UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA GRADUATE COLLEGE

**THE TRIANGULAR MODEL FOR
MULTI-ACTOR RELATIONAL DYNAMICS:
RESTAURANT CHAINS AND THEIR PUBLICS**

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**THE TRIANGULAR MODEL FOR
MULTI-ACTOR RELATIONAL DYNAMICS:
RESTAURANT CHAINS AND THEIR PUBLICS**

A THESIS APPROVED FOR

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Abstract

Organizational relationships with external publics are mostly perceived in the context of two-way interactions. In networked digital media platforms, employees or investors who are internal stakeholders and publics engage in communicative interactions with external stakeholders. Some employees in poor relationships with their working companies become expressive in online communities. They may blow whistles, leak, exaggerate problems, exaggerate severity of consequences, or collaborate with external publics against management (e.g., negative megaphoning). Such negative content, once generated and distributed by internal publics, could earn higher credibility with online information seekers.

This study tests a new model of multi-actor relational dynamics in a triangular frame. The strategic value of employee relationships is demonstrated through an inspection of their communicative actions. Using a design of two experimental surveys– one of employees of fast-food restaurants and the other of customers of the same four restaurants– two sides of the triangular model are presented and measured to see how relationship moderates the valence and receptiveness to information from an organization's internal publics (employees or investors) directly to their external publics (customers). Thus, two sides of the triangle are measured to make inferences about the third. The key concepts being measured are relationship quality and symmetrical communications, so see if they have the predicted effect on communicative action and acceptance of that information.

Results support that positive organization-public relationship (OPR) and symmetrical communications with publics have a direct positive relationship with the effects of employees' communicative behavior, as well as the credence customers give to that information and their likelihood to further share that information.

Introduction

Historically, an organization's relationships with its external publics have been described and understood as two-way interactions between the organization and its customers or its activist publics. In networked digital media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter and Reddit, which have been recently heavily debated in traditional media, employees or investors (internal publics) have for some time now had the ability to simultaneously engage in communicative interactions directly with external stakeholders and with their own organization (Kim & Rhee, 2011). This communication from internal publics directly to external, without the sanction of the organization, known as megaphoning (Kim & Rhee, 2011), raises the potential for three-way communications that could change the ways we have previously conceptualized other mass communication theories. Built on well-researched theories such as publics, balance theory, credibility theory and others. James Grunig's work from the 1960s through today has established the concept of two-way symmetrical communication, the open and responsive give-and-take of information between an organization and a public as well as their shared goals, as the normative state of strategic communications and the public relations practice most likely to lead to excellence (Gruing & Kim, 2021; Kenny, 2016).

The reality that organizations must now understand that their communications sometimes actually exist in a three-way structure, and yet strive to remain symmetrical to achieve excellence (Dozier, Grunig & Grunig, 2013) would represent a paradigmatic shift to a new way of thinking about strategic communications and the role of the public relations department in an organization. This shift is potentially important because, among other reasons, critiques of the Grunig models have often focused on an assumed lack of realistic application (Kenny, 2016). The idea of two-way symmetrical communications between an organization and its external

publics is itself often somewhat cynically viewed as somewhat unrealistic, so the addition of a third dimension would likely be greeted with similar skepticism. Adding a third communicator to that model might be assumed to further complicate it, however, it also can serve to make the model more optimal than ever, due to the technological realities of the Internet. The triangular model discusses not so much three-way symmetrical communication as it does two-way symmetrical communication unfolding on three planes in real time.

This thesis attempts to use such a model for three-way communications in the form of a triangle, previously proposed by Kaufman and Kim (2020), and to highlight the role the relationship between the different parties at the nodes of the triangle plays in mediating those communications. To do this, we must first explore the history of theories that propose effects observable in communicative actions unfolding on networked digital platforms and their effect on the practice of public relations. The purpose of this thesis' goal is to further develop burgeoning theory in the exploration of three-way symmetrical communication as a public relations concept and to give direction to future research. The existence of Grunig's models of public relations gives us theory that explains many phenomena in the public relations and strategic communications realm, but we also have a new phenomenon, three-way communicative interactions, that requires some new way to explain how it works. This necessitates the creation of a new model.

Illustration of this new model requires an exploration of Heider's balance theory, which will help with concepts of credibility and relationship between three parties. Additionally, theories that have previously been associated with Grunig's four models of public relations could be re-evaluated and applied to networked digital platforms. The role relationship plays, as a context of all the interactions that occur between an organization and its publics, as well as

relationship's distinction from reputation, are important factors in the new model. Most importantly perhaps, is the integration of the theories put forth by Kim, Rhee and others (e.g., megaphoning), exploring the phenomena of communicative actions undertaken by internal publics and their influences on external publics. These are the essential functions undertaken by internal publics, which can dictate the disposition of issues, crisis and the relationships that exist between the organization and its publics.

Literature Review

Symmetrical Communication and Asymmetrical Communication

The view of public relations as a management function of an organization's communications with its publics (Grunig & Hunt, 1984) underlies the assumptions of this research. Their research and subsequent research by Grunig showed that the way to achieve best outcomes in communication with publics is to employ symmetrical communication methods (Grunig & Grunig, 1992; Grunig & Kim, 2021). Symmetrical communications are characterized by synergistic, holistic, and interdependent communications postures (Huang, 2004), a somewhat vague description. To be precise, symmetrical communications differ from asymmetrical communications, chiefly in their goals or purpose or intent of communication. Symmetrical communications seek to find the best outcome for both the organization and their publics, while asymmetrical communications aim chiefly to persuade the public, and change or re-enforce an attitude (Grunig & Grunig, 1992). Symmetrical communications in this conception, are more symmetric in their goals and intention of communication (e.g., adjust interests of relational actors), than they are in their measure of communications. Symmetrical communications are not marked by a roughly even amount of communication, but by symmetricity in the goals and

interests of the communicating parties (Huang, 2004). Grunig's models for public relations

further explored the use of symmetrical communications for strategic communications goals.

Grunig's Models

Grunig's four models of public relations include *press agentry* and *public information* on

the craft/journalism side of the spectrum and on the strategic communications side, *two-way*

asymmetrical and *two-way symmetrical communication* (Grunig & Kim, 2021). Press agentry,

based on the saying, often attributed to P.T. Barnum (Grunig & Hunt, 1984), that there's "no

such thing as bad publicity," or even Oscar Wilde's version of it, "there is only one thing in life

worse than being talked about and that is not being talked about," (Wilde, 1890) encapsulates the

former's vision that having public talking about the organization or its product, even negatively,

is valuable for the organization. Public information models of public relations seek to persuade,

transfer information to and cause attitudes changes on the part of the organization's publics

(Dozier, Grunig & Grunig, 2013; Grunig & Kim, 2021). Those two models represent the more

crude, purely one-way, persuasion-based models that have shown increasingly limited effects

over time (Dozier, Grunig & Grunig, 2013; Grunig & Grunig, 1992).

On the other side of the spectrum are the models based on two-way communications, where

the organization not only listens, but considers the goals, interests and issues that concern their

publics. In this normative view, an organization's best interests are served when they consider

the interests and goals of their publics (Grunig & Grunig, 1992). Two-way symmetrical

communication has been identified through previous research to be the most ethical and effective

model of public relations practice (Dozier, Grunig & Grunig, 2013). Press agentry is essentially

associated with propaganda and public information with journalism, which was the classic role

of a public relations practitioner; as an in-house journalist (Dozier, Grunig & Grunig, 2013).

Grunig's model of two-way symmetrical communications involves not just speaking and listening, but doing so in an approximately symmetrical manner, where views, concerns and issues raised by the public are not just heard by the organization but considered in decision making (Grunig & Kim, 2021).
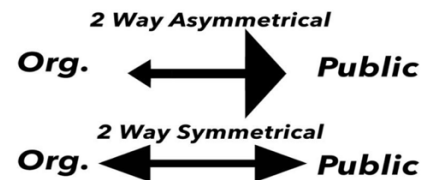

Figure 1

While Grunig's research suggests the two-way symmetrical model as most ethical and effective theoretical manner in which to practice public relations, it is not the only school of thought on public relations management and practice. Organizations have normatively subscribed to the other three models, and many organizations use the approaches and assumptions of different models during different situations and with different publics (Grunig & Kim, 2021). The two-way model has the limitation of not countenancing a split in the nature of the publics. The organization no longer communicates with solely one public at a time, they now find themselves in tripartite communications (something Grunig et al. did foresee) however, not just with external publics or internal publics, but with both simultaneously.

The triangular model proposed in this thesis separates the organization, previously viewed somewhat monolithically, into its constituent parts, management, and internal publics. It then assesses communicative actions between the three nodes of a triangle (including external publics) across different time periods, as opposed to viewing those actions as occurring strictly between organization and external publics directly. In this digital era of three-way communication potential, new and different information gathering techniques may be necessary to prepare for issues and crisis scenarios, and to conduct communications with publics in a

symmetrical manner.

Employee Communication Behavior: Scanning, Scouting and Megaphoning

Employees of companies with which they have poor relationships may express their discontent online. They may blow whistles, leak information, exaggerate problems or the severity of their consequences, or otherwise collaborate with external publics against their companies' management. This phenomenon has been described in previous research as *megaphoning* (Kim & Rhee, 2011). Lauzen (1997) conceptualized environmental scanning as being in part "the first two steps in the issues management process: issue identification and issue monitoring" (p. 70). In short, scanning the environment, which now of course includes copious internet content including social media, is a fundamental part of the process to foresee and avoid, or at least not exacerbate, oncoming issues and crises. This activity was previously the part of the purview of public relations managers, but has now become a formal and informal activity, also known as scouting, which may be undertaken by anyone within the organization (Kim & Rhee, 2011).

Environmental scanning would necessarily require a significant makeover in the era of networked digital platforms and social media (Yang, Li, & Kiang, 2011). The act of members of an organization keeping an ear to the ground to sense changes in the environment and head off coming crises has a clearer window in the digital era, with social media displaying these potential crises for all the world to see, but a much shorter fuse with which to work before a crisis blooms, due to the viral and highly networked nature of the communications on social media platforms.

Perceived Organizational Ethics

Organizational-public relations (OPR) are built on a variety of different factors, but as previously stated, trust is a major factor in positive relationships. Ethics have been shown to be integral to trust and positively related to quality of organizational public relationships (Bowen, Hung-Baesecke, & Chen, 2016). Trust, which is greatly contributed to by perception of organizational ethics, is strongly linked to employee satisfaction and loyalty as well (Matzler & Renzl, 2007, as cited in Bowen, Hung-Baesecke, & Chen, 2016). Of the OPR dimensions already identified and measurable, organizational ethics presents a good candidate for measurement and subjection to experimental manipulation (in the form of vignettes) with a good chance for useful results.

"Ethics is a core, foundational concept of organizations," (Bowen, Hung-Baesecke, & Chen, 2016, p. 10). This was one of the main two findings of the study by Bowen, Hung-Baesecke and Chen (citation), and it points to the reason it is being used as an independent variable for research in this study. Perceived organizational ethics and a team-oriented organization environment have been found to foster better job satisfaction among internal publics (Elçi & Alpkan, 2009). Thus, this study looks to measure the effects perceived organizational ethics might have from both the employee and customer standpoints.

Conspiratorial Thinking

Conspiracy is defined as "an effort to explain some event or practice by reference to the machinations of powerful people, who have also managed to conceal their role," (Sunstein & Vermeule, 2008, p. 4). Conspiratorial thinking also has a positive correlation with pro-social behavior and acceptance of scientifically presented information (van der Linden, 2015). In times of higher anxiety, conspiratorial thinking increases (Grzesiak-Feldman, 2013). This might be

more pronounced effect on internal publics in times of issue or crisis, than external, as external publics are less likely to view a crisis for the organization as an existential crisis for themselves, because their livelihood isn't connected to the organization's functioning in the same way as an employee. There isn't a wealth of research into the effects of conspiratorial thinking on relationship, but a review of what does exist suggests conspiratorial thinking is damaging to relationships, trust and healthy communications between an organization and its publics (Sunstein & Vermeule, 2008).

Issues and Crisis

In the triangular model, the working definition of organizational crisis is taken primarily from Coombs' research. It identified these characteristics: 1) "a major occurrence with a potentially negative outcome affecting an organization, company, or industry, as well as its publics, products, services, or good-name" (Coombs, 1999, p. 2). 2) "a major unpredictable event that has potentially negative results. The event and its aftermath may significantly damage an organization and its employees, products, services, financial condition, and reputation" (Coombs, 1999, p.2). 3) "if stakeholders believe an organization is in crisis, a crisis does exist, and stakeholders will behave as if a crisis exists" (Coombs, 1999, p. 3). When in an acute scenario, if stakeholders find their beliefs about the organization's goals and identity to be made invalid by action of the organization or unexpected occurrence, and if this dissonance is severe enough, then a crisis is present, which creates unwanted environmental consequences for both the organization and its publics (Coombs, 2012, as cited in Zhang & Borden, 2017).

Issues that are always present and simmering, may flare into crises, given a variety possible triggers, such as specific events or environmental changes (Coombs, 2007). These crises will be carried by active and aware publics but exacerbated and driven into the organization's

view by hot-issue publics, a group that may not hold the same level of knowledge or personal

involvement with an issue that active publics do, but nonetheless is highly motivated to be

involved in an issue or crisis space (Aldoory & Grunig, 2012). In networked digital platforms

like social media, when a hot issue public arises, they may have been activated by a leak of

information from an internal public, and/or may be spurred on to continued activism by further

informational leaks, in the form of megaphoning (Kim & Rhee, 2011). Recent examples of this

are the variety of megaphoning efforts employees of the mobile stock trading app, Robinhood, in

response to what they saw as opaqueness and underhanded behavior by their own organization in

the face of the GameStop stock frenzy crisis (Popper, Browning, & Griffith, 2021).

Notably, for its effect on the triangular model used in the research presented here,

previous experimental studies have found support for the idea that previous relationship can tell

researchers a great deal about how publics will react in times of crisis. Specifically, Coombs and

Holladay (2001) gave a name for this, the *velcro effect*, to reflect the relative stickiness of

memories of antecedent relationship that publics hold onto. The velcro effect described the fact

that negative relationship in the past (and only negative relationship) could cause publics to hold

those past relational outcomes against the organization in times of crisis, damaging reputation

and increasing the share of responsibility for the crisis attributed to the organization (Coombs &

Holladay, 2001). That relationship history can provide a very stable positive effect for the

organization in times of issue and crisis. "The stability may serve to deflect and reduce the

negatives generated by a crisis from attaching themselves to the organization. A favorable

relationship history acts as a buffer against crisis damage" (Coombs & Holladay, 2001, p. 324).

This study seeks to test whether a similar effect to velcro effect, and the halo effect of stability,

might occur in the case of positive relationship and symmetrical communications between the

organization and its internal publics. Thus, the positive antecedent relationship with *internal publics* might yield similar effects on the organization's relationships with *external publics* and the interaction of all three parties in times of issues and crisis.

In complex networked digital platforms, especially with larger multinational corporate structures enveloping smaller organizations and spanning the globe, it is nearly impossible not to create issues, crises and negative relational outcomes between an organization and its many publics. In the current era of networked digital platforms, relationships between customers or other external publics and employees or internal stakeholders of an organization— communicating without the express authorization of the organization, or *megaphoning*—play out in real-time, and often before the eyes of the world on social media. This necessitates a new model to both describe what is happening on networked digital platforms, also to potentially prescribe solutions and strategies, or move toward a normative theory for a 5th model of public relations using Grunig's frameworks.

Balance Theory

An application of the principles of an excellent public relations program (as outlined by the research of Dozier, Grunig and Grunig, 2013, into the four models of public relations) has been previously shown to improve the relationships between organizations and their publics, as well as helping them to avoid conflict (Dozier, Grunig, & Grunig, 2013). This is a rather instinctive result, in that one would naturally expect a relationship to benefit from an even and respectful mutual-gains based approach to problem solving (Susskind & Field, 1996). This approach would be one where an organization takes responsibility for its faults and holds the interests of the various publics they interact with on the same level as their own (Susskind & Field, 1996). And it stands to reason that publics would feel more trust and a more positive

relationship with such an organization. This effectiveness, which would include involvement of the public relations chief practitioner in the dominant decision-making coalition of the organization, would also rely heavily on environmental scanning (Dozier, 1992) to identify potential conflicts and issues before they become crises, and to use public relations to head off those crises (Grunig & Huang, 2013).

Balance theory (Heider, 1946, 1948) provides a model by which we might measure the importance of the issue/crisis at hand to the publics, thereby finetuning the accuracy of the triangular model. Additionally, this theory provides a similar conceptual visual identity which we might translate to a triangular model. In the view of balance theory Heider gives a P-O-X framework, where P and O represent actors in a scenario and X represents the issue or object of "debate." If P and O share the same view of the issue, and P has a positive view of O, then their shared views on X will foster a cognitively balanced outcome and will strengthen their relationship. However, if P and O disagree about X, then the relative importance of X to P will dictate whether or not P can maintain a positive view of O. Using P as a representation of the external publics of the organization and O the organization itself, X may represent a crisis or issue unfolding, the relative salience of which to P and O might dictate the level of activism of P (the publics) against O (the organization), as well as the form the response or apology from O might take (Yang & Bentley, 2017).

Balance theory is not a straight line of development away from the triangular model, but it provides some insight into the interactions that will take place between the parties at nodes of the triangle. This study uses balance theory as a conceptual backdrop for which it theorizes about how two publics' views of an organization in issues or crisis, might affect their views of each other, in a sense, bringing the triangular model into balance in a manner similar to Heider's

triangle. When internal publics megaphone to external publics, their individual views of the

organization in crisis might dictate whether the external publics give more credence to negative

megaphoning from the internal publics, or conversely, less credibility to their positive

megaphoning on behalf of the organization.

Credibility

Credibility is traditionally viewed as coming from three sources: audience characteristics,

message characteristics and source characteristics (Self, 1996). Source credibility and

trustworthiness are particularly important to the overall credibility of a message (Hovland &

Weiss, 1951). Based in the works of Plato and Aristotle, the source credibility is the oldest and

most instinctive to the lay thinker (Self, 1996). This is a major reason why organizations should

be thinking about the interactions that go on between their internal and external publics on social

media without their sanction. If the message being carried by the internal public is a negative

one, it may enjoy increased salience and credibility with the audience because of the inherent

credibility and assumed expertise of whistleblowers (Cassematis & Wortley, 2013). In a sense,

this is what megaphoners are: whistleblowers who have eschewed all formalities of press,

official reporting, and personal safety to report directly to external publics (Kim & Rhee, 2011).

In this view of credibility, reputation of the source would seem to be of high importance, but this

is not necessarily the case with megaphoning from the internal publics of an organization. Their

affiliation and expertise alone may be enough to make the information stick with the audience

(Hovland & Weiss, 1951).

Organization Public Relationship

Reputation was a once the most prized intangible possession an organization could have

and was believed to be essentially the same as a relationship, however research in the past 20

years has gone a long way to separating the two concepts (Grunig & Hung-Baesecke, 2015).

Importantly, while many organizations still chase reputation (just as many still use somewhat

outdated modes of public relations like press agentry) positive relationship is not only different

from positive reputation; it's also more important (Grunig & Hung-Baesecke, 2015). Positive

and negative are terms that work well for the measure of relationships because morality is not

necessarily a factor, though ideally the relationship would be based on morally righteous

motives. Good relationships that incorporate *optimal trust* levels in each other include not just

trust, but a modicum of distrust, or healthy skepticism, in each other as well (Wicks, Berman, &

Jones, 1999). However, achieving optimal trust with all publics will be an enormously difficult,

if not impossible task. In some scenarios, negative relationships with publics—even a large one

like a national population—are predicated on morally courageous decisions that create new

activist publics from populations that fundamentally view the problem differently. This is in part

due to the nature of communications between publics and organizations (Grunig & Kim, 2017).

"Communication should not be treated as a *constant* as is common in microeconomic theories of

decision making" (Kim & Krishna, 2014, p. 72). Sometimes organizations can create crises

inadvertently out of issues where they are making a morally "right" decision, where no

communicative interaction was previously taking place, which leads to a negative effect on their

relationships with publics (Coombs, 2007). There is also research that suggests that positive

long-term relationships with key publics, created and maintained by public relations, will boost

organizational effectiveness (Huang, 2001). This all informs the functions of the different sides

of the triangle in the model for three-way symmetrical communications.

 It should be fairly obvious that the ideal three-way triangular relationship model for

public relations would be *positive*, *positive* and *positive* on all sides. In other words, the firm has

a positive relationship with two of their most crucial stake-holding publics, their customers (external) and their employees or investors (internal), but also the customers and employees have a good relationship between them as well. Every party in that triangular model would be satisfied, and this would lead to increased organizational effectiveness (Dozier et al. 2013). While this may not happen as often as people might desire, it is certainly possible, if for short periods of time. The size of an organization, as well as its goals, mission and/or products, are certainly linked to the plausibility of such a scenario (Payne & Mansfield, 1973). It might be quite easy for a small organization to keep their relationships with their employees and investors positive, while also pleasing their customer publics with a quality product and avoiding activist publics by not negatively impacting their environment. In that case, there would be few conceivable reasons for internal stakeholders to communicate to publics independently or some other way negatively affect the other two relationship structures. With nothing to complain about and no reason to be upset, any communication between the internal and external stakeholders would be of a positive or neutral nature. This would reflect a more classical two-way model of communications, because the third communication channel, between internal and external stakeholders may not meaningfully develop without a negative element in the first two channels (Grunig & Kim, 2021).

The key dimensions of OPR that have been thus far identified and studied, from a public relations or relations management standpoint, are trust, control mutuality, commitment, satisfaction, involvement, openness and investment (Grunig & Huang, 2000; Hon & Grunig, 1999; Huang, 2001, as cited in Bowen, Hung-Baesecke, & Chen, 2016). These are distilled to the outcomes of control mutuality, which references the level of situational control each party feels they have in the relationship; commitment the relationship as a going concern; satisfaction

between the parties on returns for the tangible and intangible investments made in the

relationship; and trust between the organization and its public in their relationship (Hon &

Grunig, 1999; Grunig & Huang, 2000). All the factors defined by Hon, Grunig (1999) and

Huang (2000) have an element of symmetricity to them, which fuels the mutual benefits of the

relationship. The triangular models posit a key variable relationship occurs there between

symmetrical communications as a way the organization might foster this symmetricity which

permeates the elements of a quality OPR.

OPRA: Relationship Measures

OPR is not only at the heart of public relations and the thrust of much of its research over

the past few decades (Grunig & Huang, 2000), it's also instrumental to the function and measure

of the triangular model. Fostering and maintaining these positive relationships between an

organization and its publics has also been demonstrated to be a key function of the public

relations department for an organization (Dozier, Grunig & Grunig, 1995). A measure for this

relationship was provided by Huang (2001) called Organization-Public Relationship Assessment

(OPRA). The measure is built on four dimensions—trust, control mutuality, relationship

satisfaction, and relationship commitment—OPRA views as fundamental to relationship based

on the previous research into organizational relationships (Grunig & Huang, 2000). Trust is

viewed as hewing to the lay definition of trust in a relationship; not as specifically one devoid of

mistruth, but one of comfort in opening oneself to the other party (Hon & Grunig, 1999). Control

mutuality, with its base in the work of Stafford and Canary (1991), is taken to mean the amount

of perceived control each party has in decision making. This can be conceptualized very closely

with symmetry in the communications between the organization and its publics (Hon & Grunig,

1999). Satisfaction, perhaps the most subjective factor on the scale, is based on the concept of

satisfaction as a favorable response to the resolution of one's expectations regarding interaction (Hon & Grunig, 1999, as cited in Huang, 2001) and the "relational rewards" are substantial enough to be worth the cost (Stafford & Canary, 1991, as cited in Huang, 2001). Commitment takes its roots from Aldrich (1975, 1979, as cited in Huang, 2001), who viewed "formalization, intensity, reciprocity and standardization" (p. 8) as forms of commitment in the organization-public relationship. Commitment is largely seen as the amount an individual believes the other party is willing to invest in the relationship.

Based on these four factors, OPRA provides "…a concise multiple-item scale with good reliability and validity that an organization can use to better understand its publics' perceptions toward their relationship quality and thus improve public relations practice" (Huang, 2001, p. 22).

The Model

Using the balance theory as guidance, the triangular model essentially visualizes this interaction in a way that can be stretched across time periods. In this adaptation, the model uses balance theory, but replaces the issue of debate, X, with a third party, whose communications' credibility is the issue at hand. Thus, P is generally always perceived as the organization, however in this model, O is the internal publics (employees, contractors, and investors) of the organization and X is external publics (customers, activists, etc.). In this minor twist on Heider's original conception, the same key concept applies, being that the pre-existing relationship between two parties, P & O (organization and employees) will affect their view of issue X (being brought in this case, by external publics). And this may flow in the other direction as well, though the models unfold in a singular direction over time, with the differing views on X affecting the relationship between P & O.

TRIANGULAR MODEL FOR MULTIACTOR DYNAMICS
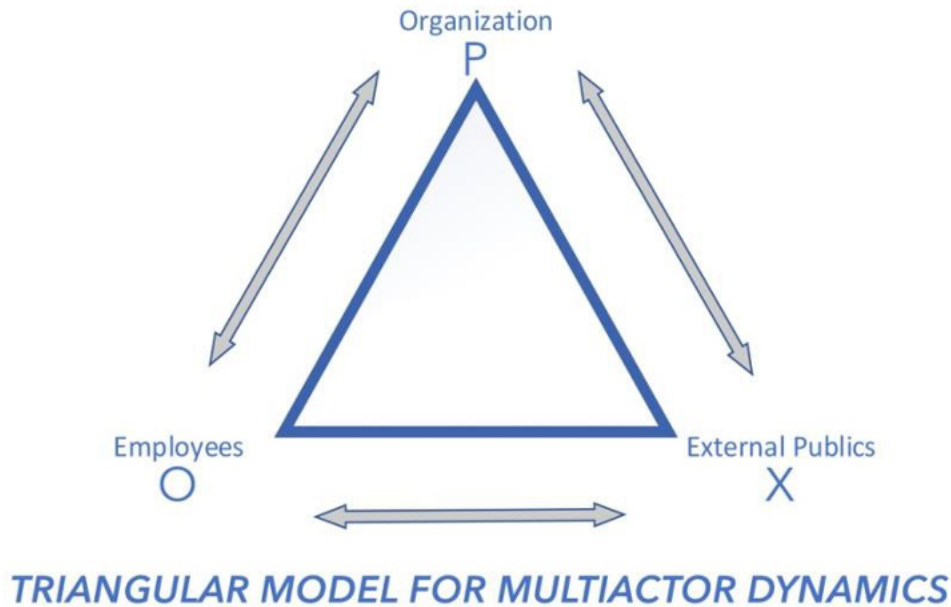
Figure 2

In descriptive terms of what happens on networked digital platforms, this is the simplest

view of the triangular model. The organization (P), employees (O, or the internal public) and

external publics (X, who may be customers or activists) all exist at the same time, able to

communicate freely across social media. The relationship between the organization and their

internal publics will moderate how those internal publics choose to communicate with external

publics. For instance, an organization with internal issues causing unhappy employees (therefore

a negative relationship between P and O), will cause those employees to look more favorably on

the point of view of external publics, particularly if that view is contrary to the organization (if P

and O are in conflict, and P and X are in conflict, than O and X will align) (Heider, 1948). This

is a potential sea change in the way we look at public relations, if only for the distinction

between the organization and its internal publics as different voices with potentially access to the

same information. This information can be of high salience to external publics who may be

happy or upset in their relationship with the organization, though it's unlikely the organization

would have any desire to stop communicative actions by their internal publics that spread a pro-organization message, so chiefly the concern is the opposite.

This negative megaphoning by internal publics effects the disposition of the relationship with external publics, in addition to possibly creating new issues and crises, and new publics along with them (Kim & Rhee, 2011). For a symmetrical communication to happen in three directions, the organization must engage in scouting and environmental scanning, as well as paying close attention to their relationship with internal publics as well as external, as these two groups are now more in contact than ever before. Management of the organization, which in this framework will have elevated need to have public relations departments involved in dominant coalition decision making, must conduct these scouting and relational improvement activities with two sets of publics, in order to prevent those publics from reinforcing each other's negative relations with the organization.
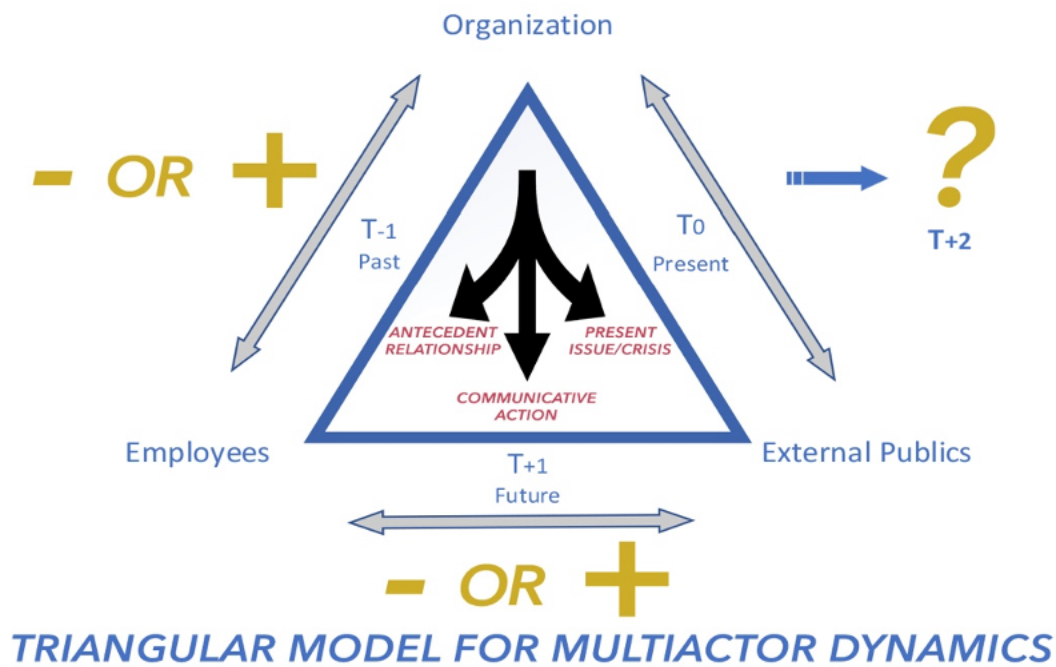
Figure 3

While the three-way communications envisioned in this model can in some ways said to be happening simultaneously, for indeed they are on social media platforms, the forces that inform the relational positioning that is occurring on each side of the triangle represents a different time frame. These frames might actually be of varying length and proximity to each other, for instance, the past (T_{-1}) relationship might be largely defined by a single incident that occurred as recently as yesterday, or it might be the accumulated relationship from decades of interaction between organization and their employees/investors. The present (T_0) issues/crisis is of course unfolding in the present, but it could be a hot issue that flares up and dies down relatively quickly, or an ongoing issue that represents the new normal for the organization. The future (T_{+1}) could more specifically called the immediate future, however the immediacy of it is rather undefined. It represents the reaction to issues/crisis unfolding in the present by internal publics, informing whether they may be more inclined to negatively megaphone in opposition of the organization's interests, or potentially positively megaphone to defend or further enhance the organization's relationship with external publics. This leads to the future situation (T_2) which is highly mediated by the three sides of the triangle.

If the pre-existing relationship with the internal publics (employees) is more positive, in the left side of the triangular model, it is proposed they will be less likely to negatively megaphone against their organization and more likely to engage in pro-organization scouting and defending on social media. In present scenarios where an organization is experiencing issues or crisis that is causing publics to antagonize them on networked digital platforms—the right side of the triangle—a positive relationship with external publics will be proposed to reduce the amount those external publics heed or interact with negatively megaphoned content in networked digital platforms, and perhaps reduce the credibility they award to internal publics who leak negative

information about the organization. In the immediate future, or the bottom side the triangular

model, the frequency and valence of leaked content by internal publics will be proposed to be

strongly mediated by the other two sides of the triangle. The more positive the other two

relationships, the more favorable this interaction between internal and external publics will be.

The model is, in its current state, a descriptive one that can be used to reflect the reality of

three-way interactions in networked digital platforms, which are occurring so frequently now, it

will continue to grow as a share of the work required of public relations departments in the near

future. By applying Grunig's concept of symmetrical two-way communications between each

pair of nodes on the triangle, three-way symmetrical communication might be said to take place,

and a normative model for public relations practice could come with it.

Testing the Triangular Model: Study Design and Hypotheses

The triangular model, which captures three-way interactions between organization,

employees, and external publics, are to be examined in a two-sequence experimental design. The

focus of this thesis is on how internal interactions such as relationships and symmetrical

communication between management and employees might influence employees' assessments or

perceptions about their organization and further increase their (employees) communicative

actions (megaphoning). Their assessment/perception such as ethical management or managerial

conspiracy could determine the valence and magnitude of employee megaphoning (positive or

negative). Most importantly, employees' perceptions and communicative actions will create

content the organization's external publics encounter. In other words, employees' megaphoned

content—good or bad—will create *information environments* for external publics (e.g.,

customers). Further, external publics in varying conditions of informational environment will

assess the organization's performance (e.g., management, products/service) and develop similar

assessments (e.g., organizational ethics) and communicative actions (e.g., customer megaphoning and reception to employee megaphoning) to the employees.

Study 1, therefore, is to examine employees' assessments and communicative actions from interactions with their working organization. Specifically, if employees' relationship quality with their organization, and their perceived managerial communication strategies (e.g., symmetrical communication) indeed influence their perceptions of organizational ethics, managerial conspiracy, and the direction and magnitude of their (employee) megaphoning.

Study 2, then, is to examine if employees' megaphoned contents which become the information environment influencing external publics' (customers) assessments (e.g., organizational ethics) and communicative actions (megaphoning) change in line with those of employees. Specifically, this thesis hypothesizes that customers will follow similar perceptions and communication behaviors as employees of the organization and amplify the business environment (favorably/negatively). Customers will also interact with employee's evaluation (positive/negative) so as to amplify or lessen their assessment and communicative actions about management and the organization. Figure 4 summarizes the two studies.
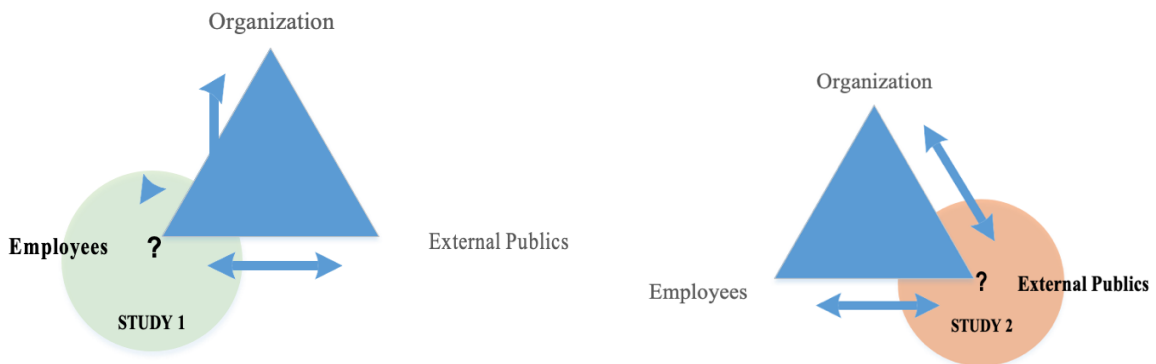
Figure 4. Study Design Summary

Hypotheses

Study 1: Internal Public (Employee)

Main Effect of Symmetrical Communication - Observed

H1a: The more symmetrical the perceived communications are between the organization and an internal public, the more likely the internal public will be to engage in positive megaphoning on behalf of the organization.

H1b: The more symmetrical the perceived communications are between the organization and an internal public, the higher the perception of organizational ethics will be for the internal public.

Main Effect of Asymmetrical Communication - Observed

H1c: The more asymmetrical the perceived communications are between the organization and an internal public, the more likely the internal public will be to engage in negative megaphoning against the organization.

H1d: The more asymmetrical the perceived communications are between the organization and an internal public, the more likely the internal public will be to engage in conspiratorial thinking against the organization.

Main Effect of Employee-Organization Relationship Quality (Observed)

H1e: The more positive the relationship between the organization and an internal public, the more likely the internal public will be to engage in positive megaphoning on behalf of the organization.

H1f: The more positive the relationship between the organization and an internal public, the more likely the internal public will be to view the organization as ethical.

Main Effect of Business Environment (Positive vs. Negative vs. Neutral) (Manipulated)

H2a: A positive (vs. negative vs. neutral) business environment will increase (decrease) an internal public's positive (vs. negative) megaphoning.

H2b: A positive (vs. negative vs. neutral) business environment will increase (decrease) internal publics' perception of organizational ethics.

H2c: A positive (vs. negative vs. neutral) business environment will decrease (increase) internal publics' conspiracy attribution.

Interaction Effects

H3a: There will be an interaction of management communication strategy (symmetrical vs. asymmetrical) and business environment (positive vs. neutral vs. negative). For symmetrical communication there will be no differences in employees' positive megaphoning, perception of managerial ethics, and managerial conspiracy attribution, regardless of the business environment. For asymmetrical communication, there will tend to be greater negative megaphoning and managerial conspiracy attribution and lesser perceived managerial ethics, but for a positive business environment there will be little difference in external public's assessment and communicative actions (i.e., megaphoning, leaking, rumor mongering).

H3b: There will be an interaction of employee-organization relationship quality (high vs. low) and external business environment (positive vs. neutral vs. negative). For higher relationship quality, there will be no difference in employees' positive megaphoning, perception of managerial ethics and managerial conspiracy attribution, regardless of the business environment. For lower relationship quality, there will be a greater negative megaphoning and managerial conspiracy attribution and lesser perceived managerial ethics, but for positive business environment, there will be little difference in external public's assessment and communicative actions (i.e., megaphoning, leaking, rumor mongering).

<u>Study 2: External Public (Customer)</u>

Main Effect of Employee-Created Information Environment (Advocational vs. Adversarial) (Manipulated)

H4a: Advocational (vs. adversarial) employee information will increase (decrease) external public's positive megaphoning.

H4b: Advocational (vs. adversarial) employee information will decrease (increase) external public's negative megaphoning.

H4c: Advocational (vs. adversarial) employee information will increase (decrease) external public's perception of organizational ethics.

H4d: Advocational (vs. adversarial) employee information will decrease (increase) external public's conspiratorial thinking against the organization.

Main Effect of Business Environment (Positive vs. Negative) (Manipulated)

H5a: A positive (vs. negative) issue environment will increase (decrease) external public's positive megaphoning.

H5b: A positive (vs. negative) issue environment will decrease (increase) external public's negative megaphoning.

H5c: A positive (vs. negative) issue environment will increase (decrease) external publics' perception of organizational ethics.

H5d: A positive (vs. negative) issue environment will decrease (increase) external public's conspiratorial thinking against the organization.

Main Effect of Customer Relationship Quality (Observed, Covariate)

H6a: Positive relationship between the organization and an external public will increase (decrease) external public's positive (negative) megaphoning.

H6b: Positive relationship between the organization and an external public will increase external public's perception of organizational ethics.

H6c: Positive relationship between the organization and an external public will decrease external public's conspiratorial thinking against the organization.

Interaction Effects

H7: There will be an interaction of employee-created information environment (advocational vs. adversarial) and external business environment (positive vs. negative). For a negative business environment, the adversarial employee communications will result in greater negative megaphoning credence given by customers and conspiracy attribution and lesser positive megaphoning credence and perception of organizational ethics, but for a positive business environment, there will be little difference in an external public's assessment and communicative actions (i.e., megaphoning, leaking, rumor mongering).

Method

This research utilized a *mixed design* vignette structure (Atzmüller & Steiner, 2010) for two online survey experiments. This means there are different vignettes presented to different groups within the sample population (Atzmüller & Steiner, 2010). One survey will examine the attitudes, relationships with an organization and communicative behaviors of internal publics, or employees of the top four US fast-food restaurants that specialize in hamburgers, and the other will look at external publics, or the customers. These four companies are McDonald's, Burger King, Wendy's, and Sonic. Fast-food restaurants were chosen because they are suitable for both the research questions in this study, which address questions of relationship between employees and their company (in both surveys), and because they present a large and easily accessible pool of potential respondents. Additionally, this population of respondents is highly diverse in all

demographic categories, providing a good data set that reflects the general population. A total of

300 participants were collected for each survey, yielding results with sufficient significance and

standard of error to make inferences about the population. The sample was recruited on the

Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) platform, with a filter inserted to collect respondents with a

proven history of providing viable responses to surveys. The respondents were incentivized with

a $1 payment for taking the survey, which immediately used question routing to weed out

respondents who had either not been employed at one of the four restaurants in the study or had

never been a customer. By presenting an experimental stimulus to the respondents, the study can

achieve the important features of correlation, sequential relation, and randomness of the sample,

to allow a causal influence to be established by the experimental stimuli (Ellett & Ericson, 1983).

Study 1 looked at the employees' interactions with the organization, depicted in the left

side of the triangular model. This study employed a 3 (issue environment situation: positive vs.

neutral vs. negative) × 2 (relationship: high vs. low quality) between-subject factorial design to

depict the left side of the triangular model. The hypotheses are that relationship (high vs. low

quality) influences the likelihood of positive or negative megaphoning, the perception of

organizational ethics and conspiratorial thinking, particularly in the expected positive direction

(positive relationship leads to positive megaphoning and negative leads to negative). Further, it

can tell us if the organization with a problematic relationship would foster a greater tendency in

employees to undertake communicative actions which in turn trigger a hostile or favorable

informational environment with external publics.

The respondents were first presented with OPRA questions *(Table 1)* assessing the state

of their relationship with the organization, on a seven-point Likert scale, as well as their

perceptions of the organization's use of symmetrical or asymmetrical communications. Then,

through a Qualtrics survey randomizer to ensure a random and roughly equal distribution,

respondents were exposed to one of three possible experimental stimuli *(Table 2);* a fictitious

situation of a service-related issue regarding food safety and hygiene, with either positive,

negative, or neutral implications. Respondents were then presented another set of questionnaire

blocks *(Table 3)* to measure their likelihood to engage in a variety of communicative activities

(i.e., megaphoning, leaking, rumor mongering) and their perceptions of the organization's ethics

and their likelihood to traffic in conspiracy and rumor. This presents the base condition of the

three-way communicative interactions, the left side of the triangular model, that is, the

antecedent relationship between the organization and its internal publics, which will inform the

disposition of the other two sides. A manipulation check was also inserted, asking respondents

to rate the perceived strength of the experimental stimuli. Additionally, a short vignette and set

of unrelated questions were inserted as a mental palate cleanser in between the relationship

measures and the experimental stimuli.

The second experimental study was to illustrate and examined the right side of the

triangular model. Specifically, Kaufman and Kim (2020) proposed and illustrated how external

members of a public could use and get greater influences from the information that an internal

public disseminates (e.g., issue-related information from employee's megaphoning) when they

have problematic situations. Further, the information from employees, positive or negative, could

accentuate the state of ongoing relationships that external publics have in the issue/crisis

situations. The nature of active publics when they have problems/issues, is they tend to seek out

information from many sources (Kim & Rhee, 2011). External publics can find and use the

megaphoned (positive/negative) information from employees, and hot-issue publics are likely to

weigh such information more heavily from internal publics (Kim & Rhee, 2011). This proposed

effect captures and illustrates how two-way relationships and communicative interactions become triangular or three-way communicative interactions based on relational dynamics. The respondents in this experiment were customers of the same four popular fast-food restaurants from which the employee respondents were recruited. Participants (customers) had their current relationships, satisfactions, and brand loyalty tested using the OPRA metric. The first experimental condition split the respondents into two relationship quality groups (high vs. low relationship quality with the brand). Then, participants were exposed to a fictitious scenario for a food safety issue (vs. a scenario of neutral situation as a comparison condition). Following this, participants will read another fictitious scenario of employees' anonymously megaphoned online content (advocating vs. accusatorial information related to the safety issues). This study employed a 2 (issue situation: positive vs. negative) × 2 (valence of employee-generated information: advocational vs. accusatory) between-subject factorial design, using the OPRA measure of relationship quality as a covariate.

Respondents were first presented with OPRA questions *(Table 4)* assessing the state of their relationship with the organization, on a seven-point Likert scale, as well as their perceptions of the organization's use of symmetrical or asymmetrical communications. Then, through a Qualtrics survey randomizer to ensure a random and roughly equal distribution, respondents were exposed to one of two possible experimental stimuli *(Table 5);* a fictitious scenario of crisis for the organization where employees either engaged in negative or positive megaphoning. Then respondents were presented a second experimental stimulus, also randomized, which presented the organization in a positive or negative issues scenario *(Table 6)*. Respondents were then presented another set of questionnaire blocks *(Table 7)* to measure their likelihood to give credence to a variety of communicative activities and their perceptions of the organization's

ethics and their likelihood to traffic in conspiracy and rumor. This presents second stage of the

three-way communicative interactions, the present-issues scenario and relationship between the

organization and its external publics, which will inform the disposition of the third side, the

communications that unfold between internal and external publics, the bottom side of the

triangular model.

The full questionnaires are provided in the appendices. Questions in the OPRA scale have

been used as designed by Grunig & Huang (2000) for the organization-internal public

relationship in the research presented here, while the questions used for customers have been

slightly modified for use.

Results

Results of the study were manifold and showed strong significance for the main

hypotheses of the thesis. For the first study, with the respondent pool containing current or

former employees of the four restaurants, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) technique was used

to look at the mean differences between respondents. ANOVA provides the best method to

analyze the data, as it provides the proper answers to the research questions we are proposing, by

providing analysis of the variance in mean data (Rutherford, 2011). The survey questions (other

than demographics and identification, were presented as 1-7 scales with 1 being the negative

pole, 7 being the positive pole and 4 representing a neutral position on the statement presented to

respondents.

Study 1

The first hypothesis set regarded *symmetrical communications* and the *asymmetrical*

communications as the independent variables (IV) and *positive megaphoning and perceived*

organizational ethics as the dependent variables (DV). ANOVA was conducted to test H1, in

which the continuous variable involvement was translated to a categorical variable using a

median split (*Table 8*). For the independent variable of symmetrical communication, there was a

pronounced, significant variance discovered, with $F = 140.191$ (1, 270), $p < .001$, $M = 5.912$, SD

$= .099$ for employees who viewed communications with the organization as more symmetrical

and $M = 4.248$, SD $= .098$ for those who saw it as less so. Thus, employees viewed symmetrical

communication as positively related to their positive megaphoning, **and H1a is supported**.

Using the same ANOVA and mean tables to look at the effects on perceived organizational

ethics as the next dependent variable (*Table 9*). Again, the effect of the independent variable,

symmetrical communication had a significant effect, with $F = 102.670$, (1, 270), with $p < .001$,

and a mean difference of 1.284 between the responses from those who viewed the

communications as more symmetrical ($M = 5.889$, SD $= .088$) and those who viewed it as less so

($M = 4.604$, SD $= .089$). **Thus, H1b is supported.**

Using ANOVA to analyze the data from the questions regarding asymmetrical

communication and both negative megaphoning and conspiracy attribution, the results are

similar to the results for symmetrical communication in the same expected direction (*Table 10*).

Asymmetrical communication had a large mean difference and significant reaction on both

dependent variables, $F = 90.939$ (1, 270), significant at $p < .001$. When asymmetrical

communications were seen as high by internal publics, so was the level of negative megaphoning

against the organization ($M = 5.480$, SD $= .117$, versus $M = 3.807$ and SD $= .129$ for negative

megaphoning) when asymmetrical communications were viewed as lower. This is a uniquely

strong effect, given that when the asymmetrical communications are seen as lower, employees

are more than just neutral about negative megaphoning, they're actively negative on it ($M =$

3.807, or on the unlikely side). A similar strength of effect was seen with the level of

conspiratorial attribution (*Table 11*) given to the organization with F = 96.861 (1, 270) and M =

5.745, SD = .112 versus M = 4.242, SD = .102 for conspiracy when asymmetrical

communications were viewed as lower. Significance was at p < .001 for both dependent

variables. **Thus, H1c and H1d are supported.**

The analysis of variance on the independent variables of organization-public relationship

(OPR) as rated by the internal publics (employees) (*Table 12*), against the dependent variables of

positive megaphoning and perceived organizational ethics. Relationship was shown to have a

significant effect, with F = 156.025 (1, 270), p < .001, and a mean difference between good and

bad relationship of 1.744 (M = 5.954, SD = .097 for positive megaphoning when the relationship

is viewed as good, and M = 4.211, SD = .097 when relationship is viewed as low). Meaning the

prior relationship as rated by the employees was a strong sign of their propensity to positively

megaphone on behalf of the organization. Relationship has a similarly pronounced effect on the

perception of organizational ethics the employees hold (*Table 13*), F = 108.21 (df = 1), with

significance (p < .001), M = 5.914, SD = .088, when relationship is viewed as good, and M =

4.590, SD = .089, when relationship is viewed poorly. **Thus, H1e and H1f are supported.**

External Experimental Condition

Hypothesis 2a's results (*Table 8)* show there was significance to the variance in mean

among the three external conditions, confirming the directional relationship hypothesized, F =

140.191 (1, 270), p < .05, M = 5.071, SD 1.20 for likelihood to positively megaphone in times of

positive external business environment, M = 5.293, SD .117 in neutral business conditions and

M = 4.876, SD .120 in times of external negative condition. **Thus, H2a is supported.** Looking at

Table 13, the results are similarly borderline in significance of effect for the external condition, ,

F = 108.120 (1, 270), p = .052, and a similarly small mean variance between the negative

condition (M = 5.112, SD = .107), the positive condition (M = 5.459, SD = .105), and the

neutral condition (M = 5.185, SD = .107). Again, the direction of the relationship is as expected,

thus, H2b is supported. The external conditions presented did not have a significant effect on

the dependent variable, conspiracy attribution. **Thus, H2c is not supported.**

Interaction Effects

The next set of hypotheses dealt with interaction effects. The data reveals an interaction

effect between the three variables, symmetrical communication, external business condition and

perceived organizational ethics (*Figure 4*). When symmetrical communication is high, perceived

organizational ethics are also stable and high across all three external conditions presented as

experimental stimuli. When symmetrical communication is low, the organization's perceived

ethics are highest in the neutral condition. They show up as higher in the positive condition than

the negative, as expected in the hypotheses, however the effect of a neutral issue environment is

interesting. One explanation might be a spite or cynicism effect that is activated in positive

environments (De Vreese, 2005), causing internal publics to be less likely perceive the

organization as having achieved their success ethically, whereas in the negative condition they

view the organization as having earned that negative environment through low ethical behavior,

and the neutral condition where they're least likely to believe unethicality on the part of the

organization, a sort of "no news *is* good news" type of effect. **Thus, H3a is supported.**

The effect of the external experimental condition presented in the study, while not as

pronounced as the effect of relationship, still registered a significant effect on variance in the

responses to the questions regarding positive megaphoning and perceived organizational ethics,

and there are very interesting interaction effects between the three variables (with both

dependent variables, perceived organizational ethics, and positive megaphoning). When the

external experimental condition was positive, the effect on both positive megaphoning and perceived organizational ethics was a rather mild one, though significant at roughly ($p = .05$), in the expected positive direction, with a higher mean value than when the situation presented was negative. However, both were lower than when the external experimental situation was neutral, depicted in the three-way interactions below (*Figures 5 & 6*). These interaction effects suggest that, as expected, when relationship is in high quality between the organization and its internal publics, regardless of the external issues environment, those internal publics will be much more likely to positively megaphone and view the organization as ethical, than when relationship is viewed as low. However, when the relationship is poorly rated by the internal publics, they are significantly more likely ($p < .05$) to both positively megaphone, and see the organization as ethical, when the external situation is neutral, than either when it is positive or negative. This suggests a similar interaction effect to H3a, wherein a neutral external business condition is less likely to cause megaphoning or ethical perception change on the part of internal publics when the antecedent relationship is viewed as a negative one. If, however, the business condition externally should change for either the better or worse, that could cause positive megaphoning to decrease, as well as perception of ethics, thus once again supporting the underlying assumptions regarding the importance of relationship with internal publics to the triangular communication model. **Thus, H3b is supported.**

Study 2

The results of Study 2, a 2x2 between subject factorial design, which focuses on the second side of the triangle and the relationship between organization and its external publics, in this case customers of the fast-food restaurants, were analyzed using analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) which combines the analysis of variance with regression to explain more about the

individual factors of the triangular model by controlling for the covariate of relationship (Rutherford, 2011).

First analyzed is the main effect of employee-created informational environment, in the form of a manipulated experimental condition (some issue between the organization and its employees), either adversarial or advocational. The amount external publics will give credence to positive megaphoning by internal publics does appear to be causally influenced in a positive direction by the valence of employee megaphoned messages in an internal issues environment the organization finds itself in (*Table 14*). The internal scenario had an effect only on the border of significance F = 3.782 (1, 286), p = .053, however showed the expected positive relationship with ambassadorial communicative actions by the employees. M = 5.030 and SD = .062 for the negative internal issues scenario and M = 5.202 and SD = .062. **Thus, H4a is supported.** The external experimental condition returned significant results F = 10.827, (2, 286) and M = 5.260, SD = .062 for the positive external condition and M = 4.972, SD = .062 for negative, showing a causal influence in a positive direction on the credence customers are likely to give to megaphoning by employees during times of external business issues (either negative or positive). **Thus, H5a is supported.**

The amount external publics will view the organization as ethical also appears to be causally influence in a positive direction with the valence of employee megaphoned messages in internal issues (*Table 15*). The internal scenario showed significance F = 6.864 (1, 286), p < .01) and the expected positive relationship with ambassadorial communicative actions by the employees. M = 5.272, SD = .081 for ambassadorial internal conditions and M = 4.969, SD = .081 for adversarial. **Thus, H4b is supported**. For the external experimental condition given to the respondents, the data returned very close numbers to the internal employee environment,

with F = 6.958 (1, 286), p <.01, and M = 5.275, SD = .081 for the positive external business

issue, and M = 4.966, SD = .081 for the negative, showing the external experimental condition

had almost identical significance and direction as the internal issues environment, also having a

positive relationship with the credence customers will give to employee megaphoning. **Thus,**

H5b is supported.

The amount external publics will give credence to negatively megaphoned content by

internal publics again shows a causal influence in a positive direction with the valence of

employee megaphoned messages in the internal environment the organization finds itself in

(*Table 16*). The internal scenario showed significance F = 4.374 (1, 286) and p < .05) to suggest

that when the internal scenario with employees is an adversarial one (M = 5.281, SD = .069),

customers will be more inclined to give credence to negative megaphoning by internal publics

than an ambassadorial condition (M = 5.076, SD = .069). **Thus, H4c is supported.** The external

experimental condition did not return a significant result (M = 5.237, SD = .069 for the negative

condition and M = 5.119, SD = .069 for the positive condition, p > .05). **Thus, H5c is not**

supported.

Conspiracy attribution was the only dependent variable which did not seem to experience

a direct effect from the experimental stimuli, which is to say, no significant movement occurred

to the amount of conspiracy attribution would be ascribed by the external publics when the

covariate of relationship, a strongly significant driver, is controlled for (*Table 17*). **Thus, H4d**

and H5d are not supported.

Both the external business condition and symmetrical communications registered a

significant effect on positive megaphoning when controlled for the covariate of relationship

between the organization and its external publics (*Table 18*), which had again, by far the

strongest effect. The external condition had F = 10.818 (1, 286) and p < .001, M = 4.941, SD = .061 for the negative external condition and M = 5.225, SD = .061 for the positive condition. Symmetrical communication had a stronger effect, F = 19.354 (1, 286), significant at p < .001, with M = 4.827, SD = .078 for the customers who rated the communications of the organization as low in symmetry, versus M = 5.338, SD = .066, for those who viewed the organization as symmetrical in their communications.

Asymmetrical communication had the same effect in the expected direction, on the credence customers will lend to negative megaphoning by employees, as symmetrical communication had on positive megaphoning, with similarly strong significance (*Table 19*). F = 38.776 (1, 286), p < .001, M = 5.542, SD = .074 for negative megaphoning credence on the part of customers when asymmetrical communication is viewed as high, versus M = 4.864, SD = .068 when asymmetrical communication is viewed as lower, with OPRA again registering a stronger effect with significance p < .001, as covariate. **Thus, H6a is supported.**

Perceived organizational ethics as a dependent variable showed a significant reaction to the external condition, F = 7.498 (1, 286) p < .01, which when positive got an M = 5.270 mean score for ethics of the organization in the perception of customers, SD = .083, versus M = 4.950, SD = .083 (*Table 20*). Symmetrical communications didn't show an effect on the external publics when controlled for relationship. **Thus, H6b was supported**

The relationship covariate also has the expected effect on external publics' conspiracy attribution(*Table 21*). Controlled for the relationship positivity between the organization and external publics, customers are much more likely to attribute negative effects to shadowy figures and be open to conspiracy and rumor mongering, particularly from internal publics, F = 72.037 (1, 286), p<.001, (M = 5.525, SD = .098) when asymmetrical communications of the

organization are viewed to be high, while there was much less attribution to conspiracy when asymmetrical communications were viewed as being low (M = 4.315, SD = .089). **Thus, H6c is supported.**

Interaction Effects

H7 predicted there would be an interaction of the employee-created information environment (advocational vs. adversarial) and external business environment (positive vs. negative). For negative business environment the adversarial employee witnessing would have greater negative megaphoning, conspiracy attribution and lesser positive megaphoning and perceived organizational ethics, but for positive business environment there is little difference in external public's assessment and communicative actions.

The interaction effect of both experimental stimuli and the conspiratorial thinking of external publics was interesting and on the border of significance, as shown in Figure 7. Meaning, when the external condition is negative and the internal issue is one of adversarial communicative actions by internal publics, external publics will be most likely to ascribe to conspiracy and rumor. When the internal issue is one of the internal publics communicating positively in defense of the organization, conspiracy is at its lowest, but interestingly, as the external situation improves, so does the cynicism and lack of trust external employees seem to place in the communicative actions of internal publics. No other interaction effects of significance were observed. **Thus, H7 is partially supported.**

Discussion

The research questions posed by this study, primarily ask what the effects of relationship, symmetrical communications, asymmetrical communications, and the experimental stimuli of hypothetical communicative scenarios are on the communicative actions that occur between an

organization, its employees and its customers. These dependent variables, as explored in this study, are positive megaphoning, negative megaphoning, perceived organizational ethics and conspiracy attribution. Using employees and customers of the four largest US fast-food chains, this study used the OPRA measure (Grunig & Huang, 2000; Hong & Grunig, 1999; Huang, 2001) to assess the relationship between the organization and its publics before manipulating those publics with experimental vignettes followed by OPRA questions regarding the dependent variables to see what effect the independent variables have on the megaphoning and valence of that megaphoning, on the part of employees, and the credence given to those communications on the part of the customers.

The hypotheses of this study were generally as follows; H1; that symmetrical communication between an organization and its publics is positively related to positive megaphoning and perceived organizational ethics, that asymmetrical communications have a positive relationship with negative megaphoning, and conspiratorial thinking and that relationship between the organization and has a positive relationship with positive megaphoning and perceived organizational ethics. These hypotheses stem from the combination of the research into the symmetricity of communication, models of public relations, OPR, communicative behaviors, and issues management. Symmetrical communication is linked to excellent public relations practice (Grunig & Grunig, 1992), while the two-way symmetrical model of public relations is the best method to achieve this excellence in a state of communications with publics (Dozier, Grunig & Grunig, 2013). Work into the organizational-public relationship guides the importance relationship will have on communicative actions. Organizations that maintain positive relationships with their publics can expect those publics to recall those relationships when communicating in times of issue and/or crisis (Hong & Grunig, 1999). The communicative

behaviors undertaken by internal publics, such as megaphoning, are inclined to occur based on a

relational disposition with the organization (Kim & Rhee, 2011) and the management of issues

and crisis has a basis in the antecedent relationships that underly the issue at hand (Coombs &

Holladay, 2001). H2; that a positive external business environment scenario involving the

organization and its public (provided in the form of experimental stimuli) will have a causal

influence in a positive direction with positive megaphoning, perceived organizational ethics and

in a negative direction with negative megaphoning and conspiratorial attribution. This follows

the theoretical underpinning of Kim and Rhee's work on megaphoning (2011). Their findings,

that internal publics are likely to base their megaphoning valence on their relationship with the

organization, suggests that external scenarios can also affect this relationship and/or

communicative action valence.

H3 holds that an interaction effect of management communication strategy (symmetrical

vs. asymmetrical) and business environment (positive vs. neutral vs. negative), as well as

between organization-employee relationship (high vs. low) and the business environment

(positive vs. neutral vs. negative). This follows the theoretical bases provided by Hon and Grunig

(1999), Grunig and Huang (2000) and Huang (2001). That an organization-public relationship is

based on different dimensions, which might be individually measured to create a composite of

the relationship, which then may be used to learn other things about the communicative nature of

publics. This leads directly to the most robustly supported findings of this research, that

relationship is the main driver of future communicative actions between publics. Those were the

hypotheses for the internal publics study, of which H1a-f were all supported, as were H2a and

H2b, though H2c (linking the external business environment to conspiracy attribution by publics)

did not find support. H3a and H3b, the hypotheses regarding interaction effects both were

supported. Strongest among the results was the antecedent relationship (OPR) between the

organization and its internal publics in being key to positively affecting the outcomes of issues

and crisis by having a positive moderating effect on the megaphoning done by internal publics.

H4 hypotheses regard the internal informational environment created by employee

megaphoning and how it affects the four dependent variables (positive megaphoning, negative

megaphoning, perceived organizational ethics and conspiracy attribution) as they are recorded

from the external public point of view. In this study, that environment was simulated through

experimental vignettes given to the respondents. These hypotheses are conceptually drawn from

Kim and Rhee's 2011 research into megaphoning. Their work posited that internal publics in

negative relationships will be inclined to leak information against the organization to external

publics. The only dependent variable that did not find support in the data for a significant effect

was conspiracy attribution (H4d).

H5 hypotheses investigated the external experimental condition's effects on the same

four dependent variables. This time, neither perceived organizational ethics (H5c) nor conspiracy

attribution (H5d) registered significant effects, while the other two did (H5a and H5b). H6

hypotheses predicted the effects of the covariate relationship effects the four dependent

variables. This hypothesis stems from the same research that led to H1, primarily Huang's work

on OPR (2001). All H6 hypotheses found support in the data with significance at $p < .001$, as

relationship was discovered to be the strongest driver of the communicative actions. H7 was the

final hypothesis in the study, regarding the interaction effects between the two experimental

conditions and the dependent variables. Only conspiracy attribution registered an interaction

effect with the two experimental variables.

Interaction Effects

The interaction effects detected among the data were of particular interest and could themselves lead to new strains of research. The variables of symmetrical communication and organization public relationship both had very similar and pronounced interaction effects with the external experimental condition and perceived organizational ethics. OPR also had the interaction effect with positive megaphoning. In all three cases, as the external experimental condition went from negative to neutral to positive, when the symmetrical communication or OPR was high, the organizational ethics or positive megaphoning was relatively high and stable. But for both organizational ethics and symmetrical communication, a neutral external issues scenario yielded the highest perceived organizational ethics and positive megaphoning from internal publics. This both confirms the research hypotheses and suggests some other effects are at play, such as the already referenced velcro effect (Coombs & Holladay, 2001), or some spite effect, such as spiral of cynicism (De Vreese, 2005).

Implications of the Triangular Model in Research

The triangular models for multi-actor relational dynamics are a first attempt to capture a natural phenomenon that has evolved from the emergence of new communications technologies. There is still much to be learned about how these scenarios unfold and what public relations practitioners must do to navigate these situations. Two-way symmetrical communication has only recently, with the mainstreaming of digital networked platforms, become a functional reality for many organizations. However, just as soon as those new avenues for excellence in public relations presented themselves, new challenges materialized in the form of three-way communication paradigms unfolding in digital networked spaces. Thus, public relations as a field finds itself with a theoretical foundation that no longer describes precisely what is happening in real life (or at least mediated and simulated life on networked digital platforms), as well as a new

phenomenon and a need for a way to explain it, in the form of three-way communications that unfold on these platforms and all over the internet.

The three-way model presented in the form of a triangle is a useful way for capturing the value of relationships with internal publics (employees), and their role in effective issues management. So long as organizations view their communications with internal and external publics strictly in terms of separate two-way communications and don't visualize them as three simultaneous interactions between groups, there will be missed opportunities for mitigation, resolution and repair of crisis management outcomes.

The three timeframes are versatile in illustrating a variety of conditions in relationship dynamics. Issues and crisis environments are built on antecedent relationships between an organization and its publics. Viewing the triangular model across differen frames opens many testable ideas. Among those are the operationalization of variables and the quantitative study of the change in relationship and sentiment between an organization and its publics. Additionally, qualitative research into the nature of applications of the models and the reality of megaphoning and its effects on relationships during issues and crisis management. Surveys which ask open-eneded questions exploring the perceptions of internal publics, both investors and employees, as well as the perceptions of external publics, including customers and activists, on the credibility of megaphoning internal publics, the antecedents that spur them to action, as well as the perceived credibility and effectiveness of public relations strategies meant to mitigate damage in those situations.

This research explores all three sides of the triangular model by straddling the two poles of employee and customer interactions. On the left side of the triangular model is the relationship between the organization and their employees. The chief findings of this research show that

relationship and symmetrical communications, as expected, have a strong effect on the communicative disposition of publics. This is the essence of the three way model.

The implications for the future of public relations management and theorization regarding its professional practice are myriad. Chief among them is a refocusing of PR management priorities on symmetrical communications and relationship-building with internal publics. Traditional views, particularly on the first two models of public relations (press agentry and public information) focus on communications with external publics almost exclusively, while even the models that specify two-way communication forms have also been looked at more from the side of the external publics than internal. This research's chief findings, and the ones that suggest future research and management foci, are that the communication symmetricity and relationship, fostered by an organization with its internal publics, can have important downstream effects when the organization is faced with issues or crises with external publics. Relationship and symmetrical communication with internal publics can help an organization predict how those internal publics will communicate with external publics in issues scenarios and help accentuate or attenuate the outcomes of those issues. This should be explored in depth in future research with other populations and methods to find ways to generalize the finidngs to a new normative theory of public relations.

Limitations

Shortcomings of such the triangular model are similar to the ones often cited by critics of Grunig's models. Chief among them is the charge that symmetrical communications are rarely possible/desirable by organizations, and exists only as a utopian normative fairytale (Kenny, 2016). Similarly, these criticisms will inevitably be levied against a three-way model as well. However, in its purely descriptive form, leaving out the desired symmetrical nature of the

communications and interactions between nodes of the triangle, the model has potential to

continue the research tradition and ideas of Grunig's four models.

This research also has some limitations of note. The relative strength of effect of the

experimental stimuli may not have been as potent as it could be. In order to craft an effective

viugnette without creating additional confounding variables, the subject of the experimental

stimuli was something rather non-controversial, though likely to peak interest in terms of health

and safety, which is the food safety theme of the fictional stimuli. While the avoidance of an

additonal confouncing variable such as a hot button issue like race may have been wise, it maye

have resulted in tepid stimulus. The manipulation check inserted in the study of internal publics

returned a mean score of 4.522, on a seven-point Likert scale reflecting not a very strong effect

from the stimuli. An additional weakness is a lack of a manipulation check in the external

publics study. Another potential weakness of this study is the use of a median split in the analysis

of the data. A process analysis might be a preferred way to go, and some have questioned the

validity of median split data and the accuracy of their significance (Maxwell & Delaney, 1993).

Surveys already suffer from the issue of relying on self-report to analyze how much

elements of the research (for instance, a manipulation check) are working. Future forays into this

same subject might focus on social media data collection and analysis to come to some of the

same conclusions and move the theoretical ball forward.

Future Research

The same research should be replicated with other industries than fast-food. While useful

for participant recruiting, the sample might have other specific limitations which make it

undesirable for such a study. The underlying research which inspired this thesis, the work of Kim

and Rhee (2011) into megaphoning and Kaufman and Kim work (2020) on the triangular model,

deals with the concept of networked digital platforms being the key to three way communications models and ideally, three way symmetrical communications models. Other industries might be better suited to seeing the actions on a networked digital platform like social media. It might be useful to explore OPR and symmetrical communication and how they unfold in a social network. This would also necessitate network anaylsis and other conceptual additions to that which girds this research.

Future research might focus on the ways in which public relations departments of an organization currently deal with megaphoning, and creating a mixed methods approach to building the theory of three-way symmetrical communications. The models chiefly represent the three-way interactions that unfold across networked digital platforms, and thus might be applied to different scenarios, time frames and variables across the spectrum of relational antecedents. A major potential font of new research into the potential of three-way models would be the application of principles from Grunig and Kim's Situational Theory of Problem Solving, which uses Grunig's Situational Theory of Publics to explain communciative actions and how publics perceie and react to them, introducing a new variable, situational motivation in problem solving, that is similar to the concepts at play in the three-way model, and may help explain inteeractions therein (Kim & Grunig, 2011). Of primary importance is that the communications that unfold are viewed in a more complex environment than the traditional goal of two-way symmetrical communications. It would also be valuable to explore corporate social responsibility and the mechanics of activist and hot-issue publics to see how they play into the triangular model. If indeed three-way symmetrical communications are one day possible, a new model of excellent public relations management will develop as well.

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Appendix

Figures
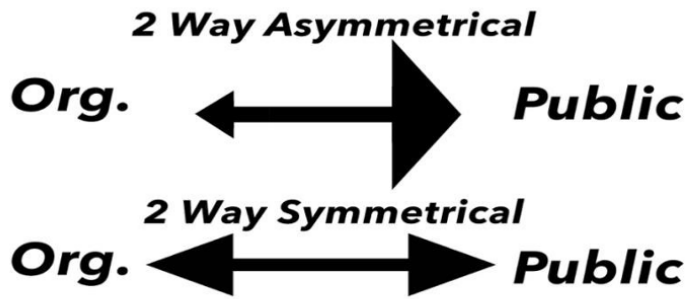
Figure 1
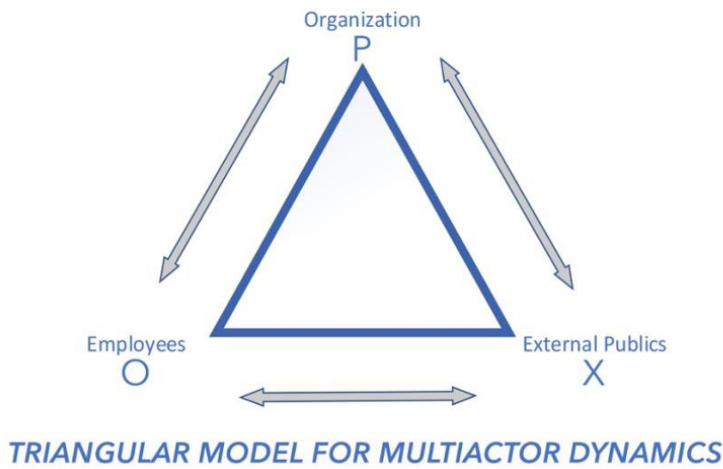
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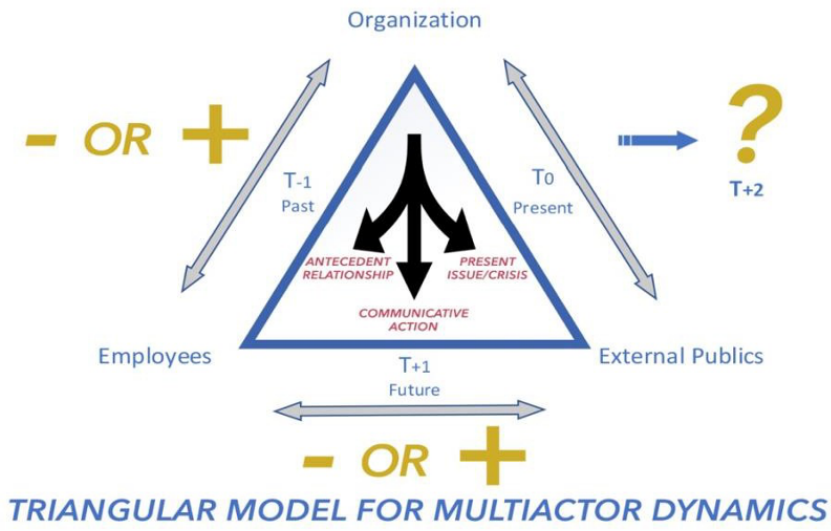
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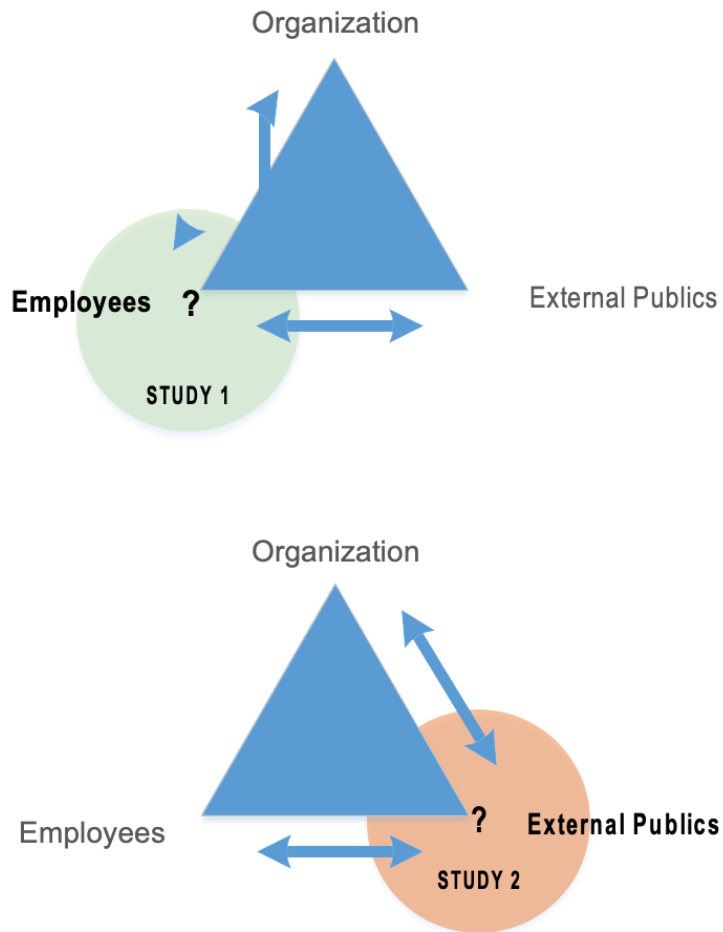
Figure 4

Figure 5

Interaction Effect: Symmetrical Communication, Perceived Organizational Ethics & External Condition
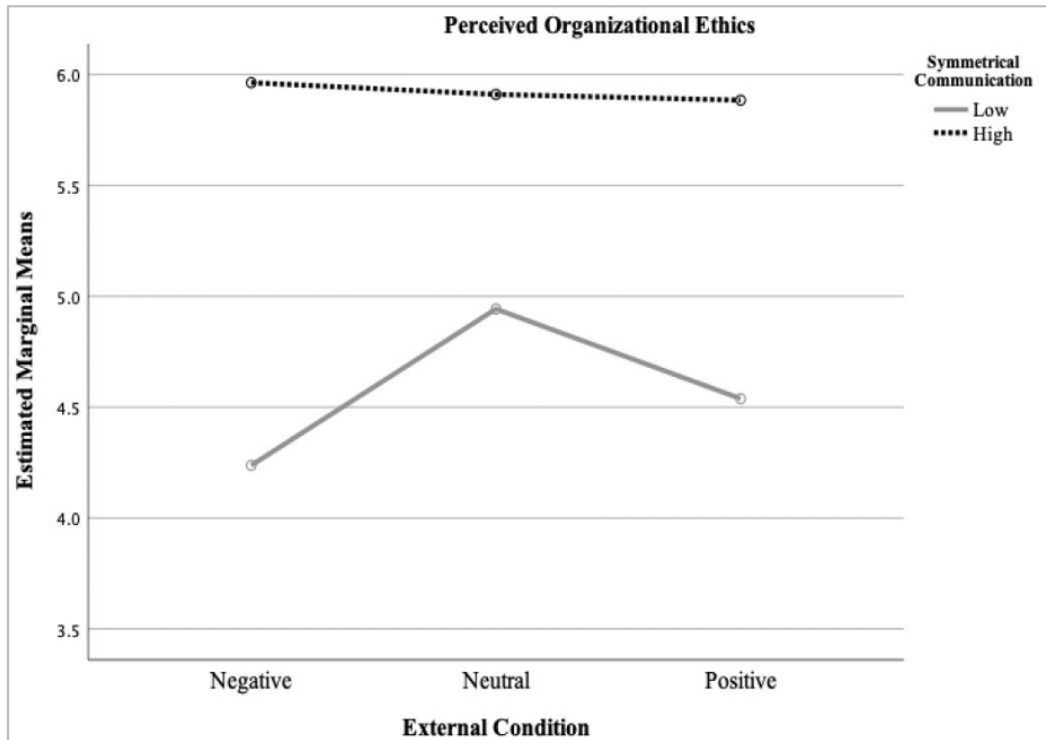
Figure 6

Interaction Effect: OPR, Positive Megaphoning & External Condition
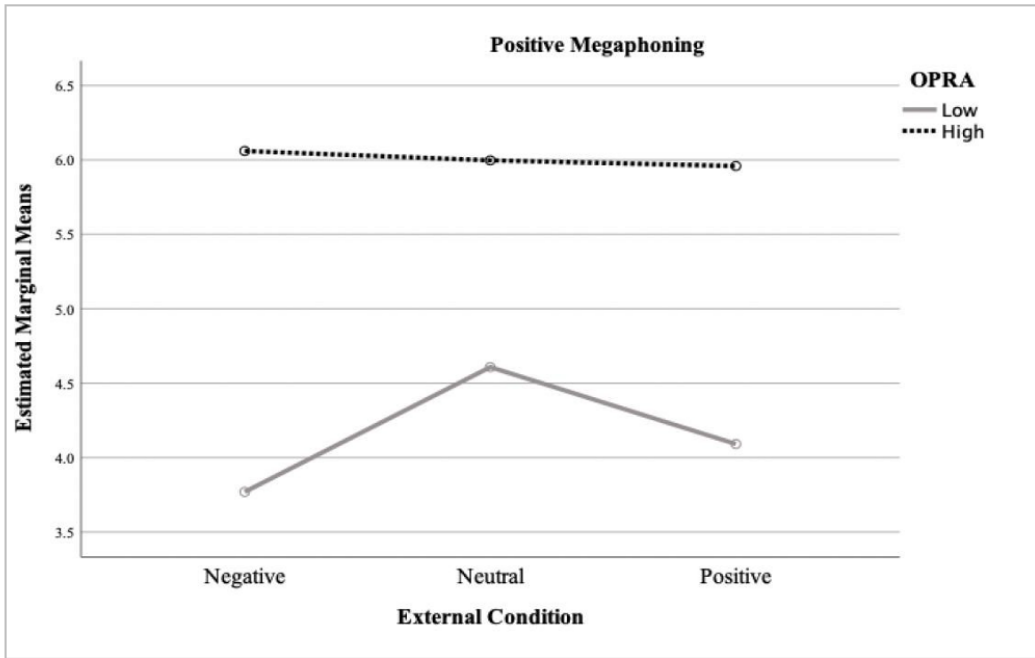
Figure 7

Interaction Effect: OPR, Perceived Organizational Ethics & External Condition
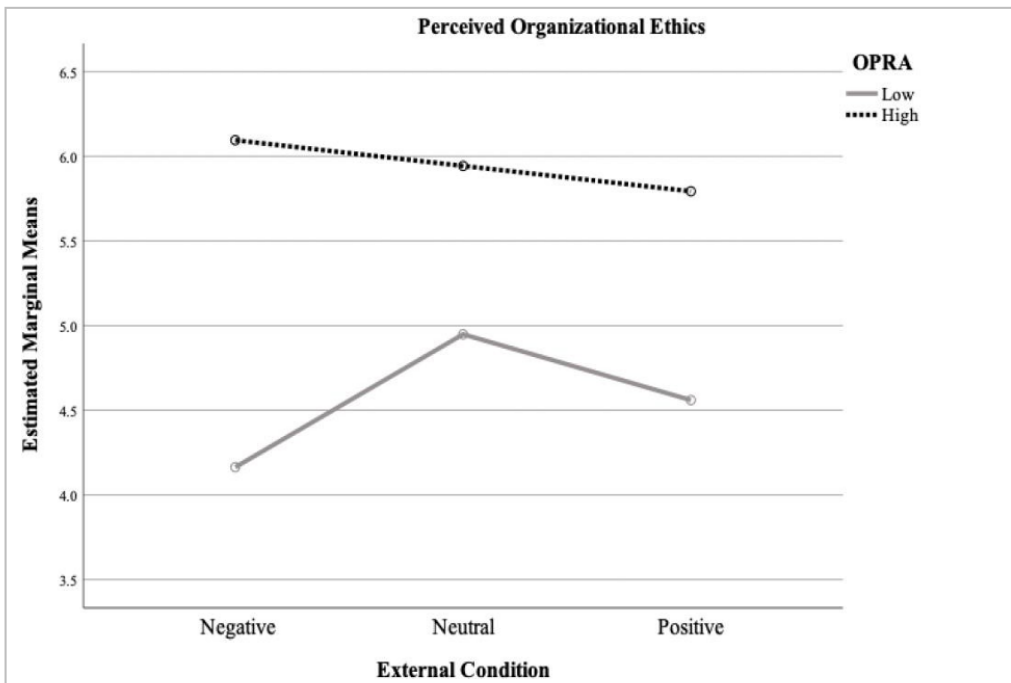
Tables

Table 1: OPRA - Trust dimension	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Whenever my organization makes an important decision, I know it will be concerned about me.							
My organization can be relied on to keep its promises.							
I believe that my organization takes my opinions into account when making decisions.							
I feel very confident about my organization's skills.							
My organization has the ability to accomplish what it says it will do.							

Negative Scenario	**McDonald's** has found itself in the news over accusations of systemic flaws in food safety and hygiene protocols. Public scrutiny on health and safety practices at fast food restaurants has increased, and recently customers at multiple **McDonald's** locations have alleged receiving undercooked or improperly prepared foods. The corporation is aware of a problem existing between franchise owners and corporate oversight on protocols at restaurants. They have been attempting to quietly solve the problems and end the outbreak of foodborne illnesses without causing a media stir or acknowledging a connection between the incidents of illness reported across the country. However, employees within the **McDonald's** corporate structure and at restaurants are increasingly aware of the problem.
Neutral Scenario	**McDonald's** is releasing a new line of meatless products which require different food-handling rules than the meat products of the past (which were largely stored frozen). The meatless options require many restaurants to get new food storage and preparation equipment to limit spoilage and cross-contamination. These upgrades are substantial and will change the classic layout of the kitchen at most franchises in a dramatic way. These upgrades are very costly, and some owners of franchises are upset about the costs. **McDonald's** corporate is splitting the costs with independent franchisees who need renovations to offer the new menu items, which has quieted most of the upset owners.
Positive Scenario	**McDonald's** has won a prestigious industry award for food safety and quality. The award, given annually to chain restaurants by the magazine Food and Wine, rarely places a fast-food chain among the pricier casual dining chains. Food & Wine is an international publication that rates and reviews restaurants all over the world. Fast food restaurants are rarely even discussed in the magazine. **McDonald's** also has previously never been recognized by Food & Wine. Due to high performance and consistently high ratings from customers, particularly regarding consistency and satisfaction, **McDonald's** was recognized over well-known chains such as **P.F. Chang's** and **Red Lobster**.

Table 2   (Each fictitious scenario was tailored to the specific restaurant the respondent worked for)

Table 3: Positive Megaphoning	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I'd like to post positive comments about my organization in the Internet.							
I'd praise my organization and management to friends and people I know.							
I'd talk to neighbors and friends about how my organization does better than other companies.							
I'd like to make efforts to persuade angry customers/activists in favor of my organization.							
I'd fight for my organization against people who attacked my organization.							
I'd counter any critiques someone says or posts online against my organization.							

Table 4: OPRA: Satisfaction	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Overall, I am happy with this organization.							
Both the organization and I benefit from the relationship.							
I am happy in my interactions with this organization.							
Generally speaking, I am pleased with the relationship this organization has established with me.							

Negative External Business Environment	**Wendy's** tweeted out a request for pictures of customers with their Frosties, asking them to recreate the first time they had the dessert. Pictures came in on Twitter and Instagram, showing customers from all over the country happily doing so. People sent out pictures of themselves recreating images from their youth, eating Frosties and sharing their positive relationship with the restaurant.
Positive External Business Environment	**Wendy's** tweeted out a call for pictures of customers with their favorite menu item. Customers responded with a wave of sarcastic pictures of orders they received that were misshapen, underfilled, or otherwise unappealing. The hashtag *#davewouldnever* began to trend across **Twitter** and **Instagram**, and several of the videos and pictures customers shared became popular memes.

Table 5   (Each fictitious scenario was tailored to the specific restaurant the respondent worked for)

Negative Megaphoning Scenario	The **Burger King** restaurant chain has come under fire from some of their own employees for lying about the freshness and preparation process of their new meatless plant-based offerings. A recent viral rumor started on Twitter, claiming the plant-based burgers often arrived at the franchise locations thawed and sometimes past expiration date, but that management had overlooked these issues. A **RESTAURANT** employee took to Twitter to announce the company had been lying about the freshness of the meatless options and showing several pictures of meatless patties at locations sitting out in the sun. Their claims were soon echoed by several other employees who voiced their concerns about the organization over social media platforms, with some directly tagging and reaching out to activists in the diet and food safety industries.
Positive Megaphoning Scenario	The **Burger King** chain of restaurants received an industry award for cleanliness and quality of food prepared at their restaurants. Many fast-food chains had recently experienced negative news reports about the problems with cleanliness and a resulting move to increased automation. The win for **Burger King** was shared with the employees who had earned the award with their work. Cash bonuses, time off and other prizes were awarded to employees across the company. Employees throughout the company took to social media to share the bonuses they got from the organization and the award recognition they got from **Burger King**, causing the hashtag *#IamBK* to briefly become a trending topic across social media.

Table 6   *(Each fictitious scenario was tailored to the specific restaurant the respondent worked for)*

Q1. In general, the top managers of this company favors …	A strong emphasis on the results	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	A strong emphasis on the working process
	Those relentless goal-seekers who bring outcomes in working	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Those rule-followers abiding by rules and guidelines in working
Q2. In general, the top managers of this company tend to think….	"There is no *rule* without exceptions."	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	"Rules are rules."
	Social norms and ethics are obstacles for better business	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Social norms and ethics are safeguard for better business
Q3. In dealing with its competitors, this company …	Typically use any ideas and method if it leads to win	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Typically contemplate ideas and method only within the norms and ethics
	Is often play tricks or deception to win	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Is seldom play tricks or deception
Q4. When confronted with decision-making situations involving uncertainty, this company …	Typically adopts a fast-and-aggressive posture without little attention to possible consequences to others to maximize success	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Typically adopts a 'wait-and-see' posture to avoid wrongdoings or loss of others' interests
	Typically pay little attention to people who would get negative consequences	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Typically pay careful attention to all possible stakeholders whose interests are affected

Table 7

Table 8: DV - Positive Megaphoning, IV – Symmetrical Communication

DV= Positive Megaphoning		N	Mean	SD	95%CI Lower Bound	95%CI Upper Bound	Mean Difference (neg-pos)
External Condition	Negative	92	4.876	.120	4.639	5.112	
	Neutral	97	5.293	.117	5.063	5.524	-.195
	Positive	91	5.071	.120	4.835	5.307	
Symmetrical Communication	Low	139	4.248	.099	4.054	4.443	-1.663***
	High	141	5.912	.098	5.719	6.104	

Between-Within Subject Table

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Intercept	121.643	1	121.643	93.416***	.000
Gender	2.434	1	2.434	1.869	.173
Age	.132	1	.132	.101	.751
Education	15.645	1	15.645	12.014***	.001
Income	.001	1	.001	.001	.974
External Condition	8.072	2	4.036	3.100*	.047
Symmetrical Communication	182.552	1	182.552	140.191***	.000
External x Symmetrical	4.780	2	2.390	1.835	.162
Error	351.585	270	1.302		
Total	7883.139	280			
Corrected Total	588.434	279			

*** $p < .001$ ** $p < .01$ * $p < .05$

Table 9: DV - Perceived Organizational Ethics, IV – Symmetrical Communications

DV= Perceived Organizational Ethics		N	Mean	SD	95%CI Lower Bound	95%CI Upper Bound	Mean Difference (neg-pos)
External Condition	Negative	92	5.084	.108	4.871	5.298	
	Neutral	97	5.439	.106	5.231	5.647	-.132
	Positive	91	5.217	.108	5.004	5.430	
Symmetrical Communication	Low	139	4.604	.089	4.429	4.780	-1.284***
	High	141	5.889	.088	5.715	6.062	

Between-Within Subject Table

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Intercept	198.051	1	198.051	186.745***	.000
Gender	.098	1	.098	.092	.761
Age	.959	1	.959	.904	.342
Education	.280	1	.280	.264	.608
Income	.505	1	.505	.476	.491
External Condition	5.951	2	2.975	2.805	.062
Symmetrical Communication	108.886	1	108.886	102.670***	.000
External x Symmetrical	6.424	2	3.212	3.029*	.050
Error	286.348	270	1.061		
Total	8193.375	280			
Corrected Total	412.746	279			

*** $p < .001$ ** $p < .01$ * $p < .05$

Table 10: DV - Negative Megaphoning, IV - Asymmetrical Communication

DV= Negative Megaphoning		N	Mean	SD	95%CI Lower Bound	95%CI Upper Bound	Mean Difference (neg-pos)
External Condition	Negative	92	4.781	.149	4.487	5.075	
	Neutral	97	4.498	.150	4.203	4.793	.129
	Positive	91	4.652	.150	4.356	4.948	
Asymmetrical Communication	Low	154	3.807	.117	3.577	4.037	-1.672***
	High	126	5.480	.129	5.226	5.734	

Between-Within Subject Table

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Intercept	113.084	1	113.084	55.309***	.000
Gender	25.843	1	25.843	12.640***	.000
Age	5.512	1	5.512	2.696	.102
Education	23.065	1	23.065	11.281***	.001
Income	14.062	1	14.062	6.878**	.009
External Condition	3.664	2	1.832	.896	.409
Asymmetrical Communication	185.931	1	185.931	90.939***	.000
External x Asymmetrical	.823	2	.412	.201	.818
Error	552.036	270	2.045		
Total	6660.680	280			
Corrected Total	832.999	279			

*** p < .001 ** p < .01 * p < .05

Table 11: DV – Conspiracy Attribution, IV – Negative Megaphoning

DV= Conspiracy Attribution		N	Mean	SD	95%CI Lower Bound	95%CI Upper Bound	Mean Difference (neg-pos)
External Condition	Negative	92	5.091	.130	4.836	5.347	
	Neutral	97	4.850	.130	4.593	5.107	.052
	Positive	91	5.040	.131	4.782	5.297	
Asymmetrical Communication	Low	154	4.242	.102	4.042	4.443	-1.503***
	High	126	5.745	.112	5.524	5.966	

Between-Within Subject Table

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Intercept	163.663	1	163.663	105.580***	.000
Gender	9.934	1	9.934	6.408**	.012
Age	2.660	1	2.660	1.716	.191
Education	11.809	1	11.809	7.618**	.006
Income	13.394	1	13.394	8.640**	.004
External Condition	2.939	2	1.470	.948	.389
Asymmetrical Communication	150.147	1	150.147	96.861***	.000
External x Asymmetrical	1.246	2	.623	.402	.669
Error	418.536	270	1.550		
Total	7379.688	280			
Corrected Total	625.000	279			

*** p < .001 ** p < .01 * p < .05

Table 12: DV – Positive Megaphoning, IV - Relationship (OPRA),

Descriptive Statistics

DV - Positive Megaphoning, IV - OPR

DV	IV	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
-1	0	3.7857	1.4262	42
	1	6.0233	.8213	50
	Total	5.0018	1.5923	92
0	0	4.6220	1.2474	56
	1	5.9837	.9301	41
	Total	5.1976	1.3073	97
1	0	4.1429	1.4410	42
	1	5.9354	.8414	49
	Total	5.1081	1.4598	91
Total	0	4.2274	1.3972	140
	1	5.9809	.8559	140
	Total	5.1041	1.4523	280

DV= Positive Megaphoning		N	Mean	SD	95%CI Lower Bound	95%CI Upper Bound	Mean Difference (neg-pos)
External Condition	Negative	92	4.912	.117	4.681	5.142	
	Neutral	97	5.315	.115	5.088	5.541	-.109
	Positive	91	5.021	.118	4.789	5.253	
OPRA	Low	140	4.211	.097	4.019	4.402	-1.744***
	High	140	5.954	.097	5.764	6.144	

Between Within Subject Table

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Intercept	126.749	1	126.749	101.439***	.000
Gender	1.398	1	1.398	1.119	.291
Age	4.968	1	4.968	3.976*	.047
Education	11.894	1	11.894	9.519**	.002
Income	.407	1	.407	.326	.569
External Condition	8.053	2	4.026	3.222*	.041
OPRA	194.954	1	194.954	156.025***	.000
External x OPRA	7.823	2	3.911	3.130*	.045
Error	337.367	270	1.250		
Total	7883.139	280			
Corrected Total	588.434	279			

*** p < .001 ** p < .01 * p < .05

Table 13: DV – Perceived Organizational Ethics, IV – Relationship (OPRA)

Descriptive Statistics

DV – Perceived Org. Ethics

pos	h_OPR1	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
-1	0	4.2143	1.52876	42
	1	6.0050	.79938	50
	Total	5.1875	1.48371	92
0	0	4.9732	.83894	56
	1	5.9268	.90008	41
	Total	5.3763	.98235	97
1	0	4.6250	1.09077	42
	1	5.7755	.90462	49
	Total	5.2445	1.14502	91
Total	0	4.6411	1.19095	140
	1	5.9018	.86639	140
	Total	5.2714	1.21630	280

DV= Perceived Organizational Ethics		N	Mean	SD	95%CI Lower Bound	95%CI Upper Bound	Mean Difference (neg-pos)
External Condition	Negative	92	5.112	.107	4.902	5.322	
	Neutral	97	5.459	.105	5.253	5.666	-.073
	Positive	91	5.185	.107	4.973	5.396	
OPRA	Low	140	4.590	.089	4.415	4.765	-1.324***
	High	140	5.914	.088	5.741	6.087	

Between-Within Subject Table

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Intercept	203.645	1	203.645	195.868***	.000
Gender	.001	1	.001	.001	.975
Age	5.566	1	5.566	5.353*	.021
Education	.022	1	.022	.021	.886
Income	.031	1	.031	.030	.863
External Condition	6.232	2	3.116	2.997	.052
OPRA	112.413	1	112.413	108.120***	.000
External x OPRA	9.061	2	4.531	4.358*	.014
Error	280.720	270	1.040		
Total	8193.375	280			
Corrected Total	412.746	279			

*** p < .001 ** p < .01 * p < .05

Table 14: DV- Positive Megaphoning, IVs – Internal Issue and External Condition

DV= Positive Megaphoning		N	Mean	SD	95%CI Lower Bound	95%CI Upper Bound	Mean Difference
External Condition	Negative	147	4.972	.062	4.850	5.093	-.289***
	Positive	148	5.260	.062	5.139	5.382	
Internal Issue with Employee	Adversarial	147	5.030	.062	4.908	5.152	-.172
	Ambassadorial	148	5.202	.062	5.080	5.323	

Descriptive Statistics

Dependent Variable: posmeg

pos	amb	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
0	0	4.923423428793210	1.154433297385250	74
	1	5.029680361486460	1.037618983826572	73
	Total	4.976190477001423	1.095514580322923	147
1	0	5.191780817018796	1.019361646344884	73
	1	5.319999985694886	1.016293694904863	75
	Total	5.256756747091138	1.016377304580389	148
Total	0	5.056689342673939	1.094036785927437	147
	1	5.176801792673162	1.033678239521171	148
	Total	5.116949148097280	1.064073036884061	295

Between-Within Subject Table

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Intercept	2.332	1	2.332	4.174*	.042
Gender	1.303	1	1.303	2.332	.128
Age	2.552	1	2.552	4.568*	.033
Education	5.659	1	5.659	10.128**	.002
Income	3.331	1	3.331	5.961**	.015
OPRA	150.619	1	150.619	269.568***	.000
External Condition	6.050	1	6.050	10.827***	.001
Internal Issue with Employee	2.113	1	2.113	3.782	.053
External x Internal Conditions	0.171	1	0.171	.306	.581
Error	159.800	286	0.559		
Total	8056.917	295			
Corrected Total	332.882	294			

*** p < .001 ** p < .01 * p < .05

Table 15: DV - Perceived Org. Ethics, IVs – Internal Issue and External Condition

DV= Perceived Organizational Ethics		N	Mean	SD	95%CI Lower Bound	95%CI Upper Bound	Mean Difference
External Condition	Negative	147	4.966	.081	4.806	5.125	-.310**
	Positive	148	5.275	.081	5.116	5.434	
Internal Issue with Employee	Adversarial	147	4.969	.081	4.809	5.129	-.303**
	Ambassadorial	148	5.272	.081	5.112	5.431	

Between-Within Subject Table

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Intercept	8.278	1	8.278	8.641**	.004
Gender	1.573	1	1.573	1.642	.201
Age	0.369	1	.369	0.385	.535
Education	1.544	1	1.544	1.611	.205
Income	0.789	1	.789	0.824	.365
OPRA	81.560	1	81.560	85.138***	.000
External Condition	6.958	1	6.958	7.263**	.007
Internal Issue with Employee	6.575	1	6.575	6.864**	.009
External x Internal Conditions	0.384	1	.384	0.401	.527
Error	273.980	286	.958		
Total	8114.688	295			
Corrected Total	377.855	294			

*** p < .001 ** p < .01 * p < .05

Table 16: DV - Negative Megaphoning, IVs – Internal Issues and External Condition

DV= Negative Megaphoning		N	Mean	SD	95%CI Lower Bound	95%CI Upper Bound	Mean Difference
External Condition	Negative	147	5.237	.069	5.102	5.373	.118
	Positive	148	5.119[a]	.069	4.984	5.254	
Internal Issue with Employee	Adversarial	147	5.281	.069	5.145	5.416	.205*
	Ambassadorial	148	5.076	.069	4.941	5.211	

Between-Within Subject Table

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Intercept	11.265	1	11.265	16.341***	.000
Gender	5.829	1	5.829	8.455**	.004
Age	0.825	1	.825	1.197	.275
Education	0.459	1	.459	0.666	.415
Income	0.003	1	.003	0.005	.945
OPRA	84.414	1	84.414	122.444***	.000
External Condition	1.011	1	1.011	1.466	.227
Internal Issue with Employee	3.015	1	3.015	4.374*	.037
External x Internal Conditions	0.203	1	.203	0.294	.588
Error	197.170	286	.689		
Total	8206.875	295			
Corrected Total	297.532	294			

*** p < .001 ** p < .01 * p < .05

Table 17: DV – Conspiracy Attribution, IVs - Internal Issues and External Condition

DV= Conspiracy Attribution		N	Mean	SD	95%CI Lower Bound	95%CI Upper Bound	Mean Difference
External Condition	Negative	147	4.933	.095	4.746	5.119	.122
	Positive	148	4.811	.094	4.625	4.997	
Internal Issue with Employee	Adversarial	147	4.912	.095	4.725	5.099	.080
	Ambassadorial	148	4.832	.095	4.646	5.018	

Descriptive Statistics

Dependent Variable: posmeg

pos	h_symm1	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
0	0	4.260416684672236	.852362113156615	64
	1	5.528112437351642	.932991839618306	83
	Total	4.976190477001423	1.095514580322923	147
1	0	4.544270828366279	.950374565433236	64
	1	5.799603161357699	.674045401888774	84
	Total	5.256756747091138	1.016377304580389	148
Total	0	4.402343756519256	.910358239386021	128
	1	5.664670645833730	.822009010800588	167
	Total	5.116949148097280	1.064073036884061	295

Between-Within Subject Table

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Intercept	3.870	1	3.870	2.956	.087
Gender	5.722	1	5.722	4.370*	.037
Age	9.587	1	9.587	7.323**	.007
Education	32.684	1	32.684	24.966***	.000
Income	8.520	1	8.520	6.508*	.011
OPRA	100.210	1	100.210	76.545***	.000
External Condition	1.076	1	1.076	0.822	.365
Internal Issue with Employee	0.455	1	.455	0.348	.556
External x Internal Conditions	4.797	1	4.797	3.644	.057
Error	374.419	286	1.309		
Total	7548.625	295			
Corrected Total	543.858	294			

$$*** \, p < .001 \; ** \, p < .01 \; * \, p < .05$$

Table 18: DV – Positive Megaphoning, IV – OPRA (Covariate)

DV= Positive Megaphoning		N	Mean	SD	95%CI Lower Bound	95%CI Upper Bound	Mean Difference
External Condition	Negative	147	4.941	0.061	4.821	5.061	-.284***
	Positive	148	5.225	0.061	5.104	5.345	
Symmetrical Communication	Low	128	4.827	0.078	4.673	4.981	
	High	167	5.338	0.066	5.209	5.468	-.511***

Descriptive Statistics

Dependent Variable: posmeg

pos	h_symm1	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
0	0	4.260416684672236	.852362113156615	64
	1	5.528112437351642	.932991839618306	83
	Total	4.976190477001423	1.095514580322923	147
1	0	4.544270828366279	.950374565433236	64
	1	5.799603161357699	.674045401888774	84
	Total	5.256756747091138	1.016377304580389	148
Total	0	4.402343756519256	.910358239386021	128
	1	5.664670645833730	.822009010800588	167
	Total	5.116949148097280	1.064073036884061	295

Between-Within Subject Table

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Intercept	9.282	1	9.282	17.495***	.000
Gender	0.983	1	0.983	1.853	.174
Age	2.574	1	2.574	4.851*	.028
Education	6.321	1	6.321	11.913***	.001
Income	2.608	1	2.608	4.916*	.027
OPRA	46.746	1	46.746	88.109***	.000***
External Condition	5.739	1	5.739	10.818***	.001***
Symmetrical Communication	10.268	1	10.268	19.354***	.000***
External x Symmetrical	0.082	1	0.082	0.155	.694
Error	151.738	286	0.531		
Total	8056.917	295			
Corrected Total	332.882	294			

*** $p < .001$ ** $p < .01$ * $p < .05$

Table 19: DV – Negative Megaphoning, IV – OPRA Covariate

DV= Negative Megaphoning		N	Mean	SD	95%CI Lower Bound	95%CI Upper Bound	Mean Difference
External	Negative	147	5.274[a]	.066	5.145	5.403	.152
Condition	Positive	148	5.132[a]	.065	5.004	5.260	
Asymmetrical	Low	159	4.864[a]	.068	4.731	4.998	
Communication	High	136	5.542[a]	.074	5.395	5.688	-.677***

Descriptive Statistics

Dependent Variable: negmeg

pos	h_symm1	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
0	0	4.6094	.75969	64
	1	5.7500	.77695	83
	Total	5.2534	.95399	147
1	0	4.6680	.92909	64
	1	5.4345	1.02537	84
	Total	5.1030	1.05299	148
Total	0	4.6387	.84579	128
	1	5.5913	.92137	167
	Total	5.1780	1.00599	295

Between-Within Subject Table

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Intercept	24.256	1	24.256	39.361	.000
Gender	5.410	1	5.410	8.779	.003
Age	3.802	1	3.802	6.169	.014
Education	.032	1	.032	.052	.819
Income	.094	1	.094	.153	.696
OPRA	31.423	1	31.423	50.991	.000***
External Condition	1.449	1	1.449	2.352	.126
Asymmetrical Communication	23.895	1	23.895	38.776	.000***
External x Asymmetrical	.306	1	.306	.497	.482
Error	176.246	286	.616		
Total	8206.875	295			
Corrected Total	297.532	294			

*** p < .001 ** p < .01 * p < .05

Table 20: DV – Perceived Organizational Ethics, IV – OPRA (covariate)

DV= Perceived Organizational Ethics			Mean	SD	95%CI Lower Bound	95%CI Upper Bound	Mean Difference
External	Negative	147	4.950	0.083	4.788	5.113	-.320**
Condition	Positive	148	5.270	0.083	5.108	5.433	
Symmetrