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CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS IN THE
MITIGATION OF CRISIS

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department

of Communications

University of Houston

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

By

Jan E. Uhrick

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to understand how corporate social responsibility can be utilized in the event of a crisis. In this qualitative study, issues management theory and the situational crisis communication theory provided a theoretical framework that incorporate corporate social responsibility in order to determine to what extent public relations practitioners conduct issues monitoring, how they define CSR, how CSR initiatives emerge, how the results of issues management are incorporated into crisis communication, and how practitioners relate CSR and crisis communication. The study used qualitative one-on-one and dyad, in-depth interviews with public relations practitioners who had experience with CSR and/or crisis communication across various industries. Findings suggest that practitioners feel a strong relationship exists between CSR and crisis communication, and this connection can be a response of crisis communication's incorporation of the results from issues management. Practitioners had multiple definitions of CSR, but through these definitions, it was possible to determine how CSR initiatives emerge. This study expanded upon the situational crisis communication theory as well as issues management theory. Practical implications include opportunities for practitioners to be able to turn an organization's crisis into a potential opportunity for the organization while mitigating reputational and monetary damage.

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Context of the Study

Since the early 2000s, corporate social responsibility (CSR) has become an integral part of organizational success. CSR has the ability to increase an organization's reputational value, improve stakeholder relations, assist communities in time of disaster and crisis, and potentially decrease reputational and monetary damage for the organization in a time of crisis. CSR has become "a fundamental belief among its business supporters and business-and-society scholars is that corporate social responsibility 'pays off' for the firm as well as for the firm's stakeholders and society in general" (Burke & Logsdon, 1996, p. 495).

Early definitions of CSR included the ability of an organization to do good to help the community, but it has evolved into a key asset for organizational success. Wood (1991) defines CSR as "the basic idea or corporate social responsibility is that business and society are interwoven rather than distinct entities; therefore, society has certain expectations for appropriate business behaviors and outcomes" (p. 695). The basic concept behind CSR is an organization, society, and stakeholders working together in order to benefit both the organization and society as a whole.

As CSR research has been conducted, there are a handful of studies that are qualitative; furthermore, the lack of a true definition for CSR has left practitioners, scholars, and students in a quandary as to what the true purpose of CSR is and why it is needed in an organization. These factors piqued my interest in CSR, and as I began to look at examples of crises and the communication of CSR, I noticed discrepancies as well as the connection of these two concepts

with issues management. Therefore, a qualitative approach is unique to understand if effective communication of CSR initiatives can mitigate reputational and monetary damage to an organization in the event of a crisis. As I began to consider this possibility, I considered the idea of issues management and how stakeholders have a say in the CSR initiatives an organization performs. Therefore, in the event of a crisis, it is necessary for practitioners, scholars, and students to understand how issues management can impact an organization's choice of CSR initiatives which will in turn help the organization navigate a potential crisis.

The lack of definition and research of CSR became my inspiration for this study. There are two goals of this research. The first goal of this study is to create a foundation for future students through which they can enter the workforce better prepared and with an advantage above their competition. The second purpose is to identify additional elements of CSR that can be opportunities for public relations scholars to research and further develop.

Organizations practicing good CSR can help the community in times of disaster, but CSR can also protect organizations in times of crisis. Crises like the Bluebell Creameries contamination have demonstrated how CSR and good crisis communication skills can help an organization. The Bluebell Creameries crisis demonstrated how organizations who effectively practice and communicate CSR have the ability to recover from a crisis with smaller reputational damage. Bluebell had to respond to a crisis in a timely and accurate manner, but their prior reputation with publics assisted them in recovering from the crisis. However, Bluebell had the advantage of a strong brand and customer loyalty, but their crisis also sent a message to other organizations: be prepared and protect the organization's reputation (Hendricks, 2015). David Sommer, the Charles E. Cheever chair of risk management at St. Mary's University explained that Bluebell's image and reputation has been tarnished due to the multiple recalls and was slow

to get the facts out, but if the company can preserve the brand, then they can recover from the crisis (Hendricks, 2015).

In comparison, the 2010 BP oil spill reacted slowly, which led the public and stakeholders to believe the organization was uncaring and arrogant (Hendricks, 2015). During the BP crisis, critics argued that BP showed a lack of compassion and failed to follow internal guidelines for how to handle the crisis (McClam & Weber, 2011). Richard Levick of Levick Strategic Communications suggested that BP could have cut gas prices to “show financial solidarity” (McClam & Weber, 2011). When the crisis began, BP held daily briefings with the media, but this slowly changed to teleconferences and less in-person communication (McClam & Weber, 2011). The attempts that BP made to resolve the situation were ineffective and unsuccessful, and BP is still paying the price for the crisis.

In cases like these, the definition of CSR provided by the Business for Social Responsibility applies in regards to the organization’s commercialization and its reputation with its publics. Business for Social Responsibility works with businesses in order to create a sustainable world, and believes that “a just and sustainable world will result when the unique skills and resources of all sectors—business, civil society, and government—are aligned toward that goal” (<http://www.bsr.org/en/about>). Business for Social Responsibility defines CSR as “achieving commercial success in ways that honor ethical values and respect people, communities, and the natural environment” (Rowe, 2006, p. 442).

After the early 1980s, public attitudes about CSR began to change. Prior to the 1980s, public surveys showed that a company’s profits were more important to the public and created trust between the organization and investors (Lewis, 2003, p. 357). However, in 1982, a shift in the trend of trust occurred, which led to publics trusting and organization based on acts of CSR.

As this shift continued into the 1990s and 2000s, companies have been challenged by stakeholders to “show that they care as much about their other responsibilities as about their immediate commercial ones” (Lewis, 2005, p. 358). Lewis (2005) noted that this shift in the consumer agenda has given companies more opportunities to engage with stakeholders and provide more information about the businesses’ role outside of a profit margin (p.359).

CSR dates to the early 1800s by some scholars due to the emergence of organizations and the need to help the surrounding community. The use of effective communication of CSR has become more relevant in the 21st century. Dawkins (2005) noted that “effective communication of corporate responsibility depends on clear strategy which evaluates both the opportunities and the risks to the brand, and which tailors messages to different stakeholder groups” (p.108). Dawkins (2005) later referred to this definition as a “coordinated approach” (p.108).

Through clear and effective communication of CSR initiatives, corporations can create opportunities to strengthen bonds with stakeholders and communities, thus creating a foundation of trust. By practicing effective public relations, practitioners engaging in issues management can communicate with stakeholders to determine the level of trust that exists between the organization and its consumers. Based on these concepts, opportunities created through open communication of CSR initiatives and issues monitoring can potentially help an organization survive a crisis with less reputational and monetary damage. A key theme found among scholarly research is the creation of trust between the organization and stakeholders and the relationship between trust and, subsequently the creation of opportunities.

Plan of Study

As the importance of CSR continues to grow, I plan to define trends and patterns between corporate social responsibility, issues management, and crisis communication. In my research, I found three main themes: CSR definitions and communication, CSR in association with the practice of issues management, and CSR in regards to reputation management and image building in the event of a crisis.

In my review of Corporate Social Responsibility, I will first address the history and background of CSR and how it became an integral part of public relations within organizational communications. As CSR continues to become an important aspect of public relations and organizational management, effective communication of CSR has become a job title on its own. With the emergence of social media platforms, it has become increasingly important for organizations to communicate with publics using various forums in order to build and maintain strong relationships. To conclude my review of CSR, I will evaluate the incentives and benefits for organizations that employ CSR initiatives.

In my review of Issues Management Theory, I will first review the general theory and stakeholder dialogue. CSR has become part of issues management, and this shift has created an additional job for public relations practitioners, reputation management. Through reputation management, researchers have found that practitioners address stakeholder activism, demands, and expectations. Through my research of Issues Management, I have also included issues monitoring and scanning as a primary method used by public relations practitioners and organizations. The use of issues monitoring allows practitioners and organizations to gauge the publics' opinions on various issues and determine what topics are salient. Therefore, when a

crisis arises, the organization knows what methods to utilize to mitigate the crisis with the least amount of damage to organizational reputation and monetary damage.

In crisis communication, I will incorporate the Situational Crisis Communication Theory. Through the use of the Situational Crisis Communication Theory, organizations are able to tailor messages for specific publics based upon the utilization of issues management applications. By using this theory, practitioners can better understand the needs of the public and resolve crises in a timely manner with minimal reputational damage to the organization.

Chapter II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature Overview

This study has been framed by corporate social responsibility (CSR) in association with Issues Management Theory and the Situational Crisis Communication Theory. Through this review, I will establish a context in which CSR fits in with these two theories and how scholars have previously noted how it can be utilized in a crisis.

Corporate Social Responsibility

CSR practices in the early 1900s were minimal but still practiced. However, in the 1960s, research about CSR began, and since, the topic has continued to grow, but the topic is still in the infant stages of research. CSR is often limited to an organization doing good for the community, but its definition extends beyond doing good and extends beyond the general idea of philanthropy. Philanthropy is one aspect of CSR.

The initiatives that organizations create to help the community, nation, and world are astounding, and this information is available on websites or annual reports produced by the organization. These initiatives extend beyond donating money and can go so far as helping the community recover from a disaster to helping other countries and cultures learn about disease and famine in their area and how to combat these issues.

CSR Background. In 1919, Ford Motor Company shareholders agreed to a decision made by the Supreme Court of Michigan which granted maximum dividends to the Dodge brothers. This decision changed Henry Ford's original intention of reinvesting the company's

profits for plant expansion to using profits to “serve society” (Moura-Leite & Padgett, 2011, p. 529). Later, in 1999, Ford’s great-grandson attempted to convince the company’s shareholders of the importance of a business serving society. The difference between these two definitions of CSR and serving society came with the change of CSR in terms of government regulations and lawsuits. When faced with a lawsuit, Henry Ford chose to state that profits were being used to benefit and serve society; however, Ford’s great-grandson chose to utilize CSR without the threat of lawsuit and government regulations and to better help society (Moura-Leite & Padgett, 2011, p. 529).

In the 1950s, CSR mainly referred to philanthropy with little discussion of how CSR was linked with business benefits (Carroll, 2008; cited by Moura-Leite & Padgett, 2011, p. 530). CSR in the 1960s began to focus on the definition of social responsibility and the benefits to society and business (Carroll, 1999; Carroll & Sabana, 2010; cited by Moura-Leite & Padgett, 2011, p. 530). Friedman (1962) stated that “there is one and only one social responsibility of business—to use its resources and engage in activities designed to increase its profits as long as it stays within the rules of the game.” However, as CSR continued to develop in the 1990s, the definition has evolved to include sustainability, industry standards, transparency, and engagement with stakeholders (Moura-Leite & Padgett, 2011, p. 535).

Burke and Logsdon (1996) identified five dimensions of corporate strategy which have become key to the success of strategic Corporate Social Responsibility (p. 496). These dimensions are centrality, specificity, proactivity, voluntarism, and visibility (Burke & Logsdon, 1996, p. 496). Centrality is a “measure of the closeness of fit between a CSR policy or programme and the firm’s mission and objectives” (Burke & Logsdon, 1996, p. 496). It also provides direction and feedback for the organization which can help practitioners using issues

management and issues monitoring create more productive and useful CSR initiatives (Burke & Logsdon, 1996, p. 496). Specificity “refers to the firm’s ability to capture or internalize the benefits of a CSR programme”, and by considering specificity as a dimension of CSR, organizations can use the benefits of CSR to encourage and increase employee retention (Burke & Logsdon, 1996, p. 497). Proactivity is key to one aspect of issues management in which the organization plans and anticipates the emerging economy, including technology and trends, both social and political. Proactivity also refers to the changes that occur in the external environment which can be measured through issues monitoring (Burke & Logsdon, 1996, p. 498). Burke and Logsdon (1996) explain that voluntarism refers to the decision-making by the firm in the absence of external publics, so in this dimension of CSR, the organization is able to make CSR decisions on its own with less consideration on external publics (p. 498). The final dimension that Burke and Logsdon (1996) discuss is visibility which refers to how the business is able to gain recognition from both internal and external stakeholders in regards to CSR initiatives being performed (p. 499).

Dahlsrud (2008) gathered and analyzed 37 definitions of Corporate Social Responsibility (p. 3). These definitions were then separated into five dimensions: environmental, social, economic, stakeholder, and voluntariness (Dahlsrud, 2008, p. 4). The conclusion of this research, it was determined that the environmental dimension of CSR was the lowest ratio among the five dimensions. Dahlsrud (2008) also concluded that all of the definitions found from the 27 authors pointed towards the importance of stakeholders in regards to balancing the concerns of stakeholders as well as the profitability of the business (p. 6).

Incentives for Corporations. CSR presents numerous benefits to corporations. According to Rowe (2006), financial analysts have viewed the quality of an organization’s

management as a prediction of their future performance (p. 443). Based upon the public that CSR addresses, I have found internal and external benefits based upon scholarly research. CSR benefits go beyond a pure financial gain and can range from anywhere from “maintaining the license to operate, to risk reduction, to efficiency gains, and to tax advantages” (Weber, 2008). Carroll (1979) divided CSR incentives into four categories: economic responsibility, legal responsibility, ethical responsibility, and discretionary responsibility. In economic responsibility, the organization’s main goal is to generate profits while providing jobs and creating products that consumers want. Legal responsibilities refer to complying with local, state, federal, and some international laws. In ethical responsibilities, organizations must meet other social expectations such as doing the right thing. Finally, Carroll (1979) explained that discretionary responsibility refers to meeting other behaviors that society finds desirable.

Frankental (2001) explained CSR incentives through the triple bottom line which includes financial, environmental, and social (p. 19). The triple bottom line explains that if a company is audited “according to their environmental and social impact”, then financial markets will judge the organization according to their impact on society (Frankental, 2001, p. 19). Through a proactive use of CSR, internal publics like employees can determine the extent to which they will be treated fairly by the corporation, and through this a corporation can maintain a high employee retention (Galbreath, 2010, p. 415). High employee retention and low turnover rates have been demonstrated in a corporation’s demonstration of good citizenship through which employees can determine if the corporation is “just and fair” (Galbreath, 2010, p. 415).

External incentives for a corporations’ use of CSR include enhanced reputation (Moir, 2001, p. 17). Corporations that proactively demonstrate CSR initiatives build a strong rapport with employees which leads to a stronger reputation. Employees who are satisfied with the

amount of social responsibility that their employing company demonstrates will discuss initiatives with external publics, thus enhancing the reputation of the organization. An additional external incentive for organizations utilizing CSR comes from the demand and value that stakeholders place on responsible activities, which continues to influence the organization's reputation (Amaladoss & Manohar, 2011, p. 67). Based upon this demand and value, research has shown that stakeholders view organizations with strong responsible activities in a positive light, which has a strong effect on the organization's evaluation and purchase intent (Esrock & Leichty, 1998).

Harwood, Humby, and Harwood (2011) cited that the most frequent response to why CSR activities are undertaken was "it's just the right thing to do" (p. 286). This response was included in terms of an organization's environmentally responsible activities in addition to socially responsible activities. In this instance, environmentally responsible activities referred to sustainability and infrastructure resiliency, and socially responsible activities referred to philanthropy and citizenship (Harwood et al., 2011, p. 284). Additional research has shown that organizations may be rewarded or punished based upon the public's knowledge of CSR initiatives and how the organization behaves amongst stakeholders (Dawkins, 2004, p. 113).

Internal incentives for an organization to utilize CSR initiatives primarily involve increasing demand for products, and, in this manner, CSR can be defined as a "profit-maximization strategy motivated by self-interest and not by a conception of corporate social responsibility" (Baron, 2001, p. 9). The utilization of CSR by corporations can involve property rights, and by following corporate laws, organizations will maximize market value and can also maximize the utility of individual stakeholders (Baron, 2001, p. 14). Internal incentives for utilizing CSR initiatives typically involve increasing profits for the organization. Another

example of increasing profits is explained by Baron (2001) who explains that tax deductions of charitable contributions (CSR initiative of philanthropy) have been identified as another incentive for the utilization of CSR initiatives (p. 15).

Outside of organizational incentives, incentives exist for academics. Initially, the Bowen School proposed that business' have a responsibility to society based solely upon their existence (Bowd, Bowd, & Harris, 2006, p. 149). In comparison, the Friedman School "argued that business's responsibility is to conduct itself in accordance with the desire of its owners" (Bowd et al., 2006, p. 149). The final school of thought that has come with recent literature is that CSR can be used to increase profits, which is reflected in the Bowen School of Thought, and that the organization is "doing well by doing good" which reflects the Friedman School of Thought. Together, these two thought processes form the ideals of current CSR (Bowd et al., 2006, p. 149-150).

In addition to internal and external incentives of CSR, Rowe (2006) further segments CSR into private and public sectors. Rowe (2006) notes that the private sector has grown significantly over the years, and because of this growth, the influence of organizational practices has increased (p. 445). Because of this change in influence, a shift in balance has occurred between governments and corporations. This shift now favors corporations as opposed to past experiences of CSR which favored governmental regulations (Rowe, 2006, p. 445). In the public and private sector of organizations, Rowe (2006) also notes that "ethical scandals and corporate governance failures" have had a large influence on the confidence and trust in businesses (p. 446). Ethical scandals and corporate governance failures have a large impact in crisis situations which can affect the recovery of an organization in the event of a crisis. The final "CSR Drivers"

that Rowe (2006) explains that intangible assets have increased the importance of corporate value (p. 447).

Issues Management Theory

Issues management has been commonly placed with crisis communication with the main idea being that issues monitoring can be conducted to determine the potential of a crisis. In these events, issues management may be able to potentially eliminate or warn an organization about the potential of a crisis. As CSR has evolved, issues management can be incorporated to include the idea that stakeholders influence an organization's CSR initiatives. If an organization notices that stakeholders are interested or more supportive on worldwide issues, then they can address these topics and provide the desired initiatives for stakeholders.

Background behind the theory. A key aspect of CSR is a "publics' perceived attributions about the sincerity of CSR purposes" (Kim, 2010, p. 86). Employees have a great influence on gaining the trust of the public and maintaining an organization's reputation. If employees know about CSR activities and initiatives, their perceptions of the organization may change, and they may become more emotionally attached to the organization (ter Hoeven & Verhoeven, 2013, p. 265). Employees can empower organizations, and when they believe in what the organization is doing for the community, they can contribute to the goals of the organization and help the organizations succeed. Organizations have found that internal stakeholders like employees have a large influence in helping the organization succeed, and some of CSR initiatives are directed towards employees. Ter Hoeven and Verhoeven (2013) explain that organizations who help employees develop and provide training to better their careers in addition to creating a good work-life balance found that employees will give better service to customers, but they will also be more loyal to the organization and help the organization during potential crises (p. 266).

The Purpose of Issues Management and CSR. Issues Management is designed to serve four purposes: (1) engage in strategic planning in order to consider threats and opportunities, (2) “embrace and implement the highest standards of corporate responsibility to achieve credibility, (3) to be above reproach, and thereby to earn the right to be a public policy steward”, (4) identify, analyze, and monitor issues, and voice facts, opinions, and policy positions that can “foster an ever more sound society” (Heath, 1997; Heath & Cousino, 1990; cited in Heath, 2006, p. 77). However, in regards to CSR, my primary focus of Heath’s four functions of issues management is the second function, to “embrace and implement the highest standards of corporate responsibility to achieve credibility” (Heath, 2006, p. 77). In this statement, Heath breaks down a key component of CSR and aligns it with issues management.

Issues management and scanning has developed into a key aspect of CSR (Heath & Palenchar, 2009, p. 99). Practitioners who engage in issues scanning and CSR will watch for any issues to emerge and become salient. Kim and Lee (2015) reference Weber (2008) who argued that “improved corporate reputation resulting from CSR activities may lead to a reduction of expenses by preventing and reducing business risks, and that that improved reputation positively affects the influx of capital from outside a company” (p. 277). In terms of CSR, public relations practitioners implementing issues management need to constantly be aware of stakeholder issues, and issues management/scanning allows practitioners to find these issues and address them before they become a crisis. Issues scanning is primarily conducted using social networking platforms that allow stakeholders to provide insight and feedback about the organization (Heath & Palenchar, 2009, p. 99). Practitioners who find these issues can quickly address them and provide accurate information in order to avoid a potential crisis or a negative effect on the organization’s reputation. Heath and Palenchar (2009) identify a key aspect of issues

management: identifying and naming the issue (p. 101). When an organization discovers a problem, public relations practitioners need to first create a business plan and provide a name to the issue. If this is not done, the public has power of the issue, and the organization can potentially lose control of the situation which will also increase turbulence and “the issue environment becomes more unstable, less predictable, and more uncertain” (Heath & Palenchar, 2009, p. 101).

Corporate Social Responsibility communications between an organization and its publics should be aligned with the concerns of stakeholders (Dawkins, 2004, p. 109). During the 1980s, businesses became more responsive to their stakeholders, which effectively led to better practices of issues management in relation to the organization being socially responsible and meeting the needs of publics (Moura-Leite & Padgett, 2011, p. 532). If an organization is able to effectively break through this communication barrier and align CSR initiatives with stakeholder interests, then the organization will be able to capitalize on reputational benefits associated with CSR (Dawkins, 2004, p. 109). However, communicating CSR initiatives involves practitioners understanding different stakeholder groups and the expectations of these stakeholder groups. Different stakeholder groups require different expectations from the organization, and these expectations need to be communicated in a manner that reaches the stakeholder concerns (Dawkins, 2004, p. 109). Carroll (1979) points to the importance of being sensitive towards stakeholder concerns over specific issues.

Dawkins (2004) notes that corporate responsibility can be used in terms of risk management, and in some situations, these issues can indicate quality management (p. 110). When an organization includes the voices of external publics and stakeholder criticism in order to design and tailor communication strategies for CSR, the organization can gain their trust

because they are able to integrate CSR with issues management strategies in order to maximize public perceptions (Dawkins, 2004, p. 109). In addition to external stakeholders, Lewis (2003) notes that internal stakeholders like employees have a significant effect on an organization (p. 361). When an organization effectively communicates and understands what their employees want, they can create specific initiatives to increase the trust employees have with the organization (Lewis, 2003, p. 361).

Public relations practitioners who also practice issues management have had to become aware of the changing trends in CSR over the past years. White (2005) identifies multiple scenarios in regards to the future of CSR which will potentially impact practitioners. The first scenario that White (2005) presents is the “fad-and-fade scenario” which explains that CSR will eventually move into “hibernation” because it will become natural for organizations to recover from a crisis with less use of CSR practices (p. 1). The second scenario White (2005) presents is the “embed-and-integrate scenario” which explains that for both the private and public sector, CSR is a rule, and organizations that fail to use CSR will find themselves at a “competitive disadvantage” (p. 2). The third and final scenario presented is the “transition-and-transformation scenario” which explains that “received wisdom” will remain the subject of “ongoing debates” and may instigate “efforts to legally alter the nature and purpose of corporations” (White, 2005, p. 3). Of these three scenarios, the second scenario, “embed-and-integrate” seems to be the most practical and useful in terms of CSR for the 21st century.

The “embed-and-integrate scenario” can be thoroughly exemplified in the Los Angeles uprising in 1992. These riots were initiated by the Rodney King trial which led to the burning and looting of several blocks in Los Angeles (Yoda,2014). However, there was one common thread in the community. The businesses in the blocks that were burned and looted had minimal

impact on the community. However, a McDonald's within the area had strong CSR initiatives. This McDonald's supported the community's local literacy and sports programs. Therefore, the local residents left the McDonald's completely unharmed because the organization had demonstrated that it cared about the community (Yoda, 2014).

Issues Management Alignment with CSR. Practitioners who intend to communicate an organization's CSR initiatives need to specifically tailor messages for different interests and information needs for different stakeholders (Dawkins, 2004, p. 110). Trust between organizations and stakeholders has continued to decrease over the years which has made the communication of CSR initiatives more important to regain that trust (Lewis, 2003, p. 357). Practitioners who utilize issues management have found a new basis for building trust between organizations and stakeholders, corporate responsibility (Lewis, 2003, p. 357). Officers and directors who communicate enterprise risks and risk management systems will enhance the credibility of the company with key stakeholders (Booz Allen Hamilton et al., 2004, p. 4).

In addition to building trust between organizations and stakeholders, a company that desires to be socially responsible needs to be prepared to openly admit any shortcomings and mistakes (Frankental, 2001, p. 20). Frankental (2001) continues to explain that a company who does not accept its shortcomings falls short of social responsibility, and, in turn "breaches its own codes of conduct" (p.20). Trust and transparency are key principles in practicing good public relations as well as creating and building an organization that works to benefit and provide for its stakeholders. Garbett (1981) stresses the importance of trust and transparency by explaining that these two principles are essential "to build up the investment qualities of the company's securities or to improve financial structure" (p. 13).

Social and environmental responsibilities are also significant factors in CSR initiatives in stakeholder audiences (Lewis, 2003, p. 361). These particular stakeholder audiences include the media, legislators, and investors which will increase the strength of the organization's reputation (Lewis, 2003, p. 361). Garbett (1981) developed four key points that will increase the strength of an organization's reputation (cited in Heath & Palenchar, 2009, p. 212). Of these key points, two emerged that directly correlate with social and environmental responsibilities bestowed upon an organization: "to educate, inform, or impress the public with regard to the company's policies, functions, facilities, objectives, ideals, and standards" and "to build favorable opinion about the company by stressing the competence of the company's management, its scientific know-how, manufacturing skills, technological progress...and contribution to social advancement and public welfare" (Garbett, 1981, p. 13).

Heath and Palenchar (2009) identify eight reasons for organizations to engage in Issues Management and CSR, but for the purpose of this review, I will focus on four of these reasons (p.128-129). A good issues management program will "avoid a definitive stance" to changing stakeholder expectations (Heath & Palenchar, 2009, p. 128). Organizations who proactively look for competition and a "bottom-line advantage by meeting or exceeding stakeholder expectations" are engaging in CSR that goes above general community relations programs, and this use of corporate responsibility in association with issues management establish harmony and mutual interests with stakeholders (Heath & Palenchar, 2009, p. 128).

