolitan Chicago Healthcare Council
 d. Media Coverage:
  i. [Crain's Chicago Business, October 7, 2013](#) "Upstart Land of Lincoln takes on Blues in health exchanges"
   1. About the efforts of Land of Lincoln to compete for enrollees on the exchanges.

5. [Coopportunity Health](#)
 a. State: Iowa & Nebraska
 b. Size of loan: $112,612,100
 c. Sponsor: Iowa Institute (a community health organization)
 d. Media Coverage:
  i. [The Gazette, March 11](#) "New Iowa insurer, CoOportunity Health, objects to extension"
   1. This was primarily about the Co-ops reaction to the HHS decision to allowed people to keep insurance policies that didn't comply with the new ACA standards.
  ii. [Omaha World Herald, March 27](#) "Last call for health care sign-ups; enrollment counselors getting busier and busier"
   1. About CoOpportunities push to get more people enrolled in the exchanges.

6. [Kentucky Health Care Cooperative](#)
 a. State: Kentucky
 b. Size of loan: $81,494,772
 c. Sponsor: a "coalition of business leaders, providers and community organizations" (led by Janie Miller)
 d. Media Coverage:

       i. [The Lane Report, March 5](#) "Kentucky Health Cooperative claims most of the business on the state insurance exchange"
          1. A story detailing the success of the Kentucky Health Cooperative and how they've dominated the Kentucky health exchange.

7. [Louisiana Health Cooperative, Inc.](#)
   a. State: Louisiana
   b. Size of loan: $65,790,660
   c. Sponsor: Ochsner Health System (a non-profit healthcare provider)
   d. Media Coverage:
       i. [Law 360, February 25](#) "La. Blue Cross Will Temporarily Accept Federal HIV Funds"
          1. Essentially, this article details how all of the health insurers on the Louisiana exchange will be required to allow low-income HIV patients to use federal funding to pay for their insurance premiums.

8. [Maine Community Health Options](#)
   a. State: Maine
   b. Size of loan: $64,686,124
   c. Sponsor: Maine Primary Care Association
   d. Media Coverage:
       i. [Nonprofit Quarterly, February 16](#) "Nonprofit Health Insurance CO-OPs Making Progress on the Exchanges"
          1. This article details how the Co-ops are faring on the exchange market.
       ii. [Maine Public Broadcasting Network, February 28](#), "Glut of ACA Sign-Ups Inundates Maine Insurers"
          1. This article is a broad overview of how insurance companies in Maine are handling the increase in customers via the exchanges.

9. [Evergreen Health Cooperative Inc.](#)
   a. State: Maryland
   b. Size of loan: $65,450,900
   c. Sponsor: The Maryland State Medical Society
   d. Media Coverage:
       i. [Baltimore Sun, March 18](#), "Deadline looms to enroll in health insurance"
          1. This article details how the Co-op is encouraging people to sign up for healthcare
       ii. [Baltimore Sun, October 29](#), "Evergreen faces challenges in delivering health insurance"
          1. Details how the Co-op had initial challenges due to the Maryland exchange website troubles.

10. [Minuteman Health Inc](#)

a. State: Massachusetts & New Hampshire
b. Size of loan: $156,442,995
c. Sponsor: Tufts Medical Center and Vanguard Health Systems (both non-profit hospital systems.)
d. Media Coverage:
  i. [Concord Monitor, March 21](#) "Minuteman Health plans to offer broad N.H. network on marketplace in 2015"
    1. Details the Co-ops attempt to expand to the NH market.

11. [Michigan Consumer's Healthcare CO-OP](#)
   a. State: Michigan
   b. Size of loan: $71,534,300
   c. Sponsor: a "coalition of county Health Plans" (which are non-profit organizations that provide health benefits to Michiganders.)
   d. Media Coverage:
     i. [Detroit Free Press, March 25](#) "Michigan guide to the Affordable Care Act"
       1. Listed as one of several insurance options for Michiganders

12. [Montana Health Cooperative](#)
   a. State: Montana & Idaho
   b. Size of loan: $85,019,688
   c. Sponsor: "a coalition of small businesses and community leaders"
   d. Media Coverage:
     i. [KXLF March 3](#) "Montana's Obamacare costs: just below national median"
       1. This article details the state of competition in the Montana insurance field, mentioning the Co-op several times

13. [Nevada Health Cooperative](#)
   a. State: Nevada
   b. Size of loan: $65,925,396
   c. Sponsor: Culinary Health Fund
   d. Media Coverage:
     i. [Insurance Business America, March 17](#) "Agents reserved on health co-ops despite market share successes"
       1. Focuses on whether health insurance agents will respond well to the Co-ops.

14. [Freelancers CO-OP of New Jersey](#)
   a. State: New Jersey
   b. Size of loan: $109,074,550
   c. Sponsor: Freelancers Union
   d. Media Coverage:
     i. [NJ Spotlight March 10](#), "Co-op Insurer Carves Out Unique Niche in NJ's ACA Marketplace"

1. Talks about how the Freelancers Co-op was set up, goes over the CMS rules for Co-ops.

15. New Mexico Health Connections
    a. State: New Mexico
    b. Size of loan: $77,317,782
    c. Sponsor: Multiple parties
    d. Media Coverage:
        i. Albuquerque Business First, February 25 "Hickey elected board chairman of co-op health plan trade group"
            1. Focuses on Hickey's election to the national Co-op group, National Alliance for State Co-ops.

16. Freelancers Health Service Corporation
    a. State: New York
    b. Size of loan: $174,445,000
    c. Sponsor: Freelancers Union
    d. Media Coverage:
        i. See above coverage for NJ.

17. Coordinated Health Mutual, Inc.
    a. State: Ohio
    b. Size of loan: $129,225,604
    c. Sponsor: "a coalition of community groups, business leaders, and providers"
    d. Media Coverage:
        i. Columbus Business First, March 24 "InHealth co-op doubles projections for enrollees without Obamacare boost"
            1. Focuses on the success of Inhealth, the Ohio Co-op.

18. Freelancers CO-OP of Oregon
    a. State: Oregon
    b. Size of loan: $60,648,505
    c. Sponsor: Freelancers Union
    d. Media Coverage:
        i. See above coverage on the Freelancers Co-op

19. Oregon's Health CO-OP
    a. State: Oregon
    b. Size of loan: $56,656,900
    c. Sponsor: CareOregon (a Medicaid Managed Care Organization)
    d. Media Coverage:
        i. New York Times, March 20 "Health Care Exchange in Oregon Not Meeting High Hopes"
            1. Article detailed the difficulties of this Co-op, which is facing an enrollee shortage due to the struggles of the Oregon exchange.
        ii. The Oregonian, March 21 "As final deadline looms, Oregonians may face a tax penalty for lack of health coverage"

1. Article again about the struggles of the Oregon exchange, the Co-op is quoted as having dealt with citizens confused about the tax penalty

20. Consumers' Choice Health Insurance Company
    a. State: South Carolina
    b. Size of loan: $87,578,208
    c. Sponsor: a wide variety of organizations
    d. Media Coverage:
        i. The State, February 28 "Insurance newcomer making an impact in SC"
            1. Positive story about the success of the Co-op in signing up South Carolinians for health care.

21. Community Health Alliance Mutual Insurance Company
    a. State: Tennessee
    b. Size of loan: $73,306,700
    c. Sponsor: Healthcare 21 Business Coalition
    d. Media Coverage:
        i. Memphis Business Journal, October 1 "Tennessee's co-op looks to entice Obamacare shoppers with smartphones"
            1. Article details how the Co-op is utilizing a smartphone app to encourage people to sign up for health care.

22. Arches Mutual Insurance Company
    a. State: Utah
    b. Size of loan: $89,650,303
    c. Sponsor: Association of Utah Community Health, the Salt Lake City Chamber, and the Utah Health Policy Project
    d. Media Coverage:
        i. Desert News, March 27 "Health care is no game, but will your family win or lose under Obamacare?"
            1. Article that details Utah's citizens struggling to sign up for health care, Co-op expert is quoted on difficulties of selling health insurance.

23. Common Ground Healthcare Cooperative
    a. State: Wisconsin
    b. Size of loan: $56,621,455
    c. Sponsor: Common Ground (community health group in Wisconsin)
    d. Media Coverage:
        i. Milwaukee Journal-Sentinal, March 22 "Obamacare health plans leave out some community health centers"
            1. Article details how certain Co-ops have relatively limited networks that exclude community health centers.

Chapter 5

Introduction & Research Questions

Political sex scandals have been one of the oldest and most prominent forms of crisis communication for as long as there have been politics and political leaders. American politicians are no exception to this rule. Whether it involves former president Thomas Jefferson allegedly fathering several children with his slave (Horton & Horton, 2006) or former senator John Ensign having an affair with a former campaign staffer's wife (Graham 2011), American politicians have been having sex scandals since the founding of the republic. In fact, in recent years, there have been so many sex scandals that outlets like CNN have ran pieces that generalize the responses to sex scandals, from the initial revelation to the seemingly inevitable resignation (Mullen 2013).

However, despite a political sex scandal being the ultimate public relations crisis communication situation, there have been precious few examinations of a politicians response to a sex scandal analyzed through crisis communication theories. One such review was conducted by Moran (2012), who analyzed politician's responses to sex scandals through Benoit's (1997) Image Restoration Theory, finding that politicians most often utilized the reducing offensiveness tactic (pg 49). However, none have been done through the contingency theory, first developed by Cancel et al. (1997), which posits that crisis responses should be evaluated through a continuum from advocacy to accommodation. In fact, despite the multiple verifications of the theory (Cancel et al. 1999), there is room to analyze the practical implications of the theory utilizing further

case studies. Additionally, political sex scandals are a highly valuable way in which to expand this theory, because it represents a unique form of crisis communication management, one that involves singular figures instead of overall organizations.

Even further, studying sex scandals is highly valuable within the realms of general communications studies and political science research. Williams & Delli Carpini (2000) found that the media attention that political sex scandals get was so strong, that the notion of "media gatekeeping" collapsed completely, indicating that media outlets were simply reporting whatever the most recent developments were in the saga. This helps to indicate the potential power of crisis communications responses, as the media is a potential captive audience. From a political science perspective, Bowler & Karp (2004) also found that political sex scandals can have a dramatic impact on not just opinions about individual politicians, but about overall faith in the government as a whole (pg 271). Again, this indicates the importance of a strong response, as it's not just the reputation of an individual politician that is on the line, but also the loss of institutional faith in the government as a whole.

As mentioned earlier, finding recent examples a politician sex scandal to analyze through a few case studies is not a particularly hard task, nor is hard to find a few that have gathered significant media attention during the time period in which it took place. However, it is useful to consider case studies from a wide variety of political arenas to see if there are any differences between how the response is conducted. For example, perhaps there is a difference in how a sitting member of the House of Representatives responds to a scandal compared to a candidate running for political office, or even an

elected official at a different level of government, such as a mayor. Thus, for the

purposes of this case study, I will evaluate three case studies: Anthony Weiner's 2011

twitter controversy, former presidential candidate Herman Cain's 2012 sexual

harassment charges and former Illinois gubernatorial candidate Dan Rutherford's sexual

harassment charges in February of 2014. The reasoning behind studying each is simple;

they all offer a different dimension in terms of studying the response to sex scandals.

Weiner, for example, was a sitting congressman who had his scandal originally break

through Twitter and had already utilized Twitter as one of the primary ways he

communicated to constituents. Cain, on the other hand, was a major candidate for the

Republican nomination and despite having a relatively active Twitter account; his

Twitter wasn't a central part of Cain's identity as a candidate. Finally, Dan Rutherford

represents another unique dimension, as a Republican who was against gay marriage,

Rutherford became embroiled in a sexual harassment scandal with another man.

These case studies now having been defined, it is important to detail the

questions that I will be looking to answer by investigating these case studies. As

mentioned repeatedly, I will be looking to not only define how politicians choose to

respond to sex scandals, but also how they utilize social media in those responses. Even

further, I will be looking to see if there is any substantial difference in how they use

social media as compared to more traditional forms of communication, such as press

releases or interviews with media outlets. Specifically, I will be looking to provide

preliminary answers for two questions:

RQ 1: Where do various scandal responses fall under the contingency continuum?

RQ 2: Is there a substantial difference between social media posts and traditional media outreach when it comes to the contingency continuum?

Theoretical Framework

Before conducting the case studies and answering the research questions, it is important to place my topic within an overall area of mass communications research, and then branch out to various marketing and advertising theories that will help support the topic. For the purposes of this research, the broad mass communication topic that my project best falls in is the agenda-setting theory of mass communications research. Agenda setting, as defined by McCombs (2002), involves the "ability [of the news media] to influence the salience of topics on the public agenda." The reason that this project fits under the larger umbrella of agenda setting is simple, crisis PR communications is largely about helping to influence and drive conversation through the media. In discussing crisis communications, Coombs (2007, p. 173) explained the importance of agenda setting.

> As noted earlier, most stakeholders will learn about a crisis from the news media. Hence, how the news media frame (define) the crisis is an important consideration. Research from agenda setting and reputation (Carroll, 2004) suggest that the stakeholders will adopt the media's frame for the crisis. A crisis

manager may find it difficult to change the media's frame for the crisis and be

forced to manage within that crisis frame.

Again, the reasoning behind putting my research topic under the umbrella of agenda-

setting is fairly simple, it allows for the notion that the media coverage of the crisis

communications content as being of critical importance., As McCoombs & Shaw (1972)

explained in his original work on agenda setting theory, "candidates go before the

people through the mass media rather than in person" (pg 176). Although social media

has allowed politicians to somewhat skip the direct media outreach, how the media

covers a political scandal can play an outsized role in determining the political damage

that a scandal can do.

Another study that provided more detail to the notion of agenda-setting being a

critical factor for crisis PR communications is Kiousis, Popescu & Mitrook (2011), which

attempted to find the relationship between public relations materials, agenda-setting

and public perceptions towards companies. Interestingly, Kiousis et al. (2011) didn't just

focus on first-level agenda setting, which is the notion that the media simply can

influence the types of issues that people can talk about. Instead, the authors also tested

to see whether there were any second-level agenda setting, which is the notion that the

media can influence not just the types of issues that the general public talks about, but

also can influence how they feel about those issues. Kiousis et al. (2011) measured this

second-level agenda setting by analyzing media coverage of certain companies through

The New York Times and the *Wall Street Journal*, press releases of companies through

PR Newswire, and survey data from *The Harris Interactive Survey* (pg 154). They found

that, at least for articles in the *Wall Street Journal*, there was a substantive relationship

between tone of news articles and the financial performance and public opinion of the

company (pg 161). This adds substance to the claims of Coombs (2007) as explained

above, as Kiousis et al. (2011) were able to help prove a relationship between press

coverage and public opinion. Even further, Kiousis et al. (2011) found a relationship

between the tone of press releases and the tone of media coverage (pg 161). This shows

that not only is agenda-setting powerful, but public relations tactics can play a key role

in how that agenda is set.

Aside from agenda setting research, another core theory for this project is the

contingency theory, which was first founded by Cancel et al. (1997). Contingency theory

is the theory that crisis communications responses by a company or other entity can be

placed on a continuum from pure advocacy to pure accommodation. When responding

to a crisis, a company can take a stance ranging from this continuum, although this does

not necessarily represent the specific strategies that a company can take when it comes

to responding to a crisis. Cancel et al. (1997) identified 87 variables for inclusion in the

group of factors that affect the degree of accommodation that PR practitioners can take

(pg 31). These factors include categories such as characteristics of the external public,

the nature of the threats, the industry environment, corporation characteristics and the

individual characteristics (pg 60). Although some of these factors have been eliminated

and others have been added in recent years (Cancel et al., 1999), the contingency

theory is still seen as one of the most important and relevant theories in public relations

and has been used in a wide variety of ways, including in evaluating how certain countries respond to crises (Ye & Pang, 2011).

To summarize, agenda-setting and contingency theory will be the two biggest theories that this study will be based on. However, there will be several other theories that will be used due to their specific relevance to this topic, including theories about how social media is used to respond to a crisis. Although crisis communications research has been expanding rapidly in the past few years, I believe that my project will help enhance this literature while adding a new element to crisis communications research.

Literature Review

For the literature review, I will evaluate and add further depth to the theoretical underpinnings of this topic along with giving examples of some studies with special relevance to my research topic. First, I will start by explaining the difference in mediums, whether print or digital, when participating in crisis communications. Since a significant portion of my topic involves differences between social media and traditional communications, this is an important area to highlight. Afterwards, I will be examining how crisis communications can enhance the reputation of singular figures, which will help focus on crisis communications and individual politicians. Finally, I will evaluate case studies that evaluate contingency theory in crisis PR situations and investigate two techniques related to crisis management.

Evaluating the internet and mediums difference in crisis management.

One of the critical portions of my topic involves differentiating between mediums when it comes to communications strategies. There has been a robust amount of literature contrasting various mediums effectiveness when it comes to communicating during a crisis. A major study in this regard was done by Lee & Park (2013), which evaluated the importance of contingent message interactivity, which is the idea that websites' messages should be interrelated and interconnect with each other. Additionally, the study also tested whether there were "differences of perceptions of organization–public relational outcomes according to the type of communication channel" (pg 193). Overall, the study concluded that using the internet, specifically to help build a two-way conversation with customers "positively influenced both the perceptions of relationship management and the corporate reputation" (pg 201). Interestingly, the study even found that when familiarity of the organization was controlled, the usage of Internet was still a significant factor in improving organization perception (pg 202).

Another study in this vein was done by Jin & Liu (2010), which discusses how PR practitioners should interact and handle the "blogosphere" and also contrasted with how a practitioner should handle blogger crises as compared to a more traditional media based crisis (pg 429). For one, it found that bloggers were judged as being "more credible than any mainstream media or online source" (pg 437). It also found that blogs can have a significant agenda-setting and agenda building function (pg 439). Most importantly, this study found that influential blogs can also drive media coverage and closely monitoring influential blogs that are related to a corporation was important (pg

441). These two studies are important because they help to demonstrate the differences of communicating online and with more traditional media sources during a crisis and they show the surprising credibility that online sources and mediums can have.

Another study in this topic was conducted by Schultz, Utz & Göritz (2011), which tested the impact of social and traditional media strategies on "recipients' perceptions of reputation" of a company (pg 20). Additionally, Schultz et al. (2011) tested to see which made a bigger difference, message content or the medium that the message was broadcast in (pg 21). Schultz et al. (2011) found that the medium mattered more than the message, as none of the messages produced a statistically significant difference from each other (pg 25). It was also discovered that crisis communication via twitter "led to less negative crisis reactions than blogs and newspaper articles" (pg 25).

Crisis PR communications and leadership figures.

Considering that my topic involves politicians, it is useful to discuss literature that discusses public relations and best practices among leadership figures. One such study was conducted by Kim, Park & Cameron (2012), who tested a variety of characteristics to find the most effective ways for leadership figures to improve their public image and the public image of their company. Kim et al. (2012) found that above all else, transparency within leadership was the "most significant predictor of organizational reputation" (pg 1). Other key factors involved "the practitioners' work engagement and willingness to adopt accommodation" (pg 1). One other surprising

finding in the study was the notion that people perceived an organizational leader to be more than just the CEO, but also the communications leader (pg 20). This could have interesting applications to this topic, as it may foreshadow the importance of communications directors as a way for a politician to respond to a potential scandal.

Another study that involves singular figures was done by Men (2012), which measured the impact of CEO credibility and overall employee evaluation of an organization's reputation. This study was largely focused on emphasizing the importance of the CEO's image being seen as positive and credible, which Men (2012) hypothesized would have a large impact on internal and external perceptions of a company (pg 172). Men (2012) concluded that "employees who perceive the CEO as more trustworthy and honest tend to evaluate the organization positively" (pg 172). Although this involves organizations and not specifically politicians, this article has a high degree of applicability to my study due to the heavy focus on the importance of public relations establishing CEO credibility, especially how it can affect internal and external opinion about a company.

One final study in this subject area by Hwang (2012) evaluated how CEO's can utilize public relations to enhance their image and perception of their leadership. Hwang (2012) specifically studied how CEO's can use Twitter to manage their personal public relations. This study has proved especially relevant due to the fact that CEO's are increasingly creating and using their own personal Twitter accounts, including CEO's such as Jack Welch and Tony Hsieh. Hwang (2012) found that CEO's who use Twitter helped improve public attitudes about their corporations (pg 160). Hwang (2012) also

found that using Twitter also helped the CEO improve perceptions about the CEO's leadership, as CEO's who used Twitter more likely to be perceived as being a "transformational leader (pg 161). This study is also directly applicable to my topic, as not only does it measure how public relations can affect a singular individual, it also contrasts leaders who use social media with those that do not.

Contingency Theory case studies.

As mentioned in the above theoretical framework, contingency theory is a model of how companies or other entities choose to respond to a crisis situation. At its most basic form, contingency theory places the company stances on a continuum based from pure accommodation to pure advocacy, with a majority of company responses coming between these two poles. The first major academic article that created the contingency theory was done by Cancel, Cameron, Sallot & Mitrook (1997). Cancel et al. (1997) not only discovered the continuum, but also identified 87 variables that could affect the stances that PR practitioners are likely to take (pgs 61-63).

After the contingency theory was created, Yarbrough & Cameron (1998) devised a case study that tested the practicality of the contingency theory and comparing it to the four way communications model developed by Grunig (1984). After analyzing their case study, which involved three conflicts during the 1996 Summer Olympic Games, Yarbrough & Cameron (1998) found support for the contingency theory. Additionally, Yarbrough & Cameron (1998) found that their case study "highlight[ed] the impracticality and inflexibility of two-way symmetrical or mixed-motive public relations

as models of choice" (pg 39). This study is of particular importance to my proposed

project topic, as not only does it analyze a situation through the contingency continuum,

but it also demonstrates how this can be done through a series of case studies.

Another case study was conducted by Cameron, Pang & Jin (2008) that evaluated

and compared the Chinese and Singaporean government responses to the 2003 SARS

crisis through the contingency theory (pg 147-151). One quick point that the case study

found was that although the government responses varied on the degree of openness,

the governments "tend[ed] to move in a similar way" (pg 149). However, when

compared side by side, the Chinese government tended to move in a move

accommodative way, while the Singaporean government took a more advocacy focused

approach. One way in which this study is relevant is that focused on analyzing specific

government actions and communications through the contingency continuum, which is

similar to the way that office communications will be analyzed. However, while this

study needed to not only focus on the contingency theory, but the specific actions the

governments took, my study can be more focused on the communications aspect of the

crisis.

Yet another study in this model was done by Shin, Heath & Lee (2011), which

contrasted the leadership styles of PR practitioners based on the contingency theory.

Shin et al. (2011) differed from Cameron et al. (2008) in that they focused on the

differences of PR practitioners between countries, specifically the U.S. and South Korea.

Additionally, instead of analyzing stances through the contingency continuum, Shin et al.

(2011) analyzed the specific factors that led to the various leadership styles that the PR

practitioners were likely to take (pg 169). They found that PR practitioners in the US placed a greater emphasis on problem solving activities, while South Korean PR practitioners were more focused on being practical and resourceful (pg 183). This is important, as not only does it build on the contingency theory; it also contrasts the factors that influence the contingency theory in different countries.

Crisis PR techniques.

Having discussed agenda-setting, the contingency theory and public relations theories that apply to leadership figures, it is important to discuss some PR techniques that politicians could potentially use to respond to a scandal. By considering such techniques, it will be easier to analyze such strategies when they are used by politicians after a scandal. One such strategy was discussed by Arban & Roskos-Ewoldsen (2005), the notion of "stealing thunder" (pg 425). Stealing thunder is a relatively simple concept, it is when an organization "breaks the news about its own crisis before the crisis is discovered by the media or other interested parties" (Arban & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2005, pg 425). After evaluating companies that used the stealing thunder approach, Arban & Roskos-Ewoldsen found that people perceived the crisis as less severe and were more likely to purchase the product (pg 430). Additionally, Wrigley (2011) did a study where she contrasted the approaches of two politicians, former New York Governors Eliot Spitzer and David Patterson. Wrigley (2011) found that because Patterson utilized the "stealing thunder" approach, stories about his scandal were "more positively framed" and had "fewer negative media frames" (pg 50).

One other strategy was discussed by Kim, Kim & Cameron (2011), who analyzed

whether enhanced corporate social responsibility efforts could help potentially

"inoculate a company prior to a crisis" (pg 86). Largely, they found that prior corporate

CSR didn't have a major impact on how a company was viewed during or after a crisis

(pg 87). Instead, Kim et al. (2011) suggested that a company should instead focus on

enhancing the opinion of corporate ability, which they found to have a much larger

impact on how people view a company during and after a crisis. This has a few directly

applicable results for my topic. For one, it could indicate that no matter a politician's

prior reputation or goodwill before a crisis, if they are unable to respond properly to a

crisis, they could face serious ramifications. Additionally, if a politician is able to show a

high degree of effectiveness during and after the crisis, that could help them survive

certain scandals without losing a great deal of credibility and support.

Summary.

This literature review expanded on the two major theoretical underpinnings of

this study, agenda-setting and contingency theory. It found several studies that helped

explain not only the relation to crisis communications, but also how they are directly

applicable to the topic and to politics at large. After agenda-setting and contingency

theory were better explained, studies based on individual leadership and specific PR

strategies were analyzed, with an emphasis on how they relate to the overall topic.

Methods Section

As mentioned, my topic is analyzing politicians' responses to sex scandals through the contingency theory, with a special focus on whether there is a substantive difference between social media posts and more traditional forms of media outreach, including communication forms such as press releases. Additionally, I have explained that I plan to use three case studies as my primary method to analyze politician's responses to sex scandals. Thus, for this section, I will elaborate on how I gathered and analyzed the data, along with explaining the special benefits of using the case study approach and showing some examples of this being done in this topic field.

First, after I pick my three case studies that I will choose to analyze, I accessed as many of their office responses as possible, both by accessing old social media posts and past press releases through the office. Through tools like PR Newswire, gathering old press releases was a manageable process. Additionally, Topsy was utilized to look at past tweets sent through twitter accounts, even posts that may have been previously deleted. Another tool that was useful to help determine press coverage around an event was LexisNexis. This also allowed some access to prior social media posts, along with giving an overall sense of media coverage around an event.

Having explained how I accessed the data, it is important to detail exactly how I analyzed the data. Specifically, I analyzed and detailed the specific language that went into the social media posts, including investigating tone, style and the timeliness of the post. Additionally, I synthesized the data to help determine organizational stance, which will determine where something gets placed along the contingency continuum. Finally, I

used tools, like LexisNexis, to evaluate the media response to the various techniques.

The overall goal was to be able to tell a story about the response to a scandal response,

utilizing both social media posts and traditional office communications to help detail

exactly how this response was conducted. It is important to note that there are small

differences with each case study in terms of evaluating media coverage, simply based on

the nature and quantity of the coverage around the events.

The methods having been described, it is important to provide a defense for case

studies as a smart and logical way to conduct research in the field of public relations. As

detailed in the literature review, case studies have been frequently utilized as a sound

way to go more in depth when it comes to investigating and testing specific theories.

For example, only a year after the contingency theory was originally designed,

Yarbrough & Cameron (1998) published another article that analyzed the contingency

theory through a case study. Overall, as described by Cutler (2004), "case studies, if

thoughtfully conceived and well executed are a research tool well suited to the study of

public relations" (pg 365). However, Cutler (2004) does caution that "poor

methodology" frequently renders case studies in the PR field near useless.

First Case Study: Anthony Weiner's 2011 sexting scandal evaluated

along the contingency continuum.

May 27- June 1: The scandal develops and takes shape.

The controversy first started when then-Rep. Anthony Weiner, (D-NY), on May

27, 2011 sent a photo of an erect male penis to a 21 year old college student using his

main twitter account. Quickly, Weiner took the picture down and claimed his account was hacked. This was verified by the first tweet he sent, which said "Tivo shot. FB hacked. Is my blender gonna attack me next? #TheToasterIsVeryLoyal." Despite not making a ton of sense, this fit well within his overall office message to reporters, which also claimed that he was hacked. However, retrospectively, he tried to fit the "hacking" in with some of the rest of his problems. First, it is important to note that he's taking a fully advocative approach with both his social media posts and his traditional office communication. His Twitter account went even further, claiming not only that he was hacked, but again fitting it in with his other, more mundane problems, such as his Tivo not working. This would seem to indicate him using the Benoit (1997) image restoration strategy of reducing the offensiveness of an event by minimizing its importance, again comparing it to more mundane problems. At this point, an analysis of the news articles from the three sources doesn't amount to much, as only Politico published a story, which simply repeated Weiner's claims that his account was hacked (Allen & Smith, 2011).

After two days of relative quiet during the Memorial Day weekend, on Tuesday, May 31, Weiner fielded 7 minutes of reporter questions in an impromptu press conference outside of his office. At this press conference, he refused to admit, one way or another, whether his account was truly hacked or whether he'd sent the lewd photos from the account himself (Sherman, 2011). Further, Weiner, who was a very frequent tweeter prior to the incident, didn't post any tweets out from his account throughout the day. At this point, the media coverage started to intensify further and Weiner

started getting critiqued from all media sources. For example, Salon published an article

titled "Anthony Weiner's awkward press conference" where Kornacki (2011) criticized

his performance as "totally out of character" for Weiner. Additionally, Salon published

three other articles during this time period, all of which were critical of Weiner in some

way. Meanwhile, Politico published four stories on the incident, while Human Events

cracked a joke about it in an unrelated article (Hayward 2011). Overall, analyzing

Weiner's behavior throughout the day reveals a dramatic shift in strategy. For one,

Weiner flipped from outright denial and an advocative approach to trying to ignore the

incident or not clearly addressing it, indicating a shift in the continuum to a slightly more

accommodative approach. Additionally, Weiner did not really deploy one of Benoit's

(1997) image restoration strategies, as he simply refused to answer direct questions on

the incident at all.

The next day, on June 1, Weiner completely shifted his strategy back to a full

advocative approach, but utilized a different strategy to do so. As Weiner did a series of

interviews on MSNBC, he tried to mock the controversy, making fun of the connection

between his last name and the "sexting" conversation. For example, on *The Rachel*

Maddow Show Weiner joked

> "It seems like what happened someone somehow got access to my Twitter
>
> account and tweeted a joke, I guess. You know, when your name is Weiner, you
>
> get some of those sometimes. I happen to be quite literally because I was on
>
> your show, I was tweeting at that very moment I saw it pop up there (Maddow
>
> 2011).

This kept with the theme of his tweets, one of which sent out on June 1st was as follows "Sorry for all the unwanted attention on #WeinerYes follows. I didn't mean to make you famous. #CollateralDamage." However, as Weiner was completing this tour, he was generating even more negative media coverage. Between June 1 and 2, Politico published eight stories on the incident, including a piece by Smith (2011) which heavily criticized his handling of the scandal response. Additionally, Salon published seven pieces, all of which were also critical of Weiner's response to the scandal, while Human Events published two columns both mocking Weiner and the scandal. Overall, Weiner seemed to shift back to a fully advocative approach, as he actively mocked the scandal and the media firestorm around it. According to the image restoration tactics laid out by Benoit (1997), Weiner likely fell under the provocation by joking that the media infatuation with the scandal was partially due to his last name sounding like the topic of the scandal.

June 6-June 8: The scandal intensifies further.

As the drumbeat of news coverage further intensified, a further revelation was released, involving Weiner sending shirtless photos of himself to a second woman. These revelations finally were a tipping point of sorts, as Weiner decided to call a press conference where he tearfully apologized for the repeated incidents and admitting that he was the one that sent all of the photos. Additionally, Weiner admitted to lying repeatedly about the incident (McAuliff & Sledge, 2011). The media coverage around this event was intense, as Politico published a remarkable 18 stories from June 6 to June

7 detailing the press conference and Salon.com wasn't far behind with 15 in the same time period, while Human Events published three pieces. These were all uniformly negative about the press conference, as it seemed that the bigger news wasn't the revelation that it was him behind the photos, but that he was, at the time, unwilling to resign from office. For example, the lead story about the event from the Politico by Epstein & Haberman (2011) focused equally on the press conference and his pronounced unwillingness to resign.

It is important to admit that the only communication that Weiner had was through the press conference, as he had been completely silent on Twitter since June 1, when he sent the tweets that mocked his present situation. Although clearly a dramatic shift on the contingency continuum from advocacy to accommodation in that he admitted complete fault for the situation, it likely doesn't fall under total accommodation, as Weiner had yet to resign his seat.

June 16: The resignation.

On June 16, after President Obama and several Democratic members of the House of Representatives and Senate called on him to resign, Anthony Weiner finally gave up his seat in Congress. He continued his lack of posting on social media, as instead the story leaked initially to social media. Later in the day, Weiner called a press conference where he confirmed the reports of his resignation. The media firestorm continued, as Human Events posted a story about how his resignation could prompt the GOP to possibly take his house seat in a special election (Pietrusza, 2011). Additionally, Politico published

seven more stories on the incident, including focusing on the larger significance of Weiner's resignation. Again, the only way of communicating that Weiner utilized was the press conference and office leaks, as he kept his total social media freeze until he started his New York City mayoral campaign in early 2012. Additionally, Weiner had traveled the entire range of the contingency continuum, from fully denying and ridiculing any accusations of his alleged sex scandal to fully admitting guilt and eventually resigning from office. Even more dramatically, this switch took place in little over a two-week period, helping to illustrate just how quickly things can change in politics.

Discussion of Weiner Incident.

Having now discussed the Weiner incident, it is useful to evaluate Weiner's response using the research questions outlined earlier. The first RQ involved investigating exactly where Weiner's responses fell along the contingency continuum. As one can clearly see by glancing over the paper, his responses were largely clumped on the extremes of the contingency continuum, with his advocative responses being utilized so clearly that he was actively mocking people who were criticizing him and his accommodative responses involving him crying multiple times during press conferences. This could be largely because the scandal that he was accused of, sending exposed pictures of himself while in a committed marriage, is such an obvious fault that as soon as he admitted guilt, he was unable to pick any stance aside from an extremely accommodative one. Thus, it would be highly useful to run this test on other political

sex scandals, to see if the swing between outright advocacy and outright accommodative is as extreme.

The final research question involved investigating whether there was a substantial difference when it came to whether there was a difference between social media posts and more traditional media outreach when it came to the contingency continuum. The answer to this question appears to be mixed. After careful investigation, it was found that his tweets largely mirrored his traditional office communication, including in content and where it was placed along the contingency continuum. Essentially, Weiner wasn't tweeting an advocative stance and then immediately going on television to express a more accommodative view.

However, Weiner only utilized social media and Twitter when it was to express an advocative view. In fact, after June 1 when Weiner abandoned his advocative stance, he didn't post a single tweet or post on social media at all, instead utilizing press releases and press conferences to express his more accommodative views. Why was this the case? A significant portion of this likely involved the way that Weiner already utilized social media platforms. In fact, Weiner was largely aggressive and forceful on Twitter, frequently mocking other users and his political opponents. His office staff and Weiner himself might have found that there would be a disconnect if he, all of a sudden, started using his social media posts to apologize for sending inappropriate pictures. Additionally, since the scandal was largely concentrated on his usage of social media posts, it is possible that he didn't want to be seen frequently utilizing a platform that had already put him in hot water. Either way, it would also be highly useful to look at

other case studies to perhaps investigate if this trend holds with politicians who didn't commit their sexual transgressions over social media.

Second Case Study: Herman Cain's sexual harassment charges evaluated along the contingency continuum.

October 30-October 31: The first story gets released.

Before the sexual harassment allegations against Republican presidential candidate Herman Cain, he was riding high in recent polls of the 2012 Republican presidential candidates. This was somewhat remarkable, considering Cain had extremely poor name recognition before the campaign, as he'd never been involved in organized politics before the 2012 Republican nomination process. According to CBS News on October 25, 2011, Cain was supported by 25% of Republican primary voters, compared to only 21% for the eventual nominee, Mitt Romney (Daly, 2011). This represented an eight percentage point increase for Cain since the CBS poll last month. However, a mere six days after the CBS News poll, Politico released an investigative report that detailed two former employees of the National Restaurant Association who had complained of "sexually suggestive behavior by Cain that made them angry and uncomfortable" (Martin et al., 2011). Although Cain had been in some minor campaign finance trouble before the allegations, this was the first time a substantially negative story had come out against the candidate.

Cain's primary twitter account, @thehermancain, delivered an immediate response to the allegations, as they posted a tweet mere minutes after the story

published that said "From Team HC: Sadly we've seen this movie played out before. Mr. Cain and all Americans deserve better bit.ly/uU0j7a." The link was to a press release, in which Cain fully denied all of the charges pressed against him. Specifically, the release said

> Dredging up thinly sourced allegations stemming from Mr. Cain's tenure as the Chief Executive Officer at the National Restaurant Association in the 1990s, political trade press are now casting aspersions on his character and spreading rumors that never stood up to the facts.
>
> Since Washington establishment critics haven't had much luck in attacking Mr. Cain's ideas to fix a bad economy and create jobs, they are trying to attack him in any way they can.
>
> Sadly, we've seen this movie played out before – a prominent Conservative targeted by liberals simply because they disagree with his politics.
>
> Mr. Cain — and all Americans, deserve better (Burns, 2011).

There are a few important things to note with this response. One is the relative cohesiveness of the twitter message and the press release. They all focus on the notion that the scandal is a distraction from the substance of the campaign. The tweet even uses the final takeaway line from the release with the intention to discredit the attackers. This message is an interesting combination of two of the Benoit (1997) image restoration strategies, the "simple denial" and "attack accuser" (pg 179). Cain is clearly denying the charges, and did so throughout the entire campaign. However, he is also attacking source of the article by saying that he's being "targeted by liberals," although it is unclear exactly who he is referring to in this response. Cain's team also utilized Twitter's promoted tweets feature to showcase this response, indicating that his

blaming of liberals was the message he wanted to get out into the media (Bingham, 2011).

The next day, Herman Cain did a media blitz, conducting two separate interviews on Fox News channels, including appearances on "Happening Now" and "On the Record with Greta Van Susteren." In these appearances, Cain continued to completely deny all charges, claiming to not even know one of the females by name (Van Susteren, 2011). Additionally, when asked on "Happening Now" what his message would be to supporters, Cain said that his campaign would continue to "stay on message" and repeated core campaign ideas, including his tax and foreign policy plans (Lee, 2011). Overall, in the two media interviews, Cain largely focused on denying all charges, along with encouraging the media to focus more on his campaign platform. Additionally, Cain had a pre-arranged media appearance at the National Press Club that day and he used that opportunity to further rebut the sexual harassment charges leveled against him (Galloway, 2011).

When one looks at Cain's twitter account on October 31, it largely mirrors his many media appearances throughout the day. His first tweet encouraged fans to watch his appearance on "Happening Now," saying "Team HC: Be sure to watch Mr. Cain on Fox News Happening Now today at 11:15am ET." His second, third and fourth tweets of the day also encouraged his fans to tune into another media appearance, this time notifying fans of Cain's National Press Club appearance. The fourth tweet also put a positive spin on the appearance, saying "I think I left the National Press Club today on a high note, watch the video and RT if you agree! cs.pn/vgJUsy." In addition to informing

his followers about the appearance, the tweet also refers to the fact that Herman Cain actually sang during the event. The final tweet that Cain sent out on October 31 involved his thanking fans for sticking with him, saying "I am blessed to have such great supporters! Thank you all for your support & prayers today & throughout my campaign!"

When looking at the two days' events through the contingency continuum (Cancel et al., 1997), it is pretty clear that Cain is sticking with the advocative approach in both his tweets and official media appearances. However, when one drills further, there are subtle differences in how he utilized Twitter and his official media appearances. Specifically, Cain used the traditional media appearances to repeatedly rebut the specific charges of sexual harassment. That largely wasn't how he utilized Twitter, however. He instead used it as a way to rally supporters of his campaign and inform his supporters about the media appearances. In this case, it is clear that Twitter played a support role in the response, not the main avenue that Cain utilized to respond. Given that Hwang (2012) found that Twitter can be used by CEOs to help improve personal image, it makes sense that Cain would use Twitter to generally inspire his supporters, instead of specifically rebutting each charge.

November 1-4: The scandal deepens.

On November 1, there was a new development in the Herman Cain sexual harassment scandal. One of the lawyers for the women that accused Cain of sexual harassment, Joel Bennett, asked for his client, the accused women, to be released from

a nondisclosure agreement. This would allow his client could speak to the charges that she filed (Somashekhar & Grimaldi, 2011). While this story was in the press, Cain made another appearance on a Fox News show, this one the O'Reilly Factor. In this media appearance, Cain again fully rebutted the charges against him and said that it hadn't hurt his campaign at all, citing fundraising highs his campaign had reached the day before. Bill O'Reilly asked Cain very detailed questions about his response to the scandal, with Cain saying he'd done the media appearances for his supporters and to "get out in front of" the potential scandal (O'Reilly, 2011).

Cain's campaign sent out three tweets on November 1, all of which help to illustrate a different element to his response. The first tweet that Cain sent out was to emphasize the high fundraising total that Cain had received as a result of the scandal, saying "@TheHermanCain had 1 of best fundraising days ever yesterday. We say~Let's go for two! bit.ly/oVN4oc Pls RT." This compliments Cain's appearance on the O'Reilly Factor, where he also emphasized his high fundraising as a logical rebuttal to the notion that his campaign was suffering from the sexual harassment allegations. Cain also sent out a tweet that encouraged his followers to watch his O'Reilly factor segment, saying "Team HC ~ Please tune in to the O'Reilly Factor at 8 pm ET." Again, this sticks with the tweets from the day before, where Cain notified his viewers of upcoming media appearances. Finally, Cain also sent out another tweet attempting to distract from the scandal which said "Team HC -- "We the People" reject attacks...Cain takes 10 pt. lead in #SC http://tinyurl.com/3tox8vw #tcot #Cain2012." This was clearly done to logically rebut the notion that his campaign was in trouble, despite the fact that the South

Carolina Republican primary was still three months away and there were several primaries that were scheduled to take place beforehand.

On November 2, the scandal worsened for Cain. A third woman emerged claiming to have received "unwanted sexual remarks" with Cain while Cain was at the National Restaurant Association (James, 2011). This time, instead of Cain's blaming the media, as he did in his October 30 statement, Cain blamed fellow Republican presidential nominee Rick Perry for the release of the sexual harassment stories in a phone call to Cain's supporters (Zeleny & Rutenberg, 2011). Aside from the campaign phone call, Cain was largely absent from the press about the scandal, as his campaign didn't sent any tweets on November 2.

After another quiet day on November 3, on November 4, Bennett, the lawyer for one of the accusers, released another statement, in which a woman details a "series of inappropriate behaviors and unwanted advances" over "one to two months" ("A timeline of Herman Cain's troubles," 2011). Although the statement didn't contain any specifics, there was a fresh round of calls for Cain and the National Restaurant Association to allow the alleged victims to release the details of the reports, including from former George W. Bush political adviser Karl Rove (Burns, 2011). Again, Cain didn't make any public comments or appearances in which he mentioned the scandal, as his only appearance was at an Americans for Prosperity event. Although Cain didn't make any public comments, he did send a tweet related to the scandal that said "Team HC ~ The time for smears is over. It's time for bold solutions. Give to the Iowa Fund today. http://bit.ly/t3YiLE." This fits with the theme of past Cain tweets, as he is again trying to

paint the scandal as a distraction from his larger campaign goals. Even further, this

tweet also encourages further donations, as Cain had previously used high fundraising

totals to explain why the scandal wasn't negatively affecting his candidacy for president.

November 7-9: A fourth women emerges, then the scandal dies down.

Through November 7, the Cain campaign was still running relatively strong, as

Gallup found him in a statistical tie with presumptive Republican front-runner Mitt

Romney (Newport, 2011). However, a fourth women, Sharon Bialek, emerged, accusing

Cain of asking for sexual favors in exchange for helping her find a job (Daly, 2011).

Additionally, Bialek made the accusations in a high-profile New York City press

conference and further announced that she was being represented by Gloria Allred, a

famous civil and gender rights lawyer. Immediately after the story was released, Cain

issued a statement questioning the credibility of the witness, saying "Activist celebrity

lawyer Gloria Allred is bringing forth more false accusations against the character of

Republican front-runner Herman Cain" (Daily, 2011). Cain also held a press conference

the next day, saying that the accusations against him were "baseless, bogus and false"

(Garner, 2011). Interestingly enough, the Twitter account for Cain's press staff, not the

actual Herman Cain Twitter account, issued the response, which again attacked Gloria

Allred, saying "Welcome to the campaign, Gloria Allred. What took you so long?#Iowa

fund ==> http://t.co/UPd0oPjW #iacaucus." Specifically, the tweet is doing two different

things: questioning the credibility of Gloria Allred as a lawyer and encouraging people to

donate as a result of the attacks of Cain. This was the last tweet from either Cain

account that ever mentioned the scandal.

After the press conference by Bialek, the fourth woman to accuse Cain of sexual

harassment, his candidacy began to significantly decline in the Republican primary field.

By November 11, his candidacy was eight points behind Romney and he fell to a 26%

approval rating among Republicans, compared to 44% of those who disapproved of Cain

(Weigel, 2011). Even more remarkably, 39% of Republicans wanted Cain to drop out of

the race immediately due to the accusations. As a result of these accusations building up

and the subsequent decline in approval, Cain decided to suspend his campaign on

December 3, 2011.

Discussion of the Cain incident.

Having looked over the responses that Cain had with the scandal, it is useful to

evaluate Cain's responses based on the two research questions outlined. The first RQ

asks where the various scandal responses fall along the contingency continuum. In this

case, it is clear that all of Herman Cain's responses, throughout, have been completely

advocative. From the very beginning, not only did Cain deny all of the charges against

him, he oftentimes denied even knowing who the accuser was. Even as the charges

against him continued to leak, he never strayed from the position that he would be

completely exonerated, once all of the facts were released. This type of consistency is

vastly different than with Rep. Weiner, who wildly swung across the contingency

continuum, especially towards the later days of his scandal. Say what you will about

Herman Cain, but he was consistent in denying the charges from start to finish.

The second research question asks whether there was a substantive difference in the responses in social media, as compared to traditional media, along the contingency continuum. In this specific case, there were no differences. Cain utilized both platforms to completely deny all charges throughout the entire scandal. However, there were some substantial differences in how Cain communicated on Twitter as compared to his traditional media interviews. For one, Cain utilized Twitter as a way to issue rapid-fire responses immediately after these details were published. Additionally, Cain used his Twitter account to encourage people to actively participate in the campaign, especially through donating. Also, Cain utilized his Twitter as a way to attempt to push out stories that were more favorable to his campaign, such as a new poll or a record fundraising day. In contrast, the media appearances were designed to specifically refute all of the sexual harassment charges that Cain faced in a much more matter of fact manner. The media appearances were largely focused on the scandal as well, as Cain was sometimes unable to steer the conversations back to the core talking points that he wanted his campaign to communicate, with The O'Reilly Factor being a particularly good example.

Third Case Study: Dan Rutherford's sexual harassment allegations evaluated along the contingency continuum.

June 3: Dan Rutherford enters the race for Illinois governor as a Republican.

The Republican nomination for governor of Illinois in 2014 was seen as a relatively good position to have. Despite the fact that Illinois leans Democratic on statewide elections, as President Barack Obama won the state in 2012 by nearly 16%, it had a Democratic governor, Pat Quinn, who was "one of the most unpopular governors

58

in the country" ("Illinois Governor's race looks like a toss up," 2013). Quinn had a 60%

disapproval ranking, partially due to a pension reform plan that attempted to limit

public employee pensions, which were over $100 billion in debt (Garcia, 2013). As a

result of Quinn's unpopularity, several Republicans were eager to jump into the race to

face him and the first one to enter the race, on June 3, 2013, was State Treasurer Dan

Rutherford.

Rutherford came into the race with a few clear positives. He was one of only

three Republicans elected statewide during the 2012 elections, elections that otherwise

featured Democrats winning all but two of the statewide positions. Additionally,

Rutherford was the only Republican nominee in 2013 that had a net positive approval

rating, with his 24% approval rating, compared to a 20% disapproval rating ("Illinois

Governor's race looks like a toss up," 2013). However, Rutherford also came into the

race with some potential problems. As the Chicago Tribune (2013) detailed in their

initial write-up of Rutherford's entry into the race, his tenure as State Treasurer was

"bumpy," as he'd frequently "bragged about cutting spending…but routinely made use

of the state plane for his travel between Chicago, Springfield and other cities."

Additionally, Rutherford, who was a bachelor, was subject to numerous rumors that

questioned his sexuality, especially after he was "the sole Republican vote in favor of

adding "sexual orientation" to the state's non-discrimination statute" (Eaton, 2012).

Despite the rumors about his personal life and possible minor corruption as State

Treasurer, Rutherford was in a fairly positive position when he first entered the race. In

a poll done two days after his entrance into the race, Rutherford had a nine-point lead

over the next closest challenger, state senator Bill Brady. Businessman and multi-millionaire Bruce Rauner, who would eventually win the nomination, had only 5% of the vote in the poll. However, despite the strong position, Rauner would eventually take over the race, as he spent over $6 million dollars of his own money to support his campaign (Corfman, 2014). Despite Rauner's spending massive amounts of his own money, Rutherford was still in contention and only 10% behind Rauner in a poll conducted in November of 2013 ("Illinois Governor's race looks like a toss up," 2013).

Rutherford gained a unique reputation on his social media outlets, especially Twitter, during the campaign. Specifically, the Associated Press ran an entire story based on Rutherford's Twitter account, which "chronicles the Illinois treasurer fixing home appliances, jogging on the treadmill and eating his sister's famous goulash" (Lester, 2013). However, the account also landed Rutherford in hot water, as he would sometimes tweet about his experiences on the campaign trail, despite billing them as official State Treasurer activities (Lester, 2013). Essentially, Rutherford's Twitter account could be seen as a window into all of his activities as an elected official, both positive and negative.

January 31: The first developments emerge.

Rutherford's campaign took a major hit in the end of January. Rutherford called a press conference where reporters were expecting that he'd come to "announce an endorsement, unveil a policy initiative or share some other ostensibly positive news in his bid for Republican nomination for governor" (Mihalopoulos, 2014). Rutherford had

instead come to announce that an unnamed and unidentified employee was alleging

misconduct by Rutherford. Rutherford didn't specify exactly who was making the claim

or what they were alleging that Rutherford had done, but he did say that there was

"absolutely no truth to the allegations" (Ahern, 2014). His official statement—which he

also posted on his Facebook page—went slightly into explaining the incident, but mainly

focused on blaming Bruce Rauner for the incident

> I have launched an independent investigation into allegations of misconduct
>
> made against me by an employee of the Illinois Treasurer's Office. The Office has
>
> retained Ron Braver and Associates. Ron has 25 years of law enforcement
>
> experience that will prepare him well for this important investigation.
>
> Let me make this very clear, there is absolutely no truth to the allegations, no
>
> factual support or merit.
>
> Christine Svenson is an attorney making demands on behalf of the accuser and is
>
> directly linked to my opponent Bruce Rauner. This connection only came to light
>
> when my opponent was forced by the media to disclose itemized payments
>
> within his campaign operation. Svenson's law office was paid at least once as it
>
> appears on his very recently amended campaign report (Ahern, 2014)

Having given the press conference in which he angrily denied all of the charges,

Rutherford was extremely active on his Twitter account in rebutting the charges.

Rutherford sent at least 13 tweets on January 31 and they fell into three main

categories: retweeting encouragement from his supporters, retweeting supporters who

blamed Rauner and mentioning the media stories that talked about his press

conference. All of these tactics were on the completely advocative side of the

contingency continuum developed by Cancel et al. (1997), as they featured Rutherford

not taking any blame for the incident and instead blaming outside parties for his problems.

The first, and most frequent, type of tweet was Rutherford featuring people who agreed with his notion that Rauner was behind the event. One such tweet came from the username @fortlocks2 and said "@RutherfordDan The timing of this is so obviously a setup. Rauner and his staff should be ashamed to play these kind of games" and another came from the username @reagan_ronnie, which said "@RutherfordDan @BruceRauner People rarely understand the dynamic of dirty politics when great sums of money are used." Additionally, Rutherford used his Twitter feed to highlight general support from people, including tweets from @GhostGadgetGuy, who said " @RutherfordDan Go get em' Dan!" Finally, Rutherford utilized his feed to highlight upcoming media appearances, such as a local TV appearance: "Rutherford: Gov rival Rauner behind staffer's allegations http://abclocal.go.com/wls/story?section=news%2Fpolitics&id=9414843 …" In addition to being completely on the advocacy side of the spectrum, Rutherford attempts to utilize the "shift the blame" image restoration strategy, which was theorized by Beoit (1997). Simply put, Rutherford is almost completely blaming the incident on his opponent, while admitting no fault of his own.

To summarize, Rutherford, stayed completely on the advocative side of the contingency continuum throughout the day. He largely used his Twitter account to amplify the encouragement he was getting from his supporters, especially when they agreed with his framing of the issue. Additionally, Rutherford utilized his Twitter

account to mention his upcoming media appearances, similar to what Herman Cain did with his Twitter account during his scandal. One other similarity with Cain is worth noting: both utilized their fundraising numbers as a way to respond to the scandal. On February 1, Rutherford tweeted that "Home after several campaign stops, large crowds They were not fundraisers yet $2635 in checks were given & $2100 came in on line #twill."

February 3-4: Further details emerge about the victim.

On February 3, there was another development in the scandal, as the exact nature of the offense and gender of the employee involved was revealed. Specifically, according to a report from the Chicago Sun-Times, it was a former male employee that made the claims and the claims specifically involved Rutherford sexually harassing the employee (Korecki & Mihalopoulos, 2014). Additionally, a concurrent report in the Chicago Sun-Times found that Rutherford had spent a record 32 days abroad as State Treasurer, including several trips with his personal assistant, Josh Lanning (Korecki, 2014). The kicker was that, according to Korecki (2014), the excuse to have them room together was that it had been done to "keep costs down." Most national media outlets immediately tied the two incidents together, one example being Gawker, which ran a story titled "Illinois GOP Gov. Candidate Took Strapping Male Staffer on World Tour" which summarized the entirety of the allegations against the gubernatorial candidate (Trotter, 2014).

In contrast to the response after his press conference in January, Rutherford offered a very limited official response to the latest allegations, though he gave an interview to the Associated Press where he defended his earlier decision to go public with the allegations (which he still denied), saying "I know the accusations are completely false; I'm going public with it. That's the right thing to do" (Tareen, 2014). Additionally, his Twitter activity about the developments was extremely limited, as he only retweeted media clips about the overall state of the race, including his retweet of ABC7 Chicago journalist Charles Thomas that said "The @RutherfordDan @BruceRauner feud consumes @ILGOP Gov's primary. http://abclocal.go.com/story?section=news/politics&id=9418155." Although Rutherford didn't adopt an advocative stance on Twitter, it is unlikely that his position shifted dramatically along the contingency continuum. For one, his official response and interview to the Associated Press still denied all of the claims. Additionally, his Twitter response wasn't indicating any shift in content, as he simply didn't' say much about the scandal.

February 10: The victim emerges.

After a limited time where Rutherford responded sporadically to the scandal, mainly to retweet his supporters who proclaimed his innocence, the final part of the scandal broke when Ed Michalowski, a former employee, went public with all of the sexual harassment claims (Korecki, 2014). Korecki (2014) detailed a repeated string of sexual harassment claims from Michalowski, starting in 2011 and continuing on into

64

2013. Even worse for Rutherford, all of the details went public, including an incident

where Rutherford allegedly approached Michalowski during a party and said "If you go

home with me, you can have anything you want in the office" (Korecki, 2014).

Rutherford's official response to the allegations was, again, to deny all of the

charges that Michalowski brought. Rutherford held a 23-minute press conference the

day the story broke, telling reporters "I stand right here and look you in the eye and tell

you it's wrong. It's false" and that the whole thing "smells of politics" from Rauner

(Korecki, 2014). As was the case with the last press conference that Rutherford had in

January, there was another massive Twitter response to the scandal. First, he utilized his

Twitter account to promote his various media appearances and his press conference,

saying "I will be holding a media availability this afternoon to address an ex-employee's

false claims. #twill." Additionally, Rutherford sent a total of 14 tweets on February 10,

all of which retweeted various supporters who were skeptical of the claims brought

against Rutherford. For example, he retweeted @jacob_dickey, who said

"@RutherfordDan setting the record straight with facts, supporting articles on

allegations. We could use a guy like that in office. #twill" and @djfitzgerald111, who

said "I think the charges being levied in the suit against @RutherfordDan are a load of

crap."

This response by Rutherford again firmly places him in the advocacy side of the

contingency continuum. Again, Rutherford's Twitter account was utilized as a way to

show how his supporters were holding firm with him throughout the scandal, even as he

was receiving negative media attention. This was in contrast to his response to the

various allegations that were released a few days earlier, which was met with relative silence. This could indicate that Twitter was a key part in the Rutherford's planning process. When he was able to properly coordinate a response, he heavily used his Twitter account to promote his supporters.

February 11-March 18: The aftermath.

After the barrage of scandalous revelations that the campaign suffered in little over two weeks, Rutherford struggled to regain any semblance of campaign footing. A poll conducted on February 11 helped show the damage in a very stark and direct way, as Rutherford found his support collapse to 9.7% (Flannery, 2014). Moreover, the frontrunner in the race, Bruce Rauner, was found to command 46% of the vote, giving him a commanding 36% lead over Rutherford (Flannery, 2014). In the end, Rutherford found his support completely collapse before the March 19 election and ended up only getting 7.5% of the vote, with Rauner winning with a 40% plurality of the vote.

Why did Rutherford's support collapse so heavily after the scandal? There are many possible theories, but two particularly stick out. One idea is that the scandal particularly hurt Rutherford among social conservatives, who make up a large percentage of the electorate in a Republican primary. As David Yepsen, the director of Southern Illinois University's Public Policy Institute said in an Associated Press article, "This kind of accusation from another man is just going to be devastating to Rutherford with a lot of those voters… There's just no other way to portray this" (Tareen & Lester, 2014). Another idea is that Illinois voters were entirely sick of the corruption aspect of

the scandal, having already had to deal with former governor Rob Blagojevich. As Doug

O'Brien, a former aide to senator Mark Kirk (R-IL) said in another Associated Press article

"The voters of Illinois are just so tired of having to put up with a lower standard for

ethics among their elected officials" (Tareen 2014).

Discussion of the Rutherford incident.

Having evaluated the specifics of Rutherford's response, it is useful to evaluate

the answers to both research questions with the Rutherford case study. The first

research question asks where the various scandal responses fall along the contingency

continuum, as defined by Cancel et al. (1997). The answer to this is relatively simple,

both on Twitter and Rutherford's traditional media outreach. Specifically, Rutherford's

actions fall entirely along the advocacy wing of the contingency continuum. As was

repeatedly mentioned throughout the case study, Rutherford consistently denied all of

the charges, even as they got progressively more serious. This was continued on his

Twitter feed which, if anything, amplified his denial by consistently retweeting his

supporters who were skeptical of all the charges. Although Rutherford didn't use his

Twitter account to mock the charges, like Weiner and Cain did, he clearly and repeatedly

used it to deny all of the charges and to blame his opponent, Rauner, for the entire

scandal.

The second research question asks if there was a substantial difference between

Rutherford's social media posts and traditional media outreach on the contingency

continuum. In the specific sense of this question, it appears that there was no

substantial difference. As mentioned above, Rutherford repeatedly used his Twitter account to promote his followers' skepticism of the charges, only reinforcing his claim that he wasn't guilty of any of the charges. However, there were differences in how and when he utilized Twitter to respond to the scandals. One difference was that Rutherford utilized his press conferences to poke holes in the details of the allegations and to explain, in moral terms, why he wasn't guilty of the allegations. His Twitter, on the other hand, was largely used to demonstrate the notion that his supporters were staying with him throughout the scandal by frequently mentioning their support. Even further, he utilized Twitter as a way to add credibility to his claim that Rauner was behind the charges by allowing his followers to make the claim for him. Thus, if anything, his Twitter was on the more extreme end of the contingency continuum, as he not only utilized it to explain and defend his position, but he also used it to try to show that he had supporters rallying to his side.

Overall discussion of case studies.

For this portion of the paper, there will be four sections. First, I will compare and contrast the specifics of these three case studies, with a focus on how they differed in using social and traditional forms of media to respond to their sex scandals. After that, there will be a section that attempts to answer the research questions posed at the start of this paper. Finally, there will be sections that discuss some of the limitations to this approach and further research opportunities in this space.

Comparing and contrasting the different case studies.

When evaluating the three case studies shown above, there are a few important similarities and differences to notice. For one, each situation, as presented above, represented a unique and differing set of circumstances. For Rep. Anthony Weiner, as a sitting member of Congress, there was less of an immediate pressure to respond to his voters. However, with the Rutherford and Cain case studies, they were in the middle of furious campaigns for their offices, so responding immediately and thoroughly to the allegations was imperative to their campaigns. Despite that, the Cain and Rutherford case studies were different too. For one thing, Rutherford was running in a statewide election and only had to tailor his message to a few media markets. Cain, on the other hand, was running a nationwide campaign and had to respond to a variety of outlets and deal with a greater number of overall supporters.

Candidates also had their own style on Twitter, which impacted the nature of their social media response. Weiner, for instance, had frequently utilized his Twitter account to sarcastically respond to opponents of his policies and that carried over to his response, which consistently featured him joking about the allegations and saying things like "Touche Prof Moriarity. More Weiner Jokes for all my guests! #Hacked!" Rutherford, on the other hand, had a frequently updated Twitter account that routinely featured mundane details of the campaign, so it follows that he frequently featured tweets of the exact nature of responding to this charge by saying "@TedMcClelland Mom and entire family are on board pushing back the false allegations."

Despite the differences between the case studies, there are some clear parallels between how all three politicians utilized Twitter in their response to sex scandals. For

one, all of the politicians studied used Twitter as a way to promote their upcoming media appearances, where they were able to respond to the allegations in a more thorough way. For example, Weiner utilized his Twitter to specifically promote his appearance on *The Rachel Maddow Show*, saying "On with Rachel tonight. Gonna talk about Trump eating pizza with a fork! #DudeYoureANewYorker!" Additionally, all of the candidates utilized their Twitter feeds as a way to present critiques of the persons making or bringing up the allegations, with these critiques frequently being sarcastic and of a somewhat derogatory nature. For example, the Cain-affiliated Twitter handle @CainPress responded to one of the people alleging Cain of sexual harassment by sarcastically saying "Welcome to the campaign, Gloria Allred. What took you so long?," while Weiner tweeted "Wow, so many followers now. #IsThereTrollRemovalSoftware?"

Additionally, none of the politicians studied used their Twitter accounts to present anything remotely conciliatory to the people making the allegations. Of every single tweet studied in this review, in none of them did the candidate admit any fault, at all, with their actions. In fact, when Weiner ended up resigning, instead of tweeting about his resignation, he simply stopped posting on Twitter entirely. Finally, all of the candidates utilized Twitter as a way to quickly respond to the allegations against them. As demonstrated in the Cain case study, Cain was able to respond to the POLITICO article in mere minutes after it was posted. Similarly, Rutherford responded to the allegations against him in real time by retweeting supporters of his campaign, who stood by him while the scandal was occurring. Both Cain and Rutherford also used their Twitter accounts to demonstrate how they were successfully fundraising off of the

allegations, with Cain saying ""@TheHermanCain had 1 of best fundraising days ever yesterday. We say~Let's go for two!"

Answers to the research questions.

With the case studies now being evaluated and contrasted, it is easier to look back and answer the two research questions outlined at the start of the paper. These two research questions are as follows:

RQ 1: Where do various scandal responses fall under the contingency continuum?

RQ 2: Is there a substantial difference between social media posts and traditional media outreach when it comes to the contingency continuum?

The first one asks where the various scandal responses fall on the contingency continuum, as outlined by Cancel et al. (1997). This draws on one of the themes mentioned throughout this entire review, which is that all of the case studies involved tweets that were entirely on the advocative side of the spectrum. None of the candidates used their Twitter or social media responses to admit any personal fault. In fact, the only time there was an accommodative response, with Weiner's press conference where he resigned, was completely ignored by Weiner's Twitter account. Other than that one instance, there was no accommodation on social media by any of the politicians that were studied. Given that they were all advocative, however, there were some differences in the specific image restoration techniques (Benoit, 1997) that the politicians utilized on social media. For one, some of the politicians used the "attack

accuser" (pg 179) image restoration technique, as what happened when Cain

sarcastically mentioned that one of the accusers was bringing in famed attorney Gloria

Allred (Benoit, 1997). Rutherford, on the other hand, utilized the "shift the blame" (pg

179) technique when instead of admitting fault, he simply stated that his opponent,

Bruce Rauner, was behind the attacks. So even though the politicians all were extremely

advocative in their responses, there were some differences in the exact nature of their

advocacy.

The second question asks whether there was a substantive difference between

the social media and traditional media responses along the contingency continuum. The

answer to this is decidedly mixed. As mentioned repeatedly throughout this study, all of

the Twitter accounts analyzed were at the extremely advocative end of the continuum.

However, a lot of the media appearances followed this exact same pattern. For

example, in every single media appearance to this day, both Rutherford and Cain have

denied all of the allegations against them. In fact, the only accommodative response at

all involved Weiner, who admitted fault and quickly resigned from office afterwards.

Again, though, there are differences in the nature of the social media responses from

the more official forms of media communication, such as interviews and press

conferences. None of the politicians studied utilized their Twitter to specifically rebut

the details of the allegations, instead choosing to do that through traditional media

outreach. Instead, they generally utilized their Twitter accounts to rally their supporters

or offering sarcastic responses to the accusers.

That being said, what was actually learned from this review? For one, as

mentioned by Bingham (2011), social media is changing the nature of the way politicians

can respond to scandals. It allows them a forum to immediately rebut any of the charges

against them and, more importantly, it gives them a venue to demonstrate to the media

that they are still in the good graces of their supporters. Additionally, it is important to

note that there is almost no room for specific details on Twitter, which affects the

nature of the response. None of the politicians studied utilized Twitter as a way to

provide a detailed response, instead offering pithier comments about the accusers or

rallying people to their side.

Limitations

There are a few logical limitations to this style of academic research. For one,

there is no quantifiable way to prove that all politicians responses to sex scandals will be

on the advocative side of the contingency continuum. The reason is that there isn't a big

enough sample size, nor a large enough data set, to demonstrably prove that there is a

clear difference. Thus, the external validity of the study is fairly limited. Additionally, it is

hard to exactly quantify the contingency theory as a whole. Essentially, how one should

measure an accommodative response or an advocative response, or weight them, can

be disputed. Because there aren't exact specifics, any judgments in this area will fall on

the researcher, which can introduce a different set of biases in the study. This study only

analyzed Twitter responses. It is entirely possible that how politicians respond to sex

scandals is substantively different on different forms of social media. For example, how

a politician responds on Facebook or Instagram to a sex scandal could be entirely different from how they use Twitter. Finally, it is also possible that the politicians themselves did not use their own Twitter accounts, and that there was a dramatic difference in the tweets produced by staffers and the candidates themselves.

Further research opportunities

There are a number of logical ways that this study can get expanded and built upon. For one, different forms of social media could be studied. As mentioned previously, this study was limited to studying how politicians responded using Twitter, so a follow up review could be how a politician utilized Facebook or another, newer form of social media to respond to a scandal. This type of study could also be done in a more quantifiable way, by perhaps doing a content analysis of the exact nature and language that is used in responses to sex scandals, comparing Twitter to other, more traditional media outreach. Additionally, due to the limited nature of the study, it is possible that simply studying more topics would help provide more backing to the theories demonstrated above, so as more politicians respond to sex scandals through social media, it could be evaluated and quantified using the contingency theory. Finally, it would be highly useful to evaluate a politician who was able to win his race, despite the allegations. Every case study in this study later lost or resigned, so it would be highly useful to study a political figure who was able to avoid resignation or an ignominious defeat.

References

Ahern, M. A. (2014, January 31). Dan Rutherford Calls Recent Allegations Politically

Motivated. Ward Room. Retrieved April 15, 2014, from

http://www.nbcchicago.com/blogs/ward-room/Dan-Rutherford-News-

242940741.html

Allen, J., & Smith, B. (2011, May 28). Weiner: Hackers posted lewd photos. *Politico*.

Retrieved November 14, 2011, from

http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0511/55877.html

AP/Huffington Post (2011, June 16). Anthony Weiner Resigns: Timeline Of Photos,

Twitter Scandal Fallout . *Huffington Post*. Retrieved November 14, 2013, from

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/06/16/anthony-weiner-resigns-

scandal_n_878161.html

Arpan, L. M., & Roskos-Ewoldsen, D. R. (2005). Stealing thunder: Analysis of the

effects of proactive disclosure of crisis information. *Public Relations Review*,

31(3), 425-433.

A timeline of Herman Cain's troubles. (2011, November 5). The Washington Post, p.

A1.

Avery, Elizabeth, Ruthann Lariscy, and Kaye Sweetser. "Social Media And Shared—

or Divergent—Uses? A Coorientation Analysis Of Public Relations Practitioners

And Journalists." *International Journal of Strategic Communication* 4.3 (2010):

189-205. Print.

Benoit, W. L. (1997). Image Repair Discourse and Crisis Communication. *Public

Relations Review, 23(2), 177-186.

Bingham, A. (2011, November 1). Twitter: The Political Sex Scandal Response Tool

of the 21st Century. *ABC News*. Retrieved April 9, 2014, from

http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/politics/2011/11/twitter-the-political-sex-scandal-

response-tool-of-the-21st-century/

Bowler, S., & Karp, J. A. (2004). Politicians, Scandals, And Trust In

Government. *Political Behavior*, *26*(3), 271-287.

Burns, A. (2011, October 30). Herman Cain attacks POLITICO report on allegations

of inappropriate behavior. *Politico*. Retrieved April 9, 2014, from

http://www.politico.com/news/stories/1011/67200.html

Cameron, G. T., Pang, A., & Jin, Y. (2008). Contingency theory: Strategic management

of conflict in public relations. In T. Hansen-Horn & B. Neff (Eds.), Public relations:

From theory to practice (pp. 134-157). Boston, MA: Pearson Allyn & Bacon.

Cancel, Amanda E., Glen T. Cameron, Lynne M. Sallot, and Michael A. Mitrook. "It

Depends: A Contingency Theory Of Accommodation In Public Relations."*Journal

of Public Relations Research* 9.1 (1997): 31-63. Print.

Cancel, A., Mitrook, M., & Cameron, G. (1999). Testing The Contingency Theory Of

Accommodation In Public Relations. *Public Relations Review*, *25*(2), 171-197.

Coombs, W Timothy. "Protecting Organization Reputations During A Crisis: The

Development And Application Of Situational Crisis Communication

Theory." *Corporate Reputation Review* 10.3 (2007): 163-176. Print.

Corfman, T. (2014, March 19). How Bruce Rauner won the GOP primary. Crain's

Chicago Business. Retrieved April 15, 2014, from

http://www.chicagobusiness.com/article/20140319/NEWS02/140319691/how-bruce-rauner-won-the-gop-primary

Daly, C. (2011, October 25). Herman Cain tops Mitt Romney in latest CBS/NYT poll.

CBSNews. Retrieved April 7, 2014, from

http://www.cbsnews.com/news/herman-cain-tops-mitt-romney-in-latest-cbs-nyt-poll/

Daily, C. (2011, November 7). Sharon Bialek accuses Cain of "sexually inappropriate"

behavior. CBSNews. Retrieved April 10, 2014, from

http://www.cbsnews.com/news/sharon-bialek-accuses-cain-of-sexually-inappropriate-behavior/

Eaton, F. (2012, August 30). Always Right: Rutherford, Schock and the sexualization

of Illinois politics - Illinois Review. Illinois Review. Retrieved April 15, 2014, from

http://illinoisreview.typepad.com/illinoisreview/2012/08/always-right-rutherford-shock-and-the-sexualization-of-politics.html

Epstein, J., & Haberman, M. (2011, June 6). Weiner admits tweet, will not

resign. *Politico*. Retrieved November 14, 2011, from

http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0611/56343.html

Fitzpatrick, A. (2013, January 3). Only 3 of the 79 New Congress Members Don't

Have Twitter Accounts.*Mashable*. Retrieved November 14, 2013, from

http://mashable.com/2013/01/03/new-congress-twitter/

Flannery, M. (2014, February 11). New poll shows impact of Rutherford harassment

allegations. FOX 32 News. Retrieved April 15, 2014, from

http://www.myfoxchicago.com/story/24684351/former-employee-alleges-

illinois-treasurer-dan-rutherford-sexually-harassed-him

Galloway, J. (2011, October 31). Herman Cain verbatim: 'I hope the settlement

wasn't for much, because I didn't do anything'. *Political Insider*. Retrieved April

10, 2014, from http://blogs.ajc.com/political-insider-jim-

galloway/2011/10/31/herman-cain-verbatim-%E2%80%98i-hope-the-

settlement-wasn%E2%80%99t-for-much-because-i-didn%E2%80%99t-do-

anything%E2%80%99/

Garcia, M. (2013, December 5). Quinn signs Illinois pension bill. Chicago Tribune, p.

A1.

Gardner, A., & Jr., . B. (2011, November 9). Cain calls latest allegation 'baseless,

bogus and false'. The Washington Post, p. A1.

Graham, D. (2011, May 13). The 12 Juiciest Bits From the Ensign Sex Scandal Report.

The Daily Beast. Retrieved November 15, 2013, from

http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2011/05/13/john-ensign-sex-scandal-

report-12-juiciest-bits.html

Haberman, M., & Allen, J. (2011, June 10). Anthony Weiner admits contact with girl,

17. *Politico*. Retrieved November 14, 2013, from

http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0611/56740.html

Hayward, J. (2011, May 31). House Says NO To Unlimited Debt; We will not

surrender to insolvency..*Human Events*. Retrieved November 15, 2011, from

http://www.humanevents.com/2011/05/31/house-says-no-to-unlimited-debt/

Holtzhausen, Derina, and Glen Roberts. "An Investigation Into The Role Of Image

Repair Theory In Strategic Conflict Management." *Journal of Public Relations*

Research 21.2 (2009): 165-186. Print.

Horton, J. O., & Horton, L. E. (2006).*Slavery and public history: the tough stuff of*

American memory. New York: New Press

Hwang, Sungwook. "The strategic use of Twitter to manage personal public

relations." *Public Relations Review* 38 (2012): 159-161. Print.

Illinois Governor's race looks like a toss up - Public Policy Polling. (2013, November

26). Illinois Gubernatorial Race. Retrieved April 15, 2014, from

http://www.publicpolicypolling.com/main/2013/11/illinois-governors-race-

looks-like-a-toss-up.html

James, F. (2011, November 2). Third Woman Accuses Herman Cain Of Harassment;

Witness Goes Public. it's all politics. Retrieved April 10, 2014, from

http://www.npr.org/blogs/itsallpolitics/2011/11/02/141948159/third-woman-

accuses-herman-cain-of-harassment-witness-goes-public

Jin, Yan, and Brooke Fisher Liu. "The Blog-Mediated Crisis Communication Model:

Recommendations For Responding To Influential External Blogs." *Journal of*

Public Relations Research 22.4 (2010): 429-455. Print.

Kim, J., Kim, H., & Cameron, G. T. (2009). Making nice may not matter: The interplay

of crisis type, response type and crisis issue on perceived organizational

responsibility. *Public Relations Review,* 35(1), 86-88.

Kim, B., Park, E., & Cameron, G.T. (May, 2012). Transparent Leadership in Top

Management inspires Confident, Even Excellent, Public Relations Performance.

Presented at the International Communication Association (ICA) Conference.

Kiousis, S., Popescu, C., & Mitrook, M. (2007). Understanding Influence on Corporate

Reputation: An Examination of Public Relations Efforts, Media Coverage, Public

Opinion, and Financial Performance From an Agenda- Building and Agenda-

Setting Perspective. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, *19*(2), 147–165.

Korecki, N. (2014, February 3). GOP gov hopeful Dan Rutherford spent 32 days

overseas as treasurer. Chicago Sun-Times, p. A1.

Korecki, N. (2014, February 10). Rutherford denies sex harassment charges: 'This

thing smells of politics'. Chicago Sun-Times, p. A1.

Korecki, N., & Mihalopoulos, D. (2014, February 4). Worker behind allegations

against Rutherford resigns. Chicago Sun-Times, p. A1.

Kornacki, S. (2011, June 1). Anthony Weiner's awkward press

conference. *Salon.com*. Retrieved November 14, 2011, from

http://www.salon.com/2011/06/01/anthiny_weiner_press/

Lee, J. (2011, October 31). Happening Now [Television broadcast]. New York City:

FOXNEWS.

Lee, Hyunmin , and Hyojung Park. "Testing the Impact of Message Interactivity on

Relationship Management and Organizational Reputation." *Journal of Public*

Relations Research* 25 (2013): 188–206,. Print.

Lester, K. (2013, November 2). Treasurer's Tweets Show Mix of Work, Politics.

Associated Press. Retrieved April 15, 2014, from

http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1G1-348318202.html?refid=bibme_hfMaddow,

R. (2011, June 1).

The Rachel Maddow Show [Television broadcast]. New

York City: MSNBC.

Martin, J., Haberman, M., Palmer, A., & Vogel, K. (2011, October 31). Herman Cain

accused by two women of inappropriate behavior. POLITICO. Retrieved April 7,

2014, from http://www.politico.com/news/stories/1011/

McAuliff, M., & Sledge, M. (2011, June 6). Anthony Weiner Press Conference: Admits

Sending Racy Pictures, Refuses To Resign. *Huffington Post*. Retrieved November

14, 2011, from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/06/06/anthony-weiner-

press-conference-pictures-photos_n_872108.html

McCombs, M., & Reynolds, A. (2002). News influence on our pictures of the

world. *Media effects: Advances in theory and research*, *2*, 1-18.

McCombs, M., & Shaw, D. (1972). The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass Media. *Public

Opinion Quarterly*,*36*(2), 176-187.

Men, L. R. (2012). CEO Credibility, perceived organizational reputation, and

employee engagement, *Public Relations Review*, 38, 171-173.

Mihalopoulos, D. (2014, January 30). Dan Rutherford's 'weird' announcement raises

questions. Politics Blog. Retrieved April 15, 2014, from

http://politics.suntimes.com/article/springfield/dan-rutherford%E2%80%99s-

%E2%80%98weird%E2%80%99-announcement-raises-questions/thu-01302014-

931pm

Moran, M. (2012). Image Restoration in Political Sex Scandals: What To Do (And

What Not To Do) When You're Caught With Your Pants Down. *The Elon Journal*

of Undergraduate Research in Communications,*3*(2), 43-59.

Mullen, J. (2013, June 13). The ups and downs of a political sex scandal. *CNN*.

Retrieved November 13, 2013, from

http://www.cnn.com/2013/07/25/politics/sex-scandal-life-cycle/

Newport, F. (2011, November 7). Cain Ties Romney Atop GOP Field. Gallup.

Retrieved April 10, 2014, from http://www.gallup.com/poll/150617/Cain-Ties-

Romney-Atop-GOP-Field.aspx

O'Reilly, B. (2011, November 1). The O'Reilly Factor [Television broadcast]. New

York City: Fox News.

Pietrusza, D. (2011, June 16). GOP'S ULRICH HAS A SHOT IN SPECIAL VOTE TO

REPLACE WEINER.*Human Events*. Retrieved November 14, 2013, from

http://www.humanevents.com/2011/06/17/gops-ulrich-has-a-shot-in-special-

vote-to-replace-weiner/

Saul, M. (2010, July 13). Weiner Leading Mayoral Money Chase. *Wall Street Journal*,

p. A1.

Schultz, Friederik, Sonja Utz, and Anja Göritz. "Is the medium the message?

Perceptions of and reactions to crisis communication via twitter, blogs and

traditional media." *Public Relations Review* 27 (2010): 20-27. Print.

Sherman, J. (2011, May 31). Weiner to stay quiet on Tweet. *Politico*. Retrieved

November 14, 2013, from

http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0511/55976.html

Shin, J., Heath, R., & Lee, J. (2011). A Contingency Explanation of Public Relations

Practitioner Leadership Styles: Situation and Culture. *Journal of Public Relations*

Research, *23*(2), 167-190.

Smith, B. (2011, June 2). Weiner's talkathon isn't saying much. *Politico*. Retrieved

November 14, 2011, from

http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0611/56160.html

Somashekhar, S., & Grimaldi, J. (2011, November 2). Cain accuser wants to talk but is

barred. *The Washington Post*, p. A1.

Susteren, G. V. (2011, October 31). *On the Record with Greta Van Susteren* [Television

broadcast]. New York City: FOXNEWS.

Tareen, S. (2014, February 4). Dan Rutherford's misconduct allegations may be

hurdle in governor's race. Journal Star. Retrieved April 15, 2014, from

http://www.pjstar.com/article/20140204/News/140209741/?tag=1

Tareen, S. (2014, February 12). Dan Rutherford Sexual Harassment Lawsuit Could

Spell Trouble In Corruption-Weary Illinois. The Huffington Post. Retrieved April

15, 2014, from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/02/12/dan-rutherford-

sexual-harassment_n_4774368.html

Tareen, S., & Lester, K. (2014, February 11). Dan Rutherford: 'I'm going to continue

    on'. POLITICO. Retrieved April 15, 2014, from

    http://www.politico.com/story/2014/02/illinois-governor-dan-rutherford-

    103365.html

Trotter, J. (2014, February 4). Illinois GOP Gov. Candidate Took Strapping Male

    Staffer on World Tour. Gawker. Retrieved April 15, 2014, from

    http://gawker.com/illinois-gop-gov-candidate-took-strapping-male-staffer-

    1515963252

 Washington Times (2007, January 18). Newspaper blog traffic tripled in past

    year.. *The Washington Times*. Retrieved November 14, 2013, from

    http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2007/jan/17/20070117-093214-9046r/

Waters, Richard, Natalie Tindall, and Timothy Morton. "Media Catching And The

    Journalist-Public Relations Practitioner Relationship: How Social Media Are

    Changing The Practice Of Media Relations." *Journal of Public Relations*

    Research 22.3 (2010): 241-264. Print.

Weigel, D. (2011, November 14). CNN Poll: 46 Percent of All Voters and 39 Percent

    of Republicans Want Cain to End Campaign. Weigel. Retrieved April 9, 2014,

    http://www.slate.com/blogs/weigel/2011/11/14/cnn_poll_46_percent_of_all_v

    oters_and_39_percent_of_republicans_want_cain_to_end_campaign.html

Williams, B. A., & Delli Carpini, M. X. (2000). Unchained Reaction: The Collapse Of

    Media Gatekeeping And The Clinton-Lewinsky Scandal. *Journalism*, *1*(1), 61-85.

Yarbrough, C. R., Cameron, G. T., Sallot, L. M., & McWilliams, A. (1998). Tough Calls

To Make: Contingency Theory And The Centennial Olympic Games. *Journal of*

Communication Management, *3*(1), 39-56.

Ye, L., & Pang, A. (2011). Examining the Chinese Approach to Crisis Management:

Cover-Ups, Saving Face, and Taking the "Upper Level Line". *Journal of Marketing*

Channels, *18*(4), 247-278.

Zeleny, J., & Rutenberg, J. (2011, November 2). Cain Says Perry Is Orchestrating a

Smear Campaign. The New York Times. Retrieved April 10, 2014, from

http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/03/us/politics/herman-cain-accuses-rick-

perry-of-smear-campaign.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0

Appendix

Original Proposal

Introduction

Throughout my tenure at the University of Missouri, I have been preparing and training for the moment that I will enter the workforce. I have used college, and specifically my tenure in the Journalism school, as a way for me to not only learn the key skills needed to help make an impact in my chosen field, but also to develop my work ethic and maturity.

In many ways, I am grateful to the University of Missouri for giving me a wide swath of opportunities so I could learn about a variety of topics. Before coming to Mizzou, I knew that I wanted to find a way to morph my two biggest passions, advertising and public policy. However, through this school, I've been able to narrow down on the specific type of career I want and learn the specific skill sets to help me get to my goal. It is a testament to the hard work, high knowledge level and, frankly, high patience level of MU professors that has allowed me to grow both professionally and personally.

Looking back on my tenure at this school, there are a few professors and classes that have really shaped and enhanced my knowledge of advertising and journalism and who have helped me develop as a person. Specifically, I'd like to start by thanking Professor Stephanie Padgett, who has served as a kind and understanding mentor throughout my undergraduate and graduate years at Mizzou. It has been a pleasure to work with her not just in her Media Planning classes, but also to work under her for

MOJO Ad. Under Professor Padgett, I've learned media planning, advertising research and, most importantly, how to maintain a high degree of professionalism and maturity while under stress.

I'd also like to thank another mentor of mine, Professor Mark Swanson, who has known me since I took his Strategic Writing II class back as an undergraduate. Professor Swanson has always been a wonderful professional mentor of mine, someone who is willing to both listen to problems and find creative solutions to them.

There are two graduate faculty professors who also merit special thanks from myself. For one, I'd like to thank Dr. Glen Cameron, who has taught me a great deal about strategic conflict management, the topic of the research component of my professional project. Through his class, Strategic Conflict Management, I've not only learned the bulk of my knowledge to help me with this project, but I've also found a class that has taught me a great deal about the world of public relations and how it can be done effectively. Finally, I'd like to thank Dr. Shelly Rodgers, who has been a wonderful mentor and taught an amazing class, Health News and Promotions, which was able to combine my two interest areas, advertising and public policy, in a unique and informative way. Further, Dr. Rodgers has been a great mentor throughout my time at the MU Journalism School.

As I mentioned earlier, Mizzou has been a wonderful place for my professional and personal development. That being said, let me detail what my future career plans are and how this project will help me get there. As previously explained, my two biggest professional interests are public policy and advertising. Thus, as a career, I envision

combining the two of them by working at a politically focused advertising or PR agency,

such as SKD Knickerbocker or Edelman. Within those type of agencies, I plan to

specialize in research, both in advertising and public policy for an agency. My project,

which involves analyzing the social media posts and traditional media outreach of

politicians during and after a personal scandal, helps further this cause by exploring the

intersection between political science and public relations. By conducting a project

precisely at the intersection of both of my interest areas, I will be able to further gain

knowledge and skills in my chosen career path.

Professional Skills Component

For this professional project, I plan to do the Washington Program, a study

program offered by the MU Journalism Graduate School that will allow me to work at an

internship in Washington DC for four days a week. On Fridays, I will have the

opportunity to participate in a seminar-style class where I will explore and meet the

different stakeholders at various media outlets and advertising agencies throughout

Washington DC. On weekends, I plan to work on the research component of this project

and start applying for jobs upon graduation

The area of emphasis of this project will be similar to my area of emphasis while

at the MU school of journalism, which is strategic communications. Specifically, I will be

focusing on the public relations subset of strategic communications, where I have taken

several classes while at the graduate program, including Strategic Conflict Management

and MOJO Ad.

My educational and professional experience will help ensure that I can successfully participate and complete the Washington Program in the spring of 2014. Simply put, I have a wide swath of experience in both advertising and public policy and politics. On the advertising side, I am currently a Researcher at MOJO Ad, the student led advertising agency at the University of Missouri. Additionally, I was the Head of Secondary Research for the Mizzou National Student Advertising Competition, where I conducted and analyzed research for the situation analysis portion of the campaign. On the public policy side, two summers ago, I interned with Rep. Nancy Pelosi, where I aided in a variety of tasks, including conducting health policy research. Last summer, I was able to intern with the Center for American Progress, where I was a communications intern. At CAP, I wrote several articles on public policy issues relevant to Millennials and conducted policy research for various staff members. Due to this wide variety of experience, I believe that I can and will complete the Washington Program with a high amount of success.

The specifics of the Washington Program involve me starting in January of 2014 and finishing sometime in late April or early May of 2014. At the internship, I plan to work from at least 9 AM to 5 PM for four days a week, which should easy meet the requirement for total hours needed to complete the graduate project requirement. My internship will be at Fleishman-Hillard where I will be on the health communications team. Specifically, I will be a policy research intern, where I will help support the health care communications team with any research projects necessary.

Upon starting the internship, I plan to ask the intern coordinator exactly what work I can and cannot keep and show to for the graduate component of this project. If need be, I am willing to help rewrite certain office tasks so they can be used for the graduate component of this project. Aside from any work produced at the internship, I also plan to have weekly check-in calls with both Professor Padgett and Dr. Cameron, along with keeping the field journals for my work at my internship. By keeping in constant contact with my committee, not only will I be able to receive help in performing the research component of the graduate project, I will also be able to receive valuable career and job advice from both faculty members. All of my materials, including my field reports and summaries of any contact with professors, will be included in the final project report to help meet the requirement for "abundant physical evidence." Finally, my supervisor for the project will be Professor Barbara Cochran, who is the head of the Washington Program. She will be providing weekly supervision at the seminar classes, along with other communication if necessary.

Topic Introduction and Evaluation

Throughout my tenure at Mizzou as a journalism and political science double major, along with my time as a journalism graduate student, I've always been fascinated by the way that political science and communications intersect. One such area involves crisis communications, an increasingly burgeoning topic in the larger realm of public relations research. This has a few obvious intersections with my interest in political science, one of which is how politicians react and communicate after sex scandals. Sex

scandals have been a near constant feature of American politics, whether it involves

former Rep. Anthony Weiner's alleged affairs during his mayoral candidacy or Grover

Cleveland's sexual relations with a rumored prostitute in during the 1884 election.

Yet another topic that's been relevant to political science and communications

has been the increased speed by which communication is possible, both through social

media and the internet. This has made reacting to a crisis a completely different

process, as politicians in potential trouble can react with remarkable speed. However,

there hasn't been a fully comprehensive study that tests how politicians use social

media to respond to a personal scandal, especially compared to more traditional forms

of media relations, such as press releases and interviews with major publications.

Thus, my topic is as follows: *Using the contingency theory as an overall*

framework, how do politicians responses to scandal differ between social media and

traditional office communications, such as press releases. As this will be difficult to

measure quantitatively, the method to conducting this study will involve three case

studies involving politicians that used both social media and traditional media to

communicate after their scandal.

How would my project support this topic?

I plan to do the Washington program, which will greatly help me in

accomplishing this project. With the Washington program, I plan to work for an

advertising or PR agency that specializes in political or public policy issues. This will

greatly help me accomplish my project goal in a few important ways. For one, it will put

me in contact with several great PR practitioners who have been involved in these crisis

responses before, thus can provide invaluable advice about the project and be potential

interview subjects. Additionally, at Fleishman-Hillard, which has a a large digital research

sector of the company, I can have access to social listening tools, which could add

further depth to this project by measuring sentiment around the social media posts by

political figures. Finally, by interning at Fleishman-Hillard, I can gain a practical

application for how crisis management actually plays out in the real world, which can

only make this project stronger.

Theoretical Framework

First, it is important to place my topic within an overall area of mass

communications research, and then branch out to various marketing and advertising

theories that will help support the topic. For the purposes of this research, the broad

mass communication topic that my project best falls in is the **agenda-setting theory** of

mass communications research. Agenda setting, as defined by McCombs (2002),

involves the "ability [of the news media] to influence the salience of topics on the public

agenda." The reason that this project fits under the larger umbrella of agenda setting is

simple, crisis PR communications is largely about helping to influence and drive

conversation through the media. In discussing crisis communications, Coombs (2007)

explained the importance of agenda setting.

As noted earlier, most stakeholders will learn about a crisis from the news

media. Hence, how the news media frame (define) the crisis is an important

consideration. Research from agenda setting and reputation (Carroll, 2004)

suggest that the stakeholders will adopt the media's frame for the crisis. A crisis

manager may find it difficult to change the media's frame for the crisis and be

forced to manage within that crisis frame.

Again, the reasoning behind putting my research topic under the umbrella of agenda-

setting is fairly simple, it allows for the notion that the media coverage of the crisis

communications content as being of critical importance., As McCoombs & Shaw (1972)

explained in his original work on agenda setting theory, "candidates go before the

people through the mass media rather than in person" (pg 176). Although social media

has allowed politicians to somewhat skip the direct media outreach, how the media

covers a political scandal can play an outsized role in determining the political damage

that a scandal can do.

Another study that provided more detail to the notion of agenda-setting being a

critical factor for crisis PR communications is Kiousis, Popescu & Mitrook (2011), which

attempted to find the relationship between public relations materials, agenda-setting

and public perceptions towards companies. Interestingly, Kiousis et al. (2011) didn't just

focus on first-level agenda setting, which is the notion that the media simply can

influence the types of issues that people can talk about. Instead, the authors also tested

to see whether there were any second-level agenda setting, which is the notion that the

media can influence not just the types of issues that the general public talks about, but

also can influence how they feel about those issues. Kiousis et al. (2011) measured this

second-level agenda setting by analyzing media coverage of certain companies through

The New York Times and the *Wall Street Journal*, press releases of companies through

PR Newswire, and survey data from *The Harris Interactive Survey* (pg 154). They found

that, at least for articles in the *Wall Street Journal*, there was a substantive relationship

between tone of news articles and financial performance and public opinion of the

company (pg 161). This adds substance to the claims of Coombs (2007) as explained

above, as Kiousis et al. (2011) were able to help prove a relationship between press

coverage and public opinion. Even further, Kiousis et al. (2011) found a relationship

between the tone of press releases and the tone of media coverage (pg 161). This shows

that not only is agenda setting powerful, but public relations tactics can play a key role

in how that agenda is set.

Aside from agenda setting research, another core theory for this project is the

contingency theory, which was first founded by Cancel et al. (1997). Contingency theory

is the theory that crisis communications responses by a company or other entity can be

placed on a continuum from pure advocacy to pure accommodation. When responding

to a crisis, a company can take a stance ranging from this continuum, although this does

not necessarily represent the specific strategies that a company can take when it comes

to responding to a crisis. Cancel et al. (1997) identified 87 variables for inclusion in the

group of factors that affect the degree of accommodation that PR practitioners can take

(pg 31). These factors include categories such as characteristics of the external public,

the nature of the threats, the industry environment, corporation characteristics and the

individual characteristics (pg 60). Although some of these factors have been eliminated

and others have been added in recent years (Cancel et al., 1999), the contingency

theory is still seen as one of the most important and relevant theories in public relations

and has been used in a wide variety of ways, including in evaluating how certain

countries respond to crises (Ye & Pang, 2011).

To summarize, agenda-setting and contingency theory will be the two biggest

theories that this study will be based on. However, there will be several other theories

that will be used due to their specific relevance to this topic, including theories about

how social media is used to respond to a crisis. Although crisis communications research

has been expanding rapidly in the past few years, I believe that my project will help

enhance this literature while adding a new element to crisis communications research.

Literature Review

For the literature review, I will evaluate and add further depth to the theoretical

underpinnings of this topic along with giving examples of some studies with special

relevance to my research topic. First, I will start by explaining the difference in mediums,

whether print or digital, when participating in crisis communications. Since a significant

portion of my topic involves differences between social media and traditional

communications, this is an important area to highlight. Afterwards, I will be examining

how crisis communications can enhance the reputation of singular figures, which will

help focus on crisis communications and individual politicians. After that, I will evaluate

case studies that evaluate contingency theory in crisis PR situations and investigate two

techniques related to crisis management.

Evaluating the Internet and Mediums Difference In Crisis Management

One of the critical portions of my topic involves differentiating between

mediums when it comes to communications strategies. There has been a robust amount

of literature contrasting various mediums effectiveness when it comes to

communicating during a crisis. A major study in this regard was done by Lee & Park

(2013), which evaluated the importance of contingent message interactivity, which is

the idea that websites messages should be interrelated and interconnect with each

other. Additionally, the study also tested whether there were "differences of

perceptions of organization–public relational outcomes according to the type of

communication channel" (pg 193). Overall, the study concluded that using the internet,

specifically to help build a two-way conversation with customers "positively influenced

both the perceptions of relationship management and the corporate reputation" (pg

201). Interestingly, the study even found that when familiarity of the organization was

controlled, the usage of Internet was still a significant factor in improving organization

perception (pg 202).

Another study in this vein was done by Jin & Liu (2010), which discusses how PR

practitioners should interact and handle the "blogosphere" and also contrasted with

how a practitioner should handle blogger crises as compared to a more traditional

media based crisis (pg 429). For one, it found that bloggers were judged as being "more

credible than any mainstream media or online source" (pg 437). It also found that blogs

can have a significant agenda-setting and agenda building function (pg 439). Most

importantly, however, this study found that influential blogs can also drive media coverage and closely monitoring influential blogs that are related to a corporation was important (pg 441). These two studies are important because they help to demonstrate the differences of communicating online and with more traditional media sources during a crisis. Additionally, it helps demonstrate the surprising credibility that online sources and mediums can have.

Another study in this topic was conducted by Schultz, Utz & Göritz (2011), which tested the impact of social and traditional media strategies on "recipients' perceptions of reputation" of a company (pg 20). Additionally, Schultz et al. (2011) tested to see which made a bigger difference, message content or the medium that the message was broadcast in (pg 21). Schultz et al. (2011) found that the medium mattered more than the message, as none of the messages produced a statistically significant difference from each other (pg 25). It was also discovered that crisis communication via twitter "led to less negative crisis reactions than blogs and newspaper articles" (pg 25).

Crisis PR Communications and Leadership Figures

Considering that my topic involves politicians, it is useful to discuss literature that discusses public relations and best practices among leadership figures. One such study was conducted by Kim, Park & Cameron (2012), who tested a variety of characteristics to find the most effective ways for leadership figures to improve their public image and the public image of their company. Kim et al. (2012) found that above all else, transparency within leadership was the "most significant predictor of

organizational reputation" (pg 1). Other key factors involved "the practitioners' work

engagement and willingness to adopt accommodation" (pg 1). One other surprising

finding in the study was the notion that people perceived an organizational leader to be

more than just the CEO, but also the communications leader (pg 20). This could have

interesting applications to this topic, as it may foreshadow the importance of

communications directors as a way for a politician to respond to a potential scandal.

Another study that involves singular figures was done by Men (2012), which

measured the impact of CEO credibility and overall employee evaluation of an

organization's reputation. This study was largely focused on emphasizing the

importance of the CEO's image being seen as positive and credible, which Men (2012)

hypothesized would have a large impact on internal and external perceptions of a

company (pg 172). Men (2012) concluded that "employees who perceive the CEO as

more trustworthy and honest tend to evaluate the organization positively" (pg 172).

Although this involves organizations and not specifically politicians, this article has a

high degree of applicability to my study due to the heavy focus on the importance of

public relations establishing CEO credibility, especially how it can affect internal and

external opinion about a company.

One final study in this subject area by Hwang (2012) evaluated how CEO's can

utilize public relations to enhance their image and perception of their leadership. Hwang

(2012) specifically studied how CEO's can use Twitter to manage their personal public

relations. This study has proved especially relevant due to the fact that CEO's are

increasingly creating and using their own personal Twitter accounts, including CEO's

such as Jack Welch and Tony Hsieh. Hwang (2012) found that CEO's who use Twitter

helped improve public attitudes about their corporations (pg 160). Hwang (2012) also

found that using Twitter also helped the CEO improve perceptions about the CEO's

leadership, as CEO's who used Twitter more likely to be perceived as being a

"transformational leader (pg 161). This study is also directly applicable to my topic, as

not only does it measure how public relations can affect a singular individual, it also

contrasts leaders who use social media with those that do not.

Contingency Theory Case Studies

As mentioned in the above theoretical framework, contingency theory is a model

of how companies or other entities choose to respond to a crisis situation. At it's most

basic form, contingency theory places the company stances on a continuum based from

pure accommodation to pure advocacy, with a majority of company responses coming

between these two poles. The first major academic article that created the contingency

theory was done by Cancel, Cameron, Sallot & Mitrook (1997). Cancel et al. (1997) not

only discovered the continuum, but also identified 87 variables that could affect the

stances that PR practitioners are likely to take (pgs 61-63).

After the contingency theory was created, Yarbrough & Cameron (1998) devised

a case study that tested the practicality of the contingency theory and comparing it to

the four way communications model developed by Grunig (1984). After analyzing their

case study, which involved three conflicts during the 1996 Summer Olympic Games,

Yarbrough & Cameron (1998) found support for the contingency theory. Additionally,

Yarbrough & Cameron (1998) found that their case study "highlight[ed] the impracticality and inflexibility of two-way symmetrical or mixed-motive public relations as models of choice" (pg 39). This study is of particular importance to my proposed project topic, as not only does it analyze a situation through the contingency continuum, but it also demonstrates how this can be done through a series of case studies.

Another case study was conducted by Cameron, Pang & Jin (2008) that evaluated and compared the Chinese and Singaporean government responses to the 2003 SARS crisis through the contingency theory (pg 147-151). One quick point that the case study found was that although the government responses varied on the degree of openness, the governments "tend[ed] to move in a similar way" (pg 149). However, when compared side by side, the Chinese government tended to move in a move accommodative way, while the Singaporean government took a more advocacy focused approach. One way in which this study is relevant is that focused on analyzing specific government actions and communications through the contingency continuum, which is similar to the way that office communications will be analyzed. However, while this study needed to not only focus on the contingency theory, but the specific actions the governments took, my study can be more focused on the communications aspect of the crisis.

Yet another study in this model was done by Shin, Heath & Lee (2011), which contrasted the leadership styles of PR practitioners based on the contingency theory. Shin et al. (2011) differed from Cameron et al. (2008) in that they focused on the differences of PR practitioners between countries, specifically the U.S. and South Korea.

Additionally, instead of analyzing stances through the contingency continuum, Shin et al. (2011) analyzed the specific factors that led to the various leadership styles that the PR practitioners were likely to take (pg 169). They found that PR practitioners in the US placed a greater emphasis on problem solving activities, while South Korean PR practitioners were more focused on being practical and resourceful (pg 183). This is important, as not only does it build on the contingency theory; it also contrasts the factors that influence the contingency theory in different countries.

Crisis PR Techniques

Having discussed agenda-setting, the contingency theory and public relations theories that apply to leadership figures, it is important to discuss some PR techniques that politicians could potentially use to respond to a scandal. By considering such techniques, it will be easier to analyze such strategies when they are used by politicians after a scandal. One such strategy was discussed by Arban & Roskos-Ewoldsen (2005), the notion of "stealing thunder" (pg 425). Stealing thunder is a relatively simple concept, it is when an organization "breaks the news about its own crisis before the crisis is discovered by the media or other interested parties" (Arban & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2005, pg 425). After evaluating companies that used the stealing thunder approach, Arban & Roskos-Ewoldsen found that people perceived the crisis as less severe and were more likely to purchase the product (pg 430). Additionally, Wrigley (2011) did a study where she contrasted the approaches of two politicians, former New York Governors Eliot Spitzer and David Patterson. Wrigley (2011) found that because Patterson utilized the

"stealing thunder" approach, stories about his scandal were "more positively framed" and had "fewer negative media frames" (pg 50).

One other strategy was discussed by Kim, Kim & Cameron (2011), who analyzed whether enhanced corporate social responsibility efforts could help potentially "inoculate a company prior to a crisis" (pg 86). Largely, they found that prior corporate CSR didn't have a major impact on how a company was viewed during or after a crisis (pg 87). Instead, Kim et al. (2011) suggested that a company should instead focus on enhancing the opinion of corporate ability, which they found to have a much larger impact on how people view a company during and after a crisis. This has a few directly applicable results for my topic. For one, it could indicate that no matter a politician's prior reputation or goodwill before a crisis, if they are unable to respond properly to a crisis, they could face serious ramifications. Additionally, if a politician is able to show a high degree of effectiveness during and after the crisis, that could help them survive certain scandals without losing a great deal of credibility and support.

Summary

This literature review expanded on the two major theoretical underpinnings of this study, agenda-setting and contingency theory. It found several studies that helped explain not only the relation to crisis communications, but also how they are directly applicable to the topic and to politics at large. After agenda-setting and contingency theory were better explained, studies based on individual leadership and specific PR strategies were analyzed, with an emphasis on how they relate to the overall topic.

Methods Section

As mentioned repeatedly, my topic is analyzing politicians' responses to sex scandals through the contingency theory, with a special focus on whether there is a substantive difference between social media posts and more traditional forms of media outreach, including communication forms such as press releases. Additionally, I have explained that I plan to use three case studies as my primary method to analyze politicians responses to sex scandals. Thus, for this section, I will elaborate on how I plan to gather and analyze the data, along with explaining the special benefits of using the case study approach and showing some examples of this being done in this topic field.

First, after I pick my three case studies that I will choose to analyze, I plan on trying to access as many of their office responses as possible, both by accessing old social media posts and past press releases through the office. Through tools like PR Newswire, gathering old press releases should be a manageable process. Additionally, there are tools such as Gnip that will allow me to look at past tweets sent through twitter accounts, even posts that may have been previously deleted. Another tool that will be useful to help determine press coverage around an event is LexisNexis. This will also allow me some access to prior social media posts, along with giving an overall sense of media coverage around an event.

Having explained how I'll be accessing the data, it is important to detail exactly how I will be analyzing the data. Specifically, I will be looking to analyze and describe the specific language that goes into the social media posts, including investigating tone,

style and the timeliness of the post. Additionally, I will be synthesizing the data to help determine organizational stance, which will determine where something gets placed along the contingency continuum. Finally, I will also be using tools like LexisNexis to evaluate the media response to the various techniques. The overall key here is to be able to tell a story about the response to a scandal response, utilizing both social media posts and traditional office communications to help detail exactly how this response was conducted.

The methods having been described, it is important to provide a defense for case studies as a smart and logical way to conduct research in the field of public relations. As has been detailed in the literature review, case studies have been frequently utilized as a sound way to go more in depth when it comes to investigating and testing specific theories. For example, only a year after the contingency theory was originally designed, Yarbrough & Cameron (1998) published another article that analyzed the contingency theory through a case study. Overall, as described by Cutler (2004), "case studies, if thoughtfully conceived and well executed are a research tool well suited to the study of public relations" (pg 365). However, Cutler (2004) does caution that "poor methodology" frequently renders case studies in the PR field near useless.

Short List of Academic Journals for Submission

There are a few academic journals that I would consider submitting this completed proposal to. One of the most common academic journals in the field of public relations is the Journal of Public Relations Research, which is published through the University of

Georgia. Additionally, I would consider submitting this article to is the Public Relations

Journal, which is published quarterly by the Public Relations Society of America. Finally,

due to the fact that case studies constitute a large portion of my research and methods,

I would also consider summiting any work to the Case Studies in Strategic

Communication journal, which is published through the University of Southern

California.