Responsible CSR "includes understanding community standards" which can be found by conducting research as well as using focus groups (Heath, 1987-1988). These Issues Management techniques still "reflect ethical principles" (Heath, 2009, p. 129). Effective issues management programs engage in practices that reflect corporate responsibility. Other CSR

standards with effective use of issues management result from “monitoring internal and external opinions through the open flow of information” (Heath & Palenchar, 2009, p. 129). The final connection of SIM, risk management, and crisis management in relation to CSR view organizations as adding value to issues management. This connection shows that effective integration of strategic issues management, risk management, and crisis management will decrease risks and “foster crisis and issue debate” which will engage stakeholders in the organization and allow public relations to help organizations work for a “more fully functioning society” (Heath, 2006b).

Issues Management and Crisis Communication. Issues managers and practitioners engage in crisis preparedness through the use of the Situational Crisis Communication Theory and will create a crisis plan for the organization (Heath & Palenchar, 2009, p. 282). However, Guth (1995) reported that 36.3% of practitioners reported that they work in an organization that has a crisis plan and practices the crisis plan. Since this measurement, the American Management Association (2003) reported that 64% of executives said their organization had a crisis management plan which was up from the previous year when only 49% of executives reported their company had a crisis management plan.

An issues manager will engage in crisis planning, and the center of crisis planning is control. A stakeholder wants control over crises that will affect their self-interest, and this control comes from the “desire to lessen the uncertainty” (Heath & Palenchar, 2009, p. 283). Crisis management begins before a crisis, and this prevention initiates with the observation of reflectiveness and being prepared to respond to warning signs (Heath & Palenchar, 2009, p. 285). Heath and Palenchar (2009) include:

(a) wise strategic business planning; (b) issues monitoring in support of crisis management; (c) having key personnel coordinated and trained to communicate honestly, clearly, factually, and candidly with minimal interference from legal counsel who understand court procedures better than they comprehend media relations and the consequences of being tried in the court of public opinion; and (d) working to ascertain and implement high standards of corporate responsibility” (p.285)

Coombs (2007) build a list of response strategies that include denial, diminishing, rebuilding, and bolstering (as cited in Heath & Palenchar, 2009). In this way, Coombs directly related crisis response strategies to strategic issues management. Issues managers need to be prepared for crises. In addition to monitoring internal and external environments, practitioners need to be prepared to engage in effective communication before, during, and after a crisis. Risk management, or Enterprise Resilience, have joined risk assessment, information reporting, and governance processes with business/strategic planning, and because of these combinations, Enterprise Resilience “enables companies to monitor not only the full array of traditional risks, but also risks to earnings drivers and company values” (Booz Allen Hamilton., et al., 2004, p. 2).

Situational Crisis Communication Theory

A crisis can make or break an organization, and much like Murphy’s Law explains, anything that can happen will happen, so organizations have to be prepared for a crisis at all times. However, preparation is not always a key term in an organization’s plan which can lead to problems and miscommunications, thus creating more damage to the organization’s reputation. In cases like Enron, the company went belly-up because of the crisis, loss stakeholders, and were involved in a scandal that was followed by other organizational scandals.

In cases of crisis, CSR can help an organization potentially recover from a crisis, and if successful, CSR paired with the use of crisis communication can mitigate the crisis and help the organization's recovery.

Stakeholders and Crisis. Crisis situations involve an organization to already be actively involved in issues management and monitoring which may potentially help the organization in times of crisis. "Stakeholders may forgive the occasional external crisis, but they will not excuse management's inattention to earnings drivers or cultural risks" (Booz, Allen, & Hamilton, 2004, p. 2). In times of crisis, organizations can choose to engage using different strategies including corporate apologia, corporate impression management, and image restoration theory (Coombs, 2006, p. 176). Corporate apologia, corporate impression management, and image restoration theory were combined to form the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (Coombs, 1995).

A significant aspect noted earlier is the reflective/responsive neighbor in relation to crisis communication (Heath & Ni, 2010, p. 563). In the terms of a reflective/responsive neighbor, community relations is a key aspect in crisis communication, and Heath and Ni (2010) note that "the real significance of CR began and has continued in tandem with the corporate interest in issues management, crisis management and communication, and risk management and communication" (p. 563). It is further emphasized that in the event of a crisis, responsibility and reflection are the responsibility of management and public relations practitioners which creates the need for "proaction, planning, and execution" (Heath & Ni, 2010, p. 564).

Heath and Palenchar (2009) define a crisis as "an untimely event that can be anticipated to occur (a risk manifested), which may prevent management from accomplishing its efforts to create the understanding and mutually beneficial relation with interested parties needed to negotiate mutually beneficial exchange of stakes" (p. 280). Fink (1986) explains that a crisis "is

an unstable time or state of affairs in which a decisive change is impending either one distinct possibility of a higher undesirable outcome or one with the distinct possibility of a highly desirable and extremely positive outcome” (p. 15). These definitions of a crisis directly link the practice of issues management to the utilization of Corporate Social Responsibility. An organization that actively practices issues management and scanning will be aware of the desires of stakeholders, and in the event of crisis, practitioners will be able to create a desirable outcome that will appease publics and utilize CSR.

Crisis and CSR. The critical point of this study is to determine if CSR initiatives and the communication of these initiatives impact an organization during a crisis. Kim and Lee (2015) investigate this idea through a quantitative approach. Through their initial research, they note Bennett and Gabriel (2001) who explain that a good reputation that comes from good participation in CSR activities “may play a role in protecting the company from threats in times of crisis” (Kim & Lee, 2015, p. 278). Weber (2008) noted that in the management of a corporate crisis, an enhanced corporate reputation created by CSR activities “improves both internal and external assessment of a corporation” which “can play a decisive role in preventing and reducing business risks” (Kim & Lee, 2015, p. 278).

Kim and Lee (2015) discuss cognitive dissonance theory which explains that publics will experience a cognitive dissonance when an organization has a crisis. This dissonance comes from the high esteem the stakeholders originally had for the organization, and as new information is provided that changes their beliefs, these stakeholders may “ignore or minimize negative information that conflicts with prior beliefs” (Kim & Lee, 2015, p. 279). This became known as the “halo effect or buffering effect” (Coombs & Holladay, 2006; Dawar & Pillutla, 2000; Dean, 2004; Grunwald & Hempelmann, 2011; Klein & Dawar, 2004; Lyon & Cameron,

1998; Sohn & Lariscy, 2012; cited by Kim & Lee, 2015, p. 279). Coombs and Holladay (2006) concluded that corporations with favorable reputations will help the corporation overcome damage to their public image (cited by Kim & Lee, 2015, p. 279).

Based upon the inconsistency of scholar's definitions of CSR, I determined that CSR is an organization's ability to support the public by doing the right thing and going over and beyond to reach out to their constituents. In this instance, public refers to the community or surrounding area in which an organization will assist the community directly around their location based upon a geographical concept. However, other aspects of community include publics or constituents who support the initiatives and values of the organization.

Research Questions

1. To what extent do organizations conduct issues scanning?
2. How do practitioners define CSR?
3. How do CSR initiatives emerge?
4. How are the results of issues management incorporated into crisis management?
5. How do practitioners perceive the connection between CSR and crisis?

Chapter III

METHOD

Study Design

In order to identify trends and answer my research questions, I conducted interviews with public relations practitioners who specialized in CSR or crisis communication. I interviewed practitioners from different organizations within different industries; therefore, I was able to address all of the research questions. Although the participant may have not had a strong background in CSR, issues management, or crisis communication, they still answered all of the questions to the best of their abilities and provided examples to improve the quality of their answers.

In order to answer research question 1 which asks, “To what extent do organizations conduct issues scanning?”, public relations practitioners specifically within crisis communication were able to respond thoroughly. Practitioners who were involved with CSR or Investor Relations provided a different perspective, which was still helpful because it showed the difference in practitioners and allowed me to gain a diverse group of answers and opinions. My first question in this section of my interview guide asked what came to mind to the participant when I said issues management. By asking this question, I could gauge if they considered issues management practices like scanning and monitoring as an industry tool to help them improve their brand or product or if they used issues management practices in order to manage potential issues that might arise in their industry due to external factors that are out of their control. Practitioners provided external and internal examples of how issues management creates and impacts the creation of CSR initiatives.

In regards to research question 2 which asked, “How do practitioners define CSR?”, public relations practitioners who specialized in CSR with a background in issues management provided strong answers. This allowed me to get a feel of their association and knowledge of the topic, and from that point, I was able to mold the questions to better fit their answer to the first question. By molding the question, I was able to develop probing questions during the interview. Through these questions, I asked for more examples or in some cases, I rephrased some of my probing questions in order to allow time for the participant to consider the additional question and provide an in-depth answer. I also asked for examples as to why they had these perceptions of CSR or I tried to gather more information in general if I was receiving short answers. These questions were created on the spot and required me to analyze the responses and formulate a question that would provide more information.

Research question 3 asked “How do CSR initiatives emerge?” For this specific research question, I asked each participant how CSR initiatives originate. By directly asking this question, I identified if issues management played an important role in the development of CSR initiatives or if there were internal/external factors (i.e. employees, executives, shareholders) who had an impact on the development of these initiatives. Following this question, I asked for examples to better understand how initiatives are born.

Research question 4 asked, “How are the results of issues management incorporated into crisis management?” For this research question, I designed a series of questions to identify how the issues scanning and monitoring processes described in research question 1 are utilized in crisis management. I specifically asked for crises within the organization, but I also asked questions as to how the organization prepared for the crisis. If the participant could not provide an example of a specific crisis, I asked questions about crises in general in order for my

participant to provide a hypothetical preparation for the crisis as well as what should be done after the crisis in order to ensure it does not occur again.

Lastly, research question 5 asked, “How do practitioners perceive the connection between CSR and crisis communication?” In order to prepare for this question, I led in with questions in regards to crises within an organization and how these crises had been managed. I also asked questions in regards to the incorporation of CSR into crisis communication responses. This sparked interest amongst practitioners, and I was able to develop probing questions in order to determine if there are examples of CSR being incorporated into a response or if there are CSR initiatives that have resulted because of a crisis. These questions provided a strong lead into this research question which was asked directly at the end of the interview.

Participants

For this study, I recruited 20 public relations practitioners to be interviewed. Once I completed my IRB application, I submitted that I would interview 20 practitioners. I contacted approximately 35 practitioners including many from the board of PRSA and other organizations in the Houston area with CSR specialties, but I received no emails in return. I reached out to two participants from a previous project and both agreed to participate in my thesis study. From that previous study, I was introduced to someone from the oil and gas industry, and I was able to contact him for this study. At this point, there was a small amount of snowball sampling, and he gave me the names of three colleagues.

I began my interview process by interviewing someone from my previous study as well as my other contact. When I received no emails from other practitioners, I sought the help of current and former professors. From these professors, I emailed and contacted seventeen more

practitioners in the Houston area. Of this number, sixteen agreed to participate in my study, but when I attempted to schedule interviews with three of these participants, I received no reply even after two follow-up emails. Therefore, I was able to successfully interview thirteen public relations practitioners. These practitioners were not all from Houston, so the interviewing process had to be slightly altered to accommodate for their needs.

Recruitment

In order to recruit these practitioners, I first tried to use participants from a previous study conducted with Dr. Jennifer Vardeman-Winter which addressed CSR in relation to critical infrastructure resiliency and community resiliency. The contacts interviewed in the study with Dr. Vardeman-Winter would be good participants for this study because of their knowledge in CSR. By using a snowball sampling strategy to find additional participants, I expected to find more public relations practitioners who will have experience with CSR, issues management, or crisis communication. However, this recruitment method did not work, and I had to change my recruitment tactics to convenience sampling. I was able to reach out to a former professor who posted the information about my study on her Facebook. From that message, I received participants, and I contacted them to schedule interviews. I received contacts from two other professors, and I emailed those contacts. Out of those four contacts, one agreed to be interviewed.

Snowball sampling is “well-suited to studying social networks, subcultures, or people who have certain attributes in common” and is noted for being one of the best ways to reach a “hard-to-recruit” population (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 114). However, for this particular study, snowball sampling did not work in recruitment. Apart from this sampling idea not working, I found that I needed a broader sample of practitioners. When I attempted snowball sampling with

one practitioner, I received contacts from the same industry, so at that point, I redefined my parameters in order to reach different industries. Public relations practitioners are indeed a subculture, but I reached practitioners who might otherwise be reluctant to be interviewed through mentors.

I conducted interviews with 13 public relations practitioners. These practitioners specialized primarily in corporate social responsibility, but they also had a background in crisis management and communication. These participants related crisis management with corporate social responsibility which connected the two fields. One interview was conducted with two participants. It was necessary to conduct the interview in this manner because the two participants shared the same position, but each of them had a different role of the same job. To explain this further, one participant managed and planned the CSR initiatives and programs that the organization was involved in while the other participant managed the budget for CSR initiatives and programs. Their two roles within the organization are a collaboration. Therefore, it was necessary to interview them together because they could fill in gaps of information that were unknown or less familiar to their colleague.

At the beginning of each interview, I first asked the participant for information about their job in which they included the industry they worked in, the number of years they had been employed in their field, and the title they currently hold within their organization. I interviewed practitioners in the telecommunications, oil and gas, financial, communications, private communications (i.e. firms), foreign affairs, and healthcare industries. The average years of experience between these practitioners was about 20 years. Most of my participants had been in their organization or similar positions within other organizations for many years. Their titles

ranged from CEOs and vice presidents of various firms to the head of external affairs and external affairs managers within large scale oil and gas and telecommunications companies.

Procedure

A recruitment email was sent to individuals for interviews (please see Appendix B). For this study, I asked over 30 participants to engage in a 45-90 minute interview. Out of these 30 participants, I received a response from two people. I scheduled an interview with both individuals, but only one was able to continue in the research. Upon trying to continue to schedule an interview with the other respondent, I received no email response after two follow-up emails and one phone call. Therefore, my recruitment strategy changed. A former professor as well as three other professors within the school of communications helped recruit public relations practitioners in the area who were willing to participate in my research. Altogether, I had eighteen practitioners who were willing to participate after a Facebook post and other contact information was distributed. I was able to interview 13 of these practitioners. Because of scheduling conflicts or travel times, two practitioners were unable to participate. The remaining three practitioners responded to my request upon the completion of my study.

If I received no response to an email, I followed up two to three days later via email to verify that the potential participant had received the email. I initially planned to place a phone call if I received no answer to the second email. However, some contacts information did not have phone numbers, so I recruited other participants. As I recruited other participants, some of those contacts eventually emailed back, but majority of them sent no response. My IRB application was approved in late December. In that application, I explained that there would be no incentives offered in this study, but participants would receive a thank you letter upon my completion of the study.

Each participant received general background information about the study in the recruitment letter in order to determine if they feel comfortable with the questions that will be asked. I emphasized before the interview that there are no right or wrong answers, and the participant can choose to not answer a question or end the interview at any time without any penalty. In the case that a participant was unfamiliar with one of these topics, I rephrased the question to better fit their position in the organization or make the question more industry specific. As I began to do this more often, I found that I received stronger answers from each participant. Once I learned that, I researched and learned more about the participant before I went into the interview to determine if I would need to alter some of the questions to better fit their title or industry.

The interviews were conducted based on the convenience of each participant, and I made myself readily available for each interview. Three interviews took place at restaurants in the greater Houston area. For the interviewees that were conducted in restaurants, I found the quietest location and tried to determine what distractions, if any, could potentially present a problem during the interview. Four interviews were conducted via phone. While conducting interviews via phone, I made sure that I was in a quiet area where I could hear the participant, but I also had to ensure that the participant could hear me. During one interview, I determined that my participant was driving, so I began the interview somewhat cautiously as to make sure that the participant would be safe during the interview and verified that they wanted to continue with the interview. The other interviews took place in the workplace of the interviewee. When an interview was conducted in the interviewee's workplace, it was done so in their main office or a conference room to ensure privacy. Before I began each interview, I asked if the participant had any time constraints. If he or she did, then I excluded a couple of questions or moved the

interview at a quicker pace than normal. If I did exclude a question, it was in the building rapport section because once I was able to create a bond with each participant and understand what they did and their achievements, I learned I could move on to save time for them.

For these interviews, I verified that the participant consented to having the interview recorded. If consent was received, then I recorded the interview and uploaded it to a secure password protected file. Each participant has a pseudonym in the research, and I emphasized this before each interview. I clarified to the participant that I would not state the name of their organization. This was often confirmed at the end of the interview if they had said the name of the organization at some point in the interview. I clarified that their organization would not be included in my research, but their industry would be included. If the participant did not agree to have the interview recorded, then I would have taken notes during the interview. I still took notes during the interview to make note of key themes and other key points that I will evaluate when writing my results. I transcribed all 13 interviews and took notes during each interview.

Interview Guide

The interview guide (please see Appendix A) for this study was designed in a manner that created a rapport between myself and my interviewee. As a public relations student and scholar, I wanted to understand and relate what my interviewee does in his or her line of work and how it will apply to my study. My ultimate goal is for the interviewee to feel like they aren't being interviewed. When conducting the interview, I wanted to have a conversation with each participant and be able to actively engage with them during the interview. In my first interview, I was slightly stiff, and I noticed that my participant might have been a little stiff because of that. Therefore, when I conducted the interview as more of a conversation between two individuals discussing public relations, I received answers that were more rich and in-depth. By having a

legitimate discussion with my participant and understanding their line of work, I was able to establish a rapport with each participant, and we could have a discussion. The few times I spoke during the interview were to ask questions, clarify answers, or ask for additional examples. Some participants asked more questions about my study before or after the interview which I answered, and a few wanted to make sure that they were understanding my question correctly before answering it.

In the creation of the interview guide, I first determined three independent variables that were significant to this study. These variables were the level of importance in conducting issues management, the influence publics have on CSR initiatives, and level of importance placed on crisis management based upon results yielded from issues scanning and monitoring. There was one dependent variable identified in this study. Based upon the independent variables that influenced the questions asked in each interview, I determined that practitioner's perception of the connection between corporate social responsibility and crisis communication was dependent upon these three independent variables. Therefore, I designed question that would show if there was any significance and connection between these two concepts.

This led to my interview questions based upon the first variable. I determined that I needed to ask questions that would show the level of importance an organization places on issues scanning and monitoring, but before I could do this, I needed to understand how the practitioner defined issues management. The practitioner's definition of issues management could have potentially influenced the answers I received to other questions. The next questions were dependent upon the first two questions because they show how an organization recognizes significant publics and to what extent they will communicate with those publics. The questions

in this portion of the interview guide needed to show why issues management is significant to an organization.

The importance of the first question in terms of the second variable which influence publics have on CSR initiatives was tested, I first designed a question in which the practitioner defined CSR. The answer to this question assisted in determining the general perception of the practitioner and their response/opinion in regards to CSR. The following questions were dependent upon this answer because they required the practitioner to identify what they considered important to their organizations and their publics.

In order to yield responses to understand the third independent variable, I needed to understand how each practitioner understood and defined crisis communication. The questions following this evolved to incorporate issues management and CSR to determine if the other independent variables had any relationship with the third variable. Based upon the answer to these questions and the incorporation of all three independent variables, I designed a question that pulled in the dependent variable in which I could determine the relationship between CSR and crisis communication.

Data Analysis

Prior to the interview, I observed the setting and determine any distractions that may occur. If a distraction is noted, I changed the seating arrangement in order to allow for the best conversation and recording quality. I personally transcribed these interviews, and after transcription, I immediately reviewed the transcription in order to make note of any key themes.

In my review of transcripts, I used an open coding scheme to note general trends in the data, or in this case, my transcripts (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 250). These trends may be

common terms or common ideas that emerge during the interviews. Because open coding can be an indefinite process, I added and eliminated codes based upon “comparing each incident of a code to other incidents” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 251). In this case, the comparison of “incidents” referred to the comparison of interviews through my use of transcripts. Once I created my codebook, I incorporated specific examples from my interviews.

Reflexivity and Personal Interests

For each interview, I took into account the environment and wrote a report following the interview about any distractions or difficulties that occurred during the interview. Interviews that occurred in public places created difficulties in recording quality, so I was prepared for the possibility that some recordings will be more difficult to transcribe due to background noise and would require more time to transcribe. In the case that an interview was in a loud public setting, the recording was hard to hear, but I found that not all interviews had to be transcribed. It was often easier for me to listen to the recording and take notes. When I transcribed the interviews, I found it very difficult to follow because I couldn't hear the emphasis of certain phrases in the participant's voice. Therefore, I referred back to my recordings to get the most accurate information and listen to which portions the participant specifically emphasized. Those aspects of the interview could not be seen on a transcription; therefore, while writing my results, I used my recordings to help me better place information and remember key points when I had to change questions or listen to a participant's tone of voice.

CSR is a relatively uncharted field in academics, and upon my initial readings of CSR, I found CSR to be a challenge. Due to the fact that there is no one definition of CSR and the applications are still being developed, it inspired me to create a study to better understand how it relates to other key components of public relations. After a long review of my notes from my

undergraduate and graduate studies, I determined two key components of public relations are crisis communication and issues management.

After determining that these two theories, crisis communication and issues management had never been included in a study with CSR, I wanted to take on the challenge of determining a relationship between these three concepts. Organizations are constantly on the news for some sort of crisis, but the news rarely reports the good that these organizations do for communities and stakeholders. Therefore, I wondered, if the public knew about the good that organizations do for the community, would they be less critical of the organization during a crisis?

Furthermore, who decides what CSR initiatives an organization should engage in with communities and stakeholders? Is it the decision of the CEO or does the organization use issues management concepts to determine what initiatives are most valued to the public? Issues management is also a key component in crisis communication, so in this study, I wanted to determine what kind of relationship exists between CSR, issues management, and crisis communication.

Chapter IV

RESULTS

Summary of Responses

The public relations practitioners interviewed had a strong expertise in corporate social responsibility and crisis communication and recognized the relationship between CSR, issues management, and crisis communication. Each practitioner discussed the constraints they face on a daily basis and how they work through those constraints, but each practitioner also referred to the strategies they employ as well as the strategies that their organization employs to make CSR a legitimate part of corporate culture. The relationship between these three public relations functions were explained by practitioners through concepts like resources, social responsibility, organizational values, strategy, and reputation.

The practitioners interviewed came from various industries, but the general concepts that they discussed during each interview demonstrated how issues management is conducted within their organization, the extent to which the organization considers the input of their stakeholders in determining CSR initiatives, the impact of issues management on crisis communication, and the perception of the connection between CSR and crisis communication. Practitioners discussed their daily experiences while on the job as well as past experiences in the creation of CSR programs. These experiences influenced their responses as well as how they viewed other organizations.

RQ 1: To what extent do organizations conduct issues scanning?

Organizations conduct issues scanning on a daily basis with the use of a variety of tools in order to scan internal and external publics. Issues scanning has continued to be vital to

organizational success and in some cases, survival. Based upon the data collected, I determined four themes: frequency of scanning, challenges to conducting issues scanning, social media, and positive and negative consequences of scanning.

Frequency of Scanning. The participants I interviewed indicated that issues scanning is a significant portion of their work day. However, each participant explained who conducts this scanning within their organization. Tim, who works within the telecommunications industry, explained that his organization has a specific department who monitor social media platforms at all times.

Within private public relations firms, practitioners like Rebecca, Peter, and Julie work with clients from all industries, and each of them explained that the frequency of scanning done for a client within one day depends entirely upon each individual client. Julie explained that an organization needs to be constantly ahead of the game, and in some situations, the PR firm may find out about a situation before the organization does. When communicating with publics significant to her public relations firm, Julie said she communicates with her clients a lot, but it may also depend upon the client. When working with chemical companies, they may be in contact with their partners and publics at least two to three times per month, but her firm will have communication with the client frequently. When communicating with key stakeholders, firms will communicate with them often while they conduct issues scanning. One other aspect of issues scanning is determining who the key publics and stakeholders are for each of her clients.

In the oil and gas industry, Stephen explained that in the beginning phases, his organization will communicate with stakeholders more frequently than “a normal, regular relationship”. He explained that during the first year, the organization will hold open houses and

one-on-one meetings. After that first year, it becomes a maintenance issue, and Stephen may talk with them about once a quarter.

The frequency of scanning remained constant throughout each industry. Kathy, who works in the foreign affairs, conducts environmental scanning on a daily basis in order to “what’s being said in the media and online, both positive and negative.”

Challenges to conducting issues scanning. Public relations practitioners are constantly dealing with issues whether it is within their organization or other organizations. Peter, who built his public relations firm from scratch has full experience of conducting issues management from his experiences of building a company, which have led to the success of his organization and the strategy that is employed in his firm. When discussing his definition of issues management, Peter said,

I think that companies and individuals have challenging, ongoing issues that need to be monitored, addressed, and handled, and they are going to have stakeholders that need to be communicated to, and a day doesn’t go by that you don’t see somebody who has an issue that they’re dealing with. It can be any dimension.

Every industry has challenges they need to prepare for on a daily basis, but it’s how practitioners form a plan to handle these challenges that sets them apart. Rebecca explained that one of her main challenges is media relations because

as the marketplace has evolved over the last, I’ve got twenty years of experience in communications, and over the last twenty years. We’ve gone from world wide web to there’s flavor of the day and a new social media channel that’s developed and how people receive information.

Practitioners identified one challenge within their daily duties. Each practitioner manages these challenges differently. This has led to practitioners utilizing research and various databases in order to stay current with various publics and stakeholders. Victoria explained that it can “be difficult getting people to understand their organization and why it needs flow in a matter that you want it to, and you really can’t take short cuts when you’re working with the public.” In order to help her organizations, she spends a “chunk of my day reading and researching and understanding what’s current and what are some best practices.” Rebecca said,

You can plan your day, and you should plan your day, but considering that the news cycle is 24/7, you have to be able to make adjustments to take advantage of opportunities, to address reactive situations. All those things kind of float in the middle. You know, you could be trucking right along working on a new website or doing a brochure or something like that, and you know, doing some social media, but something big comes up and you have to be able to pause and figure out how do we handle this...is this an opportunity or challenge that we need to address.

Lisa and Chloe work within the financial industry, and they discussed issues monitoring and scanning in terms of the challenges they face on a daily basis. It was during this interview that I identified the final trend of resources in terms of issues management which is a lack of resources.

Lisa and Chloe oversee various volunteer events that are brought to them by employees and the community. However, because their institution has 2,000 employees across all of their branches, it is difficult to get employees into volunteer work and have the resources they need in order to do large philanthropy projects. One other scarce resource issue that Lisa mentioned is time because banking is a highly regulated industry, they

need to get content approved by legal and compliance before we can push it out externally, not all the time, but a lot of the time, so there's not a lot of time for us to work for all of the chances to promote all the information we would like to about the bank.

Lisa explained that they oversee many partnerships, while Chloe has to monitor the organization's charitable giving budget which consists of \$1.2 million. Chloe mentioned that one of their greatest challenges is budget constraints "because we're such a small financial institution compared to the larger banks that have more what I guess would be considered profitable because they're larger as in terms of how much they are able to give back. On a national level, they have more money to give."

Social Media and Services. Julie explained that because of Twitter and other social medium platforms, "everybody is a reporter. Everybody is reporting the news." In one example, she described a pipeline leak in northern Louisiana during which someone driving by saw the leak and posted on Twitter. The sign with the organization's name could be seen in the post, but the database they used picked up this tweet, and they were able to notify their clients of the situation and further solve the problem.

Every practitioner I interviewed discussed different tools and services they use in order to conduct issues monitoring and scanning. The tools and services used depend upon the industry and vary with each industry. For example, a private public relations firm may use different tools and services than an organization in the oil and gas industry or healthcare industry. Julie said,

We have a whole host of media databases. We use Meltwater. We use New View. We use Google. we use any of the search platforms. We use competitors. We use Twitter. We sometimes find out, and this is absolutely true, the crisis before the company does,

especially if that's our clients. I use Google Alerts. I get Google Alerts on all of my clients, and that's where we have been able to keep up with some of these issues and the monitoring of those issues to where we can bring it to the attention of our clients before they even know what's happening.

Practitioners explained that knowing who the influencers are in their industry is very important when determining how to scan publics or stakeholders. This scanning helps practitioners determine who should be notified about various situations. Private public relations firms like Julie's firm may follow these companies on Twitter or other social media platforms. The main learning process of scanning in public relations firms is communicating with each public upfront and in person.

In the telecommunications industry, Tim explained that his organization uses programs that identify the "hot topics and what everybody is talking about and what is trending" in the industry. He also mentioned that his organization puts together material that measures social media activity which helps those who monitor social media determine what is being said about the company. Tim said that the company will

...post comments that have been made by some of our customers, so those are the kind of things that we really like to see. For example, today we had a large outage across the country with channels that were down, and there was a lot of activity on social media with people wanting to know what's going on and why can't I see x channel. We were able to respond to that quickly because we began to see this trend while it was becoming a big issue and we were able to issue a statement on Twitter and Facebook and to be able to give out to the media as a result of that.

In foreign affairs, Kathy explained that she knows which publics are relevant to her organization, so for her to “listen in on the conversation”, she “uses a variety of monitoring tools [like] press reader for newspapers, factismia for more encompassing blogs and magazines.”

Stephen, an external affairs manager explained that his organization within the oil and gas industry uses a stakeholder workshop. He explained that in this workshop

...we [organization representatives] go out and try to meet as many stakeholders as possible from a variety of different groups from first responders, local elected officials, the opinion leaders of the community, chambers of commerce...we fan out and do that over a couple of months' time, and then we come back into the office and do a stakeholder workshop. We list all of the stakeholders and talk about more than just who they are, but what are the issues that are important to them.

Stephen's organization may also put an intern on a computer to do “desktop research”, and his organization will also talk to other competitors. Stephen explained that,

Especially in the oil and gas business, because we all live and die by the lowest operator, and what I mean by that is if we have a crappy operator performing their job poorly, it affects all of us. So in the Permian Basin for example, within the Permian Basin Petroleum Association, there is a community affairs committee, and that committee is probably 12-15 operators represented. They are all with community relations and internal relations type folks sitting around the table, and we'll share ideas of what's going on

Positive and negative consequences of scanning. Private firms consider issues management as a reputational value, but some organizations depend on the knowledge of their employees to drive the company. Peter, the CEO of a major PR firm, explained that he has to

have people who are smart and can stay current with technology. As technology continues to change, Peter had to make sure that he had people in positions that could effectively handle the changes in industry. It also requires him to hire employees who will make the right decisions for the company. However, Peter also explained that by hiring employees who can make the right decisions for the company, he said,

It requires me to stay on my toes, to make sure we are current, to be continually educated with what's going on in the industry, and to make the right decisions of providing the right things at the right time. For example, we do investor relations, but at one time, we were full blown investor relations with all the different services in investor relations and after Sarbanes Oxley, there wasn't as much of a demand for full blown investor relations in this marketplace...So, you have to adjust to not only the new things in communications to provide the best services that customers will buy, but you also have to know when to stop providing services that customers won't buy because the marketplace changes.

In this explanation, Peter explains how CEOs must maintain a constant feel on the industry and what is changing in order to know who needs to be hired and what services need to be removed from their company. Although this is a different form of issues scanning, it is still significant to this study because of the importance and emphasis placed on how a change in times will lead to a change in services.

RQ 2: How do practitioners define CSR?

CSR had a different meaning for every practitioner I interviewed, but there were a few main themes identified such as being a good member of the community and being responsible

within the community. Since there are several definitions of CSR, the definition each practitioner gave of CSR created a general idea of what CSR should be in organizations. Based upon the data collected, I determined three themes: business alignment, community building through social performance, and being a good competitor.

Business Alignment. When asked what came to mind when I said CSR, Peter replied it was “being a good member of the community and supporting the community that supports your business”. Peter continued to elaborate why corporate social responsibility is important to him personally. He said,

I think it’s because I feel that we’re so blessed to have what we have that it’s our responsibility to give back to the community, and that can be in the form of your favorite charities or organizations that impact your business like trade associations or like we support PRSA, IABC, and groups that promote communicators or sometimes we sit down with students that are working on their thesis and we give up our time to do those kind of things.

Chloe and Lisa had a similar definition of corporate social responsibility and Chloe said that it is “being a good corporate citizen”, but she also went on to say that it’s about “having our brand out in the community and showing that we do care about the communities we serve.”

Chloe and Lisa had a slightly different view on CSR because of their work in the financial industry. Lisa explained that because they “drive community to economic development”, CSR happens naturally. Chloe branched off of this idea and said that CSR “starts with the leadership” because in their specific organization, the president, CEO, and founder of

the bank are involved in organizations and known in the community. Lisa said that she didn't know a lot about CSR when she first started with a non-profit:

I suppose I was always of the mindset that you should do good in the community, so it's probably just your inherent belief system that gets you on that track that individuals should do the right thing and companies should do the right thing. Coming into this role, like Chloe said, our leaders, or the founder of our bank, the bank corporation president and CEO, they're all firm believers in giving back to the community, so I think they have shown our company that it's important, and so I think that makes us perceive the importance of the industry.

Community Building through Social Performance. In a relation to practitioners defining corporate social responsibility as an organization being a good citizen, Stephen defined corporate social responsibility as “programs out there that can do one of two things: mitigate an impact of the business or again, how they can benefit.” I asked Stephen to explain the difference between corporate social responsibility, social investment, and social performance in the oil and gas industry. The oil and gas industry refers to corporate social responsibility as social investment; therefore, I wanted to better understand the meaning of these two terms in order to determine if they are the same. In terms of social performance this could mean that an organization is working to gain a license to operate or focus on various pillars like safety and education. Stephen said,

So, what I'm trying to do is, for example, we want to have a goal of 67% of women in minority owned businesses. So to help that, in a region that you think would be easily to gain that because of the minority population [Permian Basin], they've [women] actually had a hard time starting their business and competing with businesses from Houston, and

another big oil place. So, what we'll do is we'll go in from a social performance area and actually help seed a program that will help minority programs get started, so it might be a business development or an entrepreneurship class...

Stephen continued to explain the seed program for minorities. In this program, Stephen's organizations will also teach these businesses how to put a safety program in place because that is a significant factor in the oil and gas industry. Stephen continued to say that these programs "take money and time and experience, so we [his organization] will fund that through a community college that will actually teach companies how to start."

Good competition. In the event of a crisis, companies within the oil and gas industry will help each other. This builds a strong relationship within the industry. This collaboration leads to organizations potentially being better prepared for a crisis because they know that other organizations within their industry will assist them in the event of a crisis if necessary. In an example from the oil and gas industry, Stephen explained that if there are materials from a site floating or found that belongs to a different company, they will pick it up and get it back to them because it is the right thing for the organization to do. In turn, this proactive approach creates a relationship between organizations, and it is more likely that this action will be reciprocated in the event of a crisis or similar problem.

RQ 3: How do CSR initiatives emerge?

Through this research question, I had a hypothesis that CSR initiatives are born through the input of internal and external publics. Within the results of this section, each practitioner had a unique point of view as to how these programs emerge and how they impact an organization. Based upon this, I noted three key themes: publics' input, employee culture, and after crisis.

Publics' input. Some organizations are credited and remembered for good CSR initiatives, as Victoria suggested:

“Just the name alone makes you feel good and trust them, so when I hear corporate responsibility, I hear Toms shoes or Chick-fil-A, and I automatically think of something good, and that’s mostly because of how they have presented themselves throughout the years.”

“The people that are focused on how are we presenting ourselves, who can we help, how can we grow, so when I hear that, I think that’s how it’s formed. A group of diverse people that want to see something other than just money coming in,” said Victoria when describing more about what a CSR program should represent.

In the oil and gas industry issues often occur as an event is occurring and while the practitioner is trying to repair the situation. Stephen described a situation in which he received a project involving hydraulic fracturing, which he called a “hot button word” in today’s society. His company planned to drill a well without warning the community or conducting any stakeholder engagement. As a result of this plan, a project that could have taken only a few months turned into a lengthy process which involved a lawsuit against the organization, reputational damage in the eyes of the media and local community, and cost the company a significant amount of money.

Because his organization had “disrespected the community and lost trust” by moving in and attempting to just drill a rig, Stephen was sent in to determine how to resolve the problem. He explained that when they got there, there were stakeholders who were against fracking altogether, but he also said that,

There were folks that weren't sure what it was about but were willing to listen, and there were folks on our side, but from the negativity of the community, they would have been shunned, so they were sitting on the fence and really not sure which side to get off on, so we had a little bit of everything in terms of these stakeholders.

This required the organization to get a third party mediator to work with three people from each party. These parties included people who were completely opposed to fracking, people who were borderline about the topic, people who didn't consider fracking to be bad, three people from the fence, people who considered that fracking wasn't too bad, government officials, people within the industry who would be employed by this project, and representation for the organization.

Altogether the project took one year, but the organization was "able to turn it around by doing the right thing and investing and being open about our plans and sharing with everyone". Stephen continued to say,

We had to have our folks followed. We had to get security and assistance in terms of protection. We had to add security systems to our offices because the doors were kicked in, the windows were broken. Our people would be spat at if they were wearing a company logo...It was very trying personally.

In this instance, the lack of scanning led to a reputational problem for this organization that led to a year of extra time and money spent as well as regaining the trust of their stakeholders. As Stephen explained, issues scanning could have made this process much simpler and more efficient. However, by taking the necessary steps and protocol, the organization was able to recover and avoid a crisis, and at the end of the issue, Stephen said,

...one of the most satisfying times of that whole troublesome process was the opposition actually came up and hugged our business leader and said we know this is difficult, we know that you spent time away from your family; we don't apologize, but we want you to know that we appreciate the investment you've done in terms of your time and educating us and while we don't believe in this, we know we can't stop it. You're doing everything legally and you seem to be doing everything right. They recognized that they don't want anybody here in our community doing it, but we want your company doing it.

Employee Culture. As Carolyn explained, corporate social responsibility programs certainly can't hurt in an organization, and they can boost morale within the organization if it is done correctly. "It can create and foster relationships that you wouldn't have any other way. It can elevate and improve a company's reputation with their publics, some of their key publics, and it serves to do something good," said Carolyn. This is where some CSR initiatives and programs are born. The success of these programs may eventually become a model for other organizations, but "it is ultimately the right thing to do".

Corporate social responsibility programs, particularly in the financial industry, are influential when there is an executive or CEO behind the initiative because it shows that the organization cares about specific programs, but it also builds a strong reputation that will be remembered by the community. There are individuals who rate companies based upon their corporate social responsibility initiatives, which can in turn help or hurt an organization's reputation. In times of economic downturn, an organization may reduce the amount of money or CSR that they do within the community, which creates a negative reputation for this organization. The public will notice that the organization is giving less, and typically, most

organizations still have enough money to be able to continue funding these programs. Therefore, these situations stand out to stakeholders.

In terms of employee involvement in the financial industry, Lisa said,

In a lot of companies, I think it happens organically. You know we all have a certain group of employees who might be rallying around a colleague to support them for a cause like someone goes out on leave for cancer treatment, then all of the sudden you have this group who wants to support their colleague, raise some money for the cause, and that continues and grows. Then there's another cause or event that comes up, so all of the sudden you have dozens of volunteer events that are just engrained in your culture...

After Crisis. Even when an organization has a crisis plan, there will always be scenarios that cannot be predicted. In the case of these scenarios, practitioners have learned that they must become creative and be able to help their clients in any situation. Julie said,

"Nobody likes the word crisis, but we all have to plan for them, and I am always shocked and amazed at how corporations, even the big ones, say it will never happen to us. They say we have measures, we have a crisis plan, it will never happen to us. Guess what, it happens to all of us." During my interview with Julie, I asked if she had any examples or crises that stuck out in her mind. She described a situation with Capital One, which was Hibernia Bank at that time. During Hurricane Katrina, she received a phone call from her client contact who was the Vice President of Corporate Communications telling her that he was on his way to Houston because the city had been completely evacuated, and all of the 504 area codes were down. He did not know where his executive team was, and although they had a crisis plan, the plan did not predict

a scenario like this. He arrived to Julie's home, and they began sending out press releases from her personal fax machine. Julie said,

For the first three days after the hurricane, we didn't know where the corporate executives were. Talk about a business continuity blowup. Yes, they had plans, they knew what they were going to do, nobody in their wildest imaginings thought that there would be no 504 area code. Do you know how we found people? We went to every TV station and every foreign station and ran tickers, when was the last time you saw a ticker, but still we ran tickers across all the stations saying if you are a Hibernia Bank employee, please call this number. We didn't know where everybody went...even the best made plans can go to hell in a hand basket.

Hibernia Bank was prepared and had drilled, but a crisis like that is something that can't always be perfectly prepared for because of different situations. Hibernia Bank became a safe place for people affected by a disaster in the future because of the way this crisis was managed, and it became known that the bank would help the community in times of need.

On a large scale crisis scheme, foreign affairs deal with complex crises. Kathy explained that

besides war, the conflict I mentioned [previously], and then we have the International Political Diplomatic Crises, like a global fight against an Iranian nuclear deal, then there's a movement...which boycotts and divests in sanctions against Israel, and...that vocal minority will make inroads with anti-Semitic, anti-Israeli legislation or whatever it is within that organization. Then we have to make sure we have established relationships, hopefully, with that audience and with our stakeholders to warn them that this is

happening by a vocal minority that is anti-Semitic or anti-Israeli, inform them of the fact that the larger majority who appreciates democracy in the Middle East can step in and kind of squash those threats for us.

Carolyn provided examples of crises, but she first explained that an organization must have a crisis plan with “real measurable and real deliverables” and issues management must be incorporated into that process. She continued to say,

“As part of that process, you should always include context for disasters that involve crisis communication. You can’t plan for a disaster, but you can plan for handling a disaster.” Apart from disasters, Carolyn also described a scenario in which an organization can be put in an “unflattering light” because the “client or employer has been advised through their discussion with the media of a story that is in process and/or already live.” Some crises may have to be managed for a long period of time and must have a long term crisis plan and strategy. Carolyn explained that, “long term issues such as a human disaster, something that is made public, but has a long lasting, you’re going to have to manage it for quite a long time. Another could be a business decision that is going to be met with largely negative responses either inside and outside the business.” These types of crises must be met with a strong crisis plan that is able to handle the duration of the crisis, and the organization must be able to carry on their day-to-day functions.

As Stephen said, “a crisis is something that went boom in the night.” Crisis preparation is having a plan prepared and being ready for any type of situation. In the oil and gas industry, there are drills several times a year. In a Tier 2 event, all of the responders are brought into a room and trained on procedures, but the government and first responder leadership are brought in

as well. During these drills the organization will write press releases, fill out a timeline, and complete an entire drill and crisis scenario.

In order to prepare for a crisis in a public relations firm which often works with multiple clients, the firm will first study the client and the industry. They will then create scenarios of what could happen and will analyze what could possibly go wrong, so the organization will be able to effectively communicate with their stakeholders in the event that a crisis occurs. It is a constant state of being prepared.

The Corporate Community Relations Council (CCRC) was developed in 1984 helps distribute money to non-profits in the area. The CCRC requires the non-profit organization to become more responsible and provide information about their board and information about where the money will go. Julie was a member of this organization when it first began in 1984. One example that Julie gave from this group was when Enron “tanked”. Julie said,

If there’s ever any question about Houston’s heart, and especially the corporate heart for giving, when Enron tanked, they had over 5-6 million dollars out in pledges for capital campaigns for organizations around Houston, and the Houston Group immediately got together...I mean it was within a couple of weeks of Enron falling. Everybody came in and said OK, Enron person, at least you are still here, talk to us...That 5-6 million dollars was covered by other corporations picking up the debt for Enron. Even in a crappy economy, pardon my French, it was the tech boom, we had 9/11, and then we had Enron, it was the trifecta, and that told me right then and there that the heart of this city is gargantuan, and that corporate social responsibility, and that may have been when it was coined...

RQ 4: How are the results of issues management incorporated into crisis management?

The answers to this particular research question yielded one primary theme which was regulations. Each industry official I spoke with had different regulations that their organization has to comply with in order to continue business. Some industries are stricter than others, but CSR initiatives often result in order to meet these regulations.

Regulations. Since telecommunications is a regulated industry, Tim explained that the FCC will create parameters based on the purchase of another organization.

CSR can be used to not only help the organization meet regulatory standards but to also meet the needs of the local community. Stephen described an area in Kansas that did not have 24/7 ambulance service, and the safety standards of his oil and gas company require that they have “critical life support technology within so many minutes of an incident.” So with no 24/7 ambulance service, the company could not meet this regulation.

In order to solve this problem, the organization first considered spending \$400,000 to have their own ambulance contractor on site, but before writing the check, representatives of the organization asked the county how much it would cost to turn on the service, and it would cost \$250,000. The company made sure that the county understood this would not be an ongoing service, so they went to meet with the chief of fire department:

I don't know how to describe him, he's a farmer by trade. His skin's all wrinkly, very tough, wheat and grain boy and really tough. And he starts bawling like a baby, and we're like chief, did we say something wrong, and he's like give me just a second and he's trying to compose himself, and he says this is a dream come true, and I said, what's a dream come true, and he said 24- hour ambulance service is a dream come true. We're

like, well that's awesome, but why is it affecting you so much, and he goes you guys don't understand, two weeks ago my father died and I'm the chief of the fire department and I couldn't get an ambulance to save his life and he's looking at me to help him.

RQ 5: What connection do practitioners see between CSR and crisis communication?

The connection between CSR and crisis communication was seen by every practitioner, but each had a different perspective as to how this connection is created and who creates it. Some practitioners identified programs and employees as a connection between CSR and crisis communication while others noted that CSR is just something good to have in case of a crisis. In my analysis of these interviews, I identified three themes: workforce support, CSR as insurance, and economic recovery.

Workforce Support. Julie's perspective from working in a private public relations firm provided a unique look into the connection of CSR and crisis communication. By working in a private public relations firm, Julie provided examples of crisis plans that are created to support the workforce. In these plans, she emphasized the importance of linking CSR and crisis communication. Her linkage of CSR and crisis communication in organizations that her firm works with provided examples of how a crisis plan can support an organization. Julie explained that corporate social responsibility and crisis communication had

better be straight in alignment. I mean it better be this tall and this tall [equal height hand gestures], and you can't have crisis and CSR. It's got to be part of the plan, holding hands, singing kumbaya, and I would venture to say, and I hate to say this, that probably only about 50% of our corporations have it that front and center. If anything, I would hope the Deepwater Horizon incident put it on people's minds, CEOs' minds.

She continued to explain that CSR and crisis communication has to “go hand-in-hand because you’ve got to deal with crisis, yes, but then, immediately, you’ve got to start looking at how are we going to offset the negativity of the crisis with the good stuff about the company, and you do that through CSR.”

Corporate social responsibility programs can be developed to help specific groups including the organization that develops the program. Stephen described a methamphetamine program that taught people being brought in to work in the areas of Wyoming, Colorado, and North Dakota in order to share information since meth was becoming a huge problem. At the time, people were becoming hooked on methamphetamine, and eventually, this oil and gas company couldn’t find employees who could pass a drug test because they were all testing positive. It was becoming evident that this was having an impact on the community when stores like Walmart and restaurants like Applebee’s quit drug testing because so many people were using it in these areas.

At that point, this organization realized that if they did not educate the community, it would have an impact on their business. The speaker who was presenting the material realized after reading some of the information that his sister was a meth addict. “It was an incredibly impactful program,” said Stephen. “We had folks lined up to speak with this gentleman afterward, and the worst, saddest cases was when the kids walked up and said I need to tell someone that I just realized after watching your story or listening to your presentation that my parents are involved in drugs, and I want to stop them,” said Stephen. This was one example provided throughout interviews that showed an organization being a good citizen and showing that they cared about the community.

CSR as insurance. Corporate social responsibility programs can mean different things to different public relations practitioners. When I asked Carolyn how she defined CSR, she said it's "the position that a business takes on how they serve as a good citizen in the communities where they operate." She continued and said,

Industries that typically have high risk and crisis potential like oil and gas/energy, utilities, food, drug, food services, those kind of industries, healthcare, those are the kind of industries that are going to catch on fire the first time and every time there is a mistake made." Carolyn explained that these companies are publicly traded and anything that happens within these organizations can potentially affect "what people think and how they invest in that business whether they're buying stock." Therefore, a business needs to have a CSR strategy "to make sure that they are investing socially and doing things charitably that support their communities because if they don't, and they have those oops', it's ten times worse.

In some situations, an organization will create a plan for if a crisis occurs. These plans may also help the organization's reputation if they are done correctly. When I asked Peter if a CSR program could result from a crisis, he said,

A crisis can cause someone to want to initiate a corporate social responsibility program where there's a deficit. It's also the flipside. Many times, you'll do a corporate social responsibility prior to a situation that could be a crisis, so that if a crisis happens, you have already built a good reputation with the community, so that way if something goes wrong, people will view you as a good community citizen. Years ago, there's an example of riots in Los Angeles and buildings were destroyed in a community except for one, that was the McDonald's because that McDonald's supported the community, participated in

the community, gave a lot back to that community, and in that situation, that McDonald's was left standing and untouched.

Based upon this scenario, Peter believed that CSR can help an organization that is going through a crisis and reduce monetary and reputational damage. He described a case when his firm worked for Imperial Sugar, and there was explosion that killed 13 people. Peter said,

Imperial Sugar bent over backwards for the people in that community providing food, providing support, shelter, transportation for people that were coming in from out of town for funerals. Doing all the right things along the way, and we like to think that that reduced litigation that took place afterwards.

Economic Recovery. In the event of a crisis, an organization should be prepared for recovery and be ready for anything the public throws at them, but as Stephen explained,

If you do CSR right, then when something bad happens, you get the benefit of the doubt. They've [the community has] seen you already as a contributor to the community and contributor to positive program and if something happens, they're like those guys do good things, this is an anomaly, and they're going to continue to be a good member of the community. They will get this fixed...If it happens the other way around where the organization doesn't do good for the community or isn't a strong contributor, then there will be less forgiveness. It may also look like you are just writing checks to buy people off.

Tim explained that corporate social responsibility programs have to

be done very subtly because you do not want when you are in the middle of a crisis, you don't want to say ok this has happened but please remember that we're a good corporate

citizen and we gave \$2 million to the Houston community this year. You will basically just shoot yourself in the foot making a statement like that. It's better to figure out how can these partners help you during a crisis.

Chapter V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Final Implications

This study used a qualitative methods approach to explore how public relations practitioners, specifically those who specialize in CSR or crisis communications, derived connections between CSR, issues management, and crisis communication as it relates to mitigating a crisis in order to reduce damage to an organization. Thirteen practitioners of various age and gender and industry were interviewed. Practitioners were interviewed in a one-on-one setting of their choice in order to discuss how CSR initiatives are created, the influence that publics and stakeholders have on these initiatives, and how all of these ideas come together and connect with crisis communication. One interview was conducted with two individuals. In this particular interview, each individual had their own perspective based on their job title as to how CSR is initiated, but their collaboration together made the interview stronger and developed more key themes.

Corporate social responsibility, issues management, and crisis communication were used in order to answer the larger question of this study: can CSR mitigate a crisis and reduce reputational and monetary damage to an organization. Based on this large question, I was able to establish four research questions that were further developed into an interview guide with four main components. Each of these components served a specific purpose to answer a research question as well as building a rapport and relationship with my participants.

Summary of Results

In regards to research question one which asks, “To what extent do organizations conduct issues scanning?”, there were three themes identified: frequency of scanning, challenges to conducting scanning, social media and other services, and the positive and negative consequences of conducting issues scanning. Across all industries, practitioners agreed that issues scanning is a daily task. Some practitioners choose to do this task themselves, while others may have an entire department devoted solely to conducting issues scanning and monitoring various social mediums. The key challenge that I found was issues scanning and monitoring is an endless task; therefore, no matter what additional obligations the practitioner has or how high they are in the company, they must constantly stay on top of any arising issues. The ever evolving internet, social mediums, and new databases create opportunities for practitioners to find issues related to their organization, but the key challenge noted was this becomes a 24/7 task, and as more than one practitioner noted, “everyone is a reporter”. That makes the job increasingly challenging with the rise of social media. In private public relations firms, the challenge is doubled since the firm has to monitor potential issues for its clients in addition to issues that may arise for their own organization. Issues scanning is changes on a daily basis, but it is something that practitioners have come to expect and are working to adjust to for the future.

In regards to research question two which asked, “How do practitioners define CSR?”, a consistent response between participants was that CSR is the idea of being a good citizen and doing good things for the community. Practitioners noted that their organization wants to be involved with CSR initiatives and programs that align with their organizational values and pillars. Some of these initiatives may be more related to what top executives are passionate about and have a trickle-down effect and others may be involved with the surrounding community.

Organizations also legitimately want to do good within minority communities and be able to provide better opportunities for those who may not have the chance to reach those opportunities. What may be seen as competition between organizations may also be seen as goodwill when looked at through a different lens.

Research question three asked, “How do CSR initiatives emerge?”. The birthing process of a CSR initiative can take place in many forms. The key themes that emerged through my interviews were initiatives emerge through the publics’ input, employee culture, and after crisis. When an organization has their hand on the pulse of the public, they can determine what are “hot button” issues with publics, and depending upon the industry, they can create initiatives to help mitigate the response to these issues. Initiatives that emerged through the publics’ input were seen within the oil and gas industry. In terms of employee culture, practitioners across all industries explained that CSR initiatives can boost employee morale, and if a CEO or executive is behind the initiative, that will make employees more passionate about the company in return. Finally, after crisis became a significant theme in terms of what does an organization do after a crisis. Practitioners had examples of how this can be done, but the thread was common: communicate to publics before, during, and after the crisis and have a plan for what needs to be done after. Whether that is establishing an initiative or continuing an initiative, making publics feel safe after a crisis is the most important job for a practitioner after a crisis.

This is where I began receiving stronger responses about corporate social responsibility. Practitioners had a wide view on whether or not CSR should be used during a crisis or after a crisis. Some practitioners said it should not be mentioned during a crisis because it would come off as a diversion which could negatively impact the organization’s reputation. These answers came from CSR practitioners. However, crisis communicators encouraged organizations to

mention CSR in their press releases and statements to alleviate some of the pressure being placed on them because of the crisis. These crisis communicators still wanted the organization to handle the crisis, but they also wanted them to remind the public of what they had done for them and remind them that they are also members of the community. By using this technique, it would be possible for advocates to gather and support the organization which could reduce reputational and monetary damage.

In research question four, I asked “How are the results of issues management incorporated into crisis management?”, and the main theme I found was regulations. This is not to say that an organization practices CSR because they are required to by the government, but it does say that there has to be some amount of CSR conducted in order for that particular organization to retain their license to operate or continue to purchase other companies depending upon the industry. Through the interviews I conducted, the CSR initiatives that were created due to regulations were beneficial to the community and were long lasting. These initiatives were continued by the community long after the organization left which shows it left a positive impact.

My final research question asked, “What connection do practitioners see between CSR and crisis communication?”, and the themes that emerged from this question encompassed the entire ecosystem that is a crisis. These themes were workforce support, CSR as insurance, and economic recovery. The main finding was CSR and crisis communication need to be directly aligned because in the situation of a crisis, an organization does not have time to scramble and create a CSR initiative. It needs to be in place, and as stated in a portion of economic recovery, the public should be able to remember that initiative. CSR is used internally as well for employees and to help employees with various issues occurring in their lives or within their

families as seen in the methamphetamine case. This question brought to life the finding that publics will remember an organization if they are a good contributor and do good things.

Depending upon the industry, participants noted various communities that their organization targeted. In the oil and gas industry, practitioners noted that geography plays a large role in determining the creation of initiatives. In oil and gas, practitioners focus on the community in the surrounding area. The telecommunications industry focused primarily on their customers and the community that impacts directly impacts their business. Each industry focused on different programs to assist their constituents and stakeholders by molding their initiatives to benefit each party.

A final finding from my research came from the general lack of knowledge about CSR and issues management found during my interviews. Some practitioners had a strong grasp of the two concepts, but others had to ask for me to redefine questions or clarify what I meant when I said CSR. These interviews still proved to have information that was useful, but I used these interviews to adjust my questioning and make things clearer for future interviews.

Theoretical Implications

CSR. Through my research, I still found no consistent definition of CSR; however, I did find key phrases that can be used to find CSR. CSR is something that is authentic and genuine. When an organization employs CSR initiatives, they seek to work with the community and become a good citizen. The three scenarios presented by White (2005) were proven to be inaccurate through these interviews. Although an organization may decrease their CSR initiatives during a downtime in the economy, the initiatives and CSR will not go into “hibernation” as White (2005) predicted, and they have been proven by practitioners that they are not a fad (p.1).

The implications of these interviews in theory opens a wide spectrum that was not present when I began this research. My initial readings pointed in one direction: CSR is the right thing to do, and I found that CSR extends far beyond this meaning. As stated earlier, Wood (1991) defined CSR as “the basic idea or corporate social responsibility is that business and society are interwoven rather than distinct entities; therefore, society has certain expectations for appropriate business behaviors and outcomes” (p. 695). This idea can now be expanded upon through this study and include that CSR is the act of an organization to partner and assist other organizations, non-profits, or communities that align with its pillars, key values, or mission statement through philanthropy, being a responsible organization, or doing good things within these other entities to help them grow. By doing so, the organization who is utilizing CSR programs will also grow and gain trust, credibility, and advocates through these partnerships if CSR is being performed in a manner that allows for this growth.

Issues Management. Issues management has been taught and utilized as a strategic function that an organization can utilize to determine how their publics and key stakeholders feel about various situations. Through this research, issues management has been further expanded upon to include a marketing role within communications. Practitioners and organizations demonstrated that one aspect of issues management is now determining trends and hot issues that can create opportunities for their organization to thrive in the current changing market and economy. Other practitioners still use issues monitoring and scanning in the traditional sense of gauging how publics feel about an organization, but because of the rapid growth of technology, the tools that were once used in this field are somewhat extinct. It now takes teams to perform these tasks due to social media platforms and instant reporters (i.e.,

bloggers) who take the news or make posts that the organization needs to find and respond to in order to either eliminate a potential threat or create an opportunity.

As I stated before issues management was designed to serve four purposes (Heath, 1997; Heath & Cousino, 1990; cited in Heath, 2006, p. 77). However, after conducting this research, two or these purposes are still very applicable today, and one other purpose is somewhat applicable. Practitioners still use issues management to “engage in strategic planning in order to consider threats and opportunities” (Heath, 1997; Heath & Cousino, 1990; cited in Heath, 2006, p.77). Organizations will also “embrace and implement the highest standards of corporate responsibility to achieve credibility”, which can now also be done through collaborating with organizations in the same industry or collaboration with practitioners and competitors. The third purpose that Heath (1997) and Heath and Cousino (1990) define no longer functions in our society as it stands today (Heath, 2006, p.77). Because everyone has a voice, and there is a way to make all of those voices heard, and organization will not be able to “earn the right to be a public policy steward” (Heath, 1997; Heath & Cousino, 1990; cited in Heath, 2006, p. 77). It may be noted that they have excellent initiatives or programs that other organizations will utilize, but there is no longer a society who will place one organization “above reproach”. The final purpose is still very accurate in today’s society of issues management, and organization still need to identify, analyze, and monitor issues, but the manner in which an organization voices their facts or policy positions may work for some publics, but it will no longer “foster an ever more sound society,” (Heath, 1997; Heath & Cousino, 1990; cited in Heath, 2006, p.77). With all of the platforms available to publics and stakeholders, there is a daily topic or multiple topics that an organization will have to answer to every day, and there will not be one solid satisfaction amongst the organizations stakeholders and publics.

Crisis Communication. As seen through my analysis of crisis communication, organizations will always continue to have crises, and there will always be a need for a crisis plan and a crisis communicator. That part is simple. The real challenge is that there is no current literature on how an organization going through a crisis should utilize CSR. There is a place for this in crisis theories, and it should be an expansion upon Image Restoration Theory or a hybrid of that theory. Image Restoration Theory is slightly rigid for today's society and the wide range of crises that occur; therefore, a less constrictive solution would be to include possibilities of how to handle a crisis. For example, bolstering and denial will be strategy tactics for an organization in a crisis in and when they are applicable, or in some cases, organizations will use them even if they aren't applicable. However, this is where CSR programming needs to come into the theoretical spectrum. These programs should not be used as a diversion from the crisis because they are not created to be a diversion. If anything, these programs lay a theoretical groundwork to create plans involving CSR.

This framework is yet to be implemented; however, future research needs to thoroughly investigate this concept and build it from the ground up because there is room for specific theory, but since CSR is a relatively "young" topic to public relations, it hasn't been fully developed to its maximum potential when it involves crisis communication.

Practical Implications

Because this study explored CSR, issues management, and crisis communication, it created a sort of puzzle that needed to be solved. At first glance, it looks like these three concepts should not go together because how does issues management fit into the fix, and why would you add crisis communication to CSR? The change in today's crises has created an opportunity for

practitioners to evolve with CSR programs and use them in ways that will best benefit the organization.

A CSR program on its own can create a great deal of awareness when stakeholders find out about the program or have an influence on the program, but a program that actively seeks to help the community can create huge growth for the organization in the way of advocates and support from influencers who can help the organization in times of crisis. From speaking with practitioners, I learned that CSR has been in practice for years, but it has never had its own title under public relations. It has typically been lumped in with government affairs, investor relations, or even marketing. As some organizations create positions for CSR programming, it is important for other organizations to follow suit and create opportunities for emerging students who have knowledge and passion for the topic. Many organizations today cater their CSR programs to appeal to younger generations because they know from conducting issues scanning and monitoring these generations that the young generation wants to see an organization acting responsibly, and depending upon the industry, emphasizing sustainability or conservation.

If public relations practitioners can continue to grab the reins of CSR and bring it into our field, then we can continue to develop and nurture it away from a business function that places it as a way to meet regulations, maintain a license to operate, or simply create a return on investment. The business function of CSR is significant to organizations, but it is necessary for practitioners to demonstrate the additional benefits of CSR. The disconnect between CSR as a business function and a public relations function needs to be pulled together in order for the field to continue to grow. All of these things are important, and they are things that CSR programming is designed to do, but it needs to be implemented by practitioners who understand how to create awareness about the program and can show a different reason for the existence of a program.

Publics and stakeholders will look dimly on a program that is designed to meet regulations, and some organizations show that through their lackluster programs. However, publics and stakeholders become excited about an organization when they see something different, and that is the opportunity for public relations practitioners to take.

In my results and findings, I determined that there was a lack of knowledge about CSR and issues management amongst practitioners. The lack of knowledge can be attributed to a few items. The first being that CSR is a relatively new term to public relations that is emerging into the corporate world, and the second being that large corporations don't put forth large amounts of money when the economy is down. Therefore, with the oil and gas industry currently having difficulties, practitioners worry less about CSR because spending is typically cut in this area. In terms of issues management, this knowledge comes from being able to efficiently use a wealth of databases and resources and knowing which resource will yield the right information.

The final practical implication of this study that I would like to discuss is the importance of issues scanning and monitoring when determining a CSR program. These programs need to be something that is important to the community or within the organization. Human resources and other entities within an organization can conduct research and determine what issues matter most to their employees, and from that research, they can create CSR programs that appeal to these employees and give them a sense of pride that their organization listened to them. This does create a higher employee retention because employees want to know that their company listens to them. In terms of identifying what is important in the community, executives and practitioners can observe the community and determine what is needed to improve it or what assistance their organization can provide. If their particular organization can't provide that type of assistance, they can find another resource to provide and bring in other organizations to help that

community. Then, the industry will become stronger as a whole, and although these organizations are still competitors, they have done something that will give the industry a positive light.

Limitations

The greatest limitation in conducting this research was the lack of scholarly material about corporate social responsibility in a public relations setting. Although CSR is a multi-faceted topic based primarily in the business field, there is a large room for growth within public relations literature and research that has yet to be filled. This led to difficulties when formulating research questions and identifying key themes. However, this limitation also allowed quite a bit of freedom to provide a frame for future research.

While presenting a portion of this study at a conference, I received many questions about CSR, and they all related to how does it relate to public relations. I then saw that not only is there a limit of scholarly material, but there is also a limit of knowledge or a barrier between other fields and public relations. This limitation made it difficult to bring in business and psychology perspectives into the literature review because there was no base or common theme with public relations. Therefore, it required me to delve deeper in literature until I was able to grasp a common connection between CSR and business. From that point, I was able to slightly diminish this limitation, but it still existed.

Future Research

Although there is a plethora of information about CSR from business studies and other fields, there is room for research in public relations. Academia has no limits on studying this topic. For academics who study gender, research could be conducted to determine if CSR roles

in an organization are gender oriented. There could also be the question of race and determining if different races have specific preferences of CSR programs. These studies would be ideal for academics interested in gender and race and would create a stronger framework around CSR in a public relations setting. These studies could then be applied and shared with organizations to demonstrate that a diverse group of CSR programmers is a best case scenario for creating successful program.

Based on Excellence Theory, research should be conducted to determine the best ways to practice CSR in a crisis situation and under normal circumstances. There doesn't always have to be a crisis for an organization to promote their CSR programs. Excellence Theory showed the best and most effective way to practice public relations and the expected outcomes of practicing excellent public relations. Similar to this idea, studies need to be conducted on the best way to conduct crisis communication and issues management. Because these terms are loosely defined, there is room for strengthening this particular field, and with emerging technology that creates a learning gap for practitioners, it is now necessary to research and learn the best ways to conduct these two entities of public relations.

In an issues management study, the best way to begin would be to first determine what issues management means to various public relations practitioners. Through my research, some practitioners don't recognize the terms issues scanning and issues monitoring. Instead they have a broad look on issues management with a loose definition that encompasses a wide array of topics. These topics range from gathering information about trends, hot topics, the opinions of publics and stakeholders, monitoring the competition, and other topics which creates a complex job for public relations practitioners. First these practitioners need to be able to determine the best method to monitor each of these items, and then they need to do so on a daily basis. By

conducting research about issues scanning, academics can determine a more efficient way to conduct scanning and monitoring to simplify the job for practitioners. This does not mean that practitioners would have a simple job, but they would be able to conduct research on various topics in a timely manner and gather more information which could be used to create more opportunities for their organization. I would refer to this type of research as the best practices of issues management. The researcher would be able to conduct interviews with public relations practitioners who specialize in issues management and learn more about their daily duties and the challenges they face. Then, the researcher would be able to gather information from these practitioners about what would make their job more efficient. This would lead to a neater and more efficient practice of issues management.

Crisis management and communication is still an emerging and ever changing field in academics and public relations. There is a loose framework for how to best practice crisis communication and build a crisis plan, because crises are situational, there is no universal solution. Therefore, a practitioner needs to be prepared to be creative. This is where further research can assist practitioners in determining possible guidelines to handle a crisis. Public relations firms are constantly looking for ways to improve crisis training and communication, and this is the perfect opportunity for researchers to step in and conduct research on this topic. Studying various case studies from past and recent crises would provide a starting point that could demonstrate the things that went well during the crisis and the things that didn't go well during the crisis.

The field of CSR is an opportunity for public relations scholars to expand upon research. After first interviewing public relations practitioners, a second step in further research would be to interview business leaders about the benefits of CSR in their organization. This research

would also demonstrate the importance of CSR to business leaders which would help public relations practitioners communicate the benefits of CSR to these leaders. In addition to interviewing business leaders, scholars who focus on culture, diversity, and gender can conduct research to determine if CSR is a gendered field or if it is impacted by culture and diversity.

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Appendix A—In-Depth Interviews—Interview Protocol

I am conducting research for my thesis about how corporate social responsibility effects crisis communication and how issues management is incorporated into this dynamic. I will ask some basic questions about the work you do, and I will also ask questions about how your organization uses the public's input to inform their CSR initiatives as well as how you, as a public relations practitioner, perceive connections between CSR, issues management, and crisis communication. If at any time you would like me to clarify a question, please let me know. Please keep in mind that there are no right or wrong answers. If at any time, you feel uncomfortable and would like to end the interview, please feel free to tell me and we will end the interview. Also, please feel free to refrain from answering these questions. I want to remind you that your name, your identity, and your organization's name, and the programs you work on will NOT be revealed in any part of this study. I will only reveal the type of sector you are in—oil and gas, telecommunications, governmental affairs, etc. Do you have any questions before we begin?

For the purpose of this interview guide, I have included the four research questions that correspond to the following questions.

- 1. To what extent do organizations conduct issues scanning (issues management)?*
- 2. How do practitioners define CSR?*
- 3. How do CSR initiatives emerge?*
- 4. How are results of issues scanning incorporated into crisis management (issues management and crisis communication)?*

5. *How do practitioners perceive the connection between CSR and crisis (CSR and crisis communication)?*

First, I would like to ask you some questions about your role as a communicator.

1. *Tell me about your job. (Rapport building)*
2. *What are your greatest achievements in your job? (Rapport building)*
3. *What are the greatest challenges you face in your job? (Rapport building)*
 - a. *(Probe) How do you combat these challenges? (Rapport building)*
 - b. *(Probe) How do these challenges impact these daily duties? (Rapport building)*

Now, I'd like to ask you a few questions about issues scanning and issues monitoring in your organization. (Addresses research question 1 and 3)

4. *When I say the word, issues management, what comes to mind? (Understanding of issues management; potentially addresses the issues this practitioner may support; addresses research question 1 and provides a general background)*
5. *When you conduct issues monitoring, what mediums do you use to find publics that are relevant to your organization? (Issues management and determining applicable mediums to find publics; addresses research question 1)*
 - a. *(Probe) How does your organization practice issues management (ask for specific examples) (Addresses the steps of issues management and how it potentially relates to crisis prevention; addresses research question 3)*

- b. (Probe) What publics have you found are relevant to your organization? (*Issues management—determining relevant publics; addresses research question 1 slightly*)
6. How frequently do you communicate with these publics? (*Issues management—frequency of communication to publics; addresses research question 1*)
 - a. (Probe) What kind of messages do you relay to these publics? (*Issues management alignment with communication mediums and specific publics*)

Now, I'd like to ask you a few questions about corporate social responsibility (your independent views and your organizations views). (Addresses research question 2)

7. When I say corporate social responsibility, what comes to mind?
 - a. (Probe) Do you have any specific examples of why you have this perception of corporate social responsibility? (*Defining CSR*)
8. How are corporate social responsibility programs “born”? (*Addresses stakeholder engagement and issues monitoring to determine what publics want from CSR initiatives*)
9. What values do you think your organization believes in when it comes to corporate social responsibility? (*CSR trust and good citizenship*)
10. How important is corporate social responsibility to your organization? (*Addresses research question 2—stakeholder engagement*)

I'd like to ask you a few questions about crisis communication. (Addresses research questions 3 and 4)

11. When I say crisis communication, what come to mind? (*Perceptions of crisis communication*)

- a. (Probe) Do you have any specific examples of crises within your organization?
12. Can you provide examples of a crisis event at your organization? (*General background of crisis communication*)
 13. How does your organization incorporate issues management to prepare for potential crises? (*Results of issues management with crisis communication; addresses research question 4*)
 - a. (Probe) Are CSR initiatives considered in this preparation? (*Incorporation with crisis communication; addresses research question 4*)
 14. Are there any CSR programs that have resulted from a crisis? (*Addresses research question 3; results of a crisis and issues management monitoring after the crisis*)
 - a. (Probe) What kind of programs (specific examples)? (*Issues management monitoring*)
 15. What connection, if any, do you see between corporate social responsibility and crisis communication? (*Addresses research question 4 and provides connection between CSR and CM*)

Those are all of the questions I have for you today.

1. Is there anything else I didn't ask but you think I should know about this topic?

Thank you very much for your time and help.

Appendix B—Recruitment Letter

Dear (Name),

My name is Jan Uhrick, and I am a graduate student at the Jack J. Valenti School of Communication at the University of Houston. I am currently conducting research for my thesis and am interested in learning about Corporate Social Responsibility and crisis communication. My thesis committee advisor is Dr. Jennifer Vardeman-Winter (Here is a link to her faculty page: <http://www.uh.edu/class/communication/faculty-staff/faculty/JenniferVardeman-Winter/>).

I am currently interviewing communicators at organizations to learn about their Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives, particularly how these initiatives can be incorporated into crisis communication through the use of issues management. This project has been reviewed by the University of Houston Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (713) 743-9204.

Specifically, I am interviewing communicators from companies that work with the community through various initiatives and to learn how companies like yours respond to crises that affect these communities. I will ask questions like, “How are corporate social responsibility programs “born”?” and “How does your organization incorporate issues management to prepare for potential crises?” The goal of the study is to provide communication students and communicators with information about how organizations can better use CSR initiatives to help recover from a crisis with minimal reputational and monetary damage.

You do not need any prior knowledge to participate, and there are no right or wrong answers to any of the questions. If you are interested in participating, the interview will last approximately

45-90 minutes, and all information you give me will be kept confidential, including your name and your organization's name. I am very flexible on the duration of an interview and can accommodate your time needs. I can come to your office or a public place like a coffee shop to interview you.

When we meet, I will provide you with a form stating the details of the report and information about your rights as a study participant. I will also ask that you sign a form granting me permission to audiotape our interview (for accuracy purposes). If you choose not to be audio-recorded, I will instead take notes during the interview.

Thank you for your consideration. Please contact me if you have any questions.

Jan Uhrick

Appendix C—Informed Consent Form
University of Houston
Consent to Participate in Research

Thesis Title: Corporate Social Responsibility: A Qualitative Analysis of CSR in the Mitigation of Crisis

You are being invited to participate in a thesis research project conducted by Jan Uhrick from the Jack J. Valenti School of Communication at the University of Houston.

Non-Participation Statement

Your participation is voluntary, and you may refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may also refuse to answer any question.

Purpose of the Study

I am conducting research for my thesis with public relations practitioners that comprise corporate social responsibility and crisis communication relations from organizations in the City of Houston. The purpose of this research is to find out how you believe your organization uses corporate social responsibility in association with issues management, particularly in crisis communication.

The project will last approximately one year. In the end, this information may help public relations practitioners and students practicing in the field as well as providing a framework for future research for public relations scholars.

Procedures

A total of 20 participants will be asked to participate in this research.

What you will be asked to do

First, I will ask you if it is OK for me to tape record this conversation. It is OK if you do not want me to tape record this conversation.

At the beginning of this interview, there are about three questions in a questionnaire about your occupational role that I would like you to answer. These questions are helpful to me in understanding your responses to the statements. These questions ask about your title and types of work you do on a regular basis. You are not required to answer any or all of these questions—your participation in this section and entire interview is entirely voluntary.

Then I will ask you questions about your job and how your company values corporate social responsibility and conducts issues management in regards to crisis communication. I will ask questions like, “How are corporate social responsibility initiatives born?” I will also ask you questions about how your organization utilizes issues management to before, during, and/or after a crisis. In total, I will ask you about 20 questions. Again, you can choose at any time to not answer any question without any effect on your participation.

When we are done with the interview, I will ask if you have any questions for me and if there is anything you would like to add. That will be the end of the interview, and I will not ask you for any additional time. If you realize later that there is information you would like to send to me regarding the topic, you can contact me, and I will be happy to interview you again. However, this is completely your choice.

Number, frequency and duration of interactions

I will only ask to interview you once, but if you have any information at a later date that you would like to add and would like to have another interview, I will be more than happy to meet with you again.

Total time commitment

The total time commitment for your participation in this interview is 45-90 minutes, depending on how much you would like to participate.

Confidentiality

Every effort will be made to maintain the confidentiality of your participation in this research. You will be given a pseudonym immediately after your participation in the interview so I will not use your name at any point in the research after the interview. All electronic and print files will be saved under your pseudonym along with the date of the interview. The electronic data will be stored in a password protected file that will be accessed only by the principal investigator and my thesis advisor. Transcriptions of interviews will be kept in an office that is always locked. Confidentiality will be maintained within legal limits.

Risks/Discomforts

Because your interviews may be audio recorded (with your permission), and may be identified by name, this project presents minimal risk to you, the participant. However, your name and affiliations will remain confidential. Your participation is voluntary, and you can decline to answer specific questions or end your participation in the interview at any time without penalty.

Benefits

While you may not directly benefit from participation, your participation may help other practitioners and students practicing in this field as well as scholars conducting research on this topic.

Alternatives

Participation in this project is voluntary, and the only alternative to this project is non-participation.

Agreement for the Use of Audio Tapes

If you consent to take part in this study, please indicate whether you agree to be audio taped during the study by checking the appropriate box below. If you agree, please also indicate whether the audio tapes can be used for publications/presentations.

- I agree to be audio taped during the interview.
 - I agree that the audio tape(s) can be used in publication/presentations.
 - I disagree that the audio tape(s) can be used in publication/presentations.
- I disagree to be audio taped during the interview.

If you choose not to be audio-recorded, you will not be penalized and can still take part in the research. Instead, the interviewer will take notes of your comments during the interview.

Publication Statement

The results of this study will be used for a final thesis and may be published in scientific and/or professional journals. It may also be used for educational purposes or presented in conferences. However, no individual participant will be identified.

Participant Rights

1. I understand that consent is required of all persons participating in this study.
2. All procedures have been explained to me and all of my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.
3. Any risk and/or discomforts have been explained to me.
4. Any benefits have been explained to me.
5. I understand that, if I have any questions, I may contact Jennifer Vardeman-Winter at 713-743-4294 or at jvardeman@uh.edu.
6. I have been told that I may refuse to participate or to stop my participation in this project at any time before or during the project. I may also refuse to answer any question.
7. ANY QUESTIONS REGARDING MY RIGHTS AS A RESEARCH SUBJECT MAY BE ADDRESSED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON COMMITTEE FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS (713-743-9204). ALL RESEARCH PROJECTS THAT ARE CARRIED OUT BY INVESTIGATORS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON ARE GOVERNED BY REQUIREMENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY AND THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT.
8. All information that is obtained in connection with this project and that can be identified with me will remain confidential as far as possible within legal limits. Information gained from this study that can be identified with me may be released to no one other than the principal investigator. The results may be published in scientific journals, professional publications, or conferences without identifying me by name.

I HAVE READ (OR HAVE HAD READ TO ME) THE CONTENTS OF THIS CONSENT FORM AND HAVE BEEN ENCOURAGED TO ASK QUESTIONS. I HAVE RECEIVED ANSWERS TO MY QUESTIONS. I GIVE MY CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY. I HAVE RECEIVED (OR WILL RECEIVE) A COPY OF THIS FORM FOR MY RECORDS AND FUTURE REFERENCE.

Study Participant (print name): _____

Signature of Study Participant: _____

Date: _____

I HAVE READ THIS FORM TO THE PARTICIPANT AND/OR THE PARTICIPANT HAS READ THIS FORM. AN EXPLANATION OF THE RESEARCH WAS GIVEN AND QUESTIONS FROM THE PARTICIPANT WERE SOLICITED AND ANSWERED TO THE PARTICIPANT'S SATISFACTION. IN MY JUDGMENT, THE PARTICIPANT HAS DEMONSTRATED COMPREHENSION OF THE INFORMATION.

Principal Investigator (print name and title): _____

Signature of Principal Investigator: _____

Date: _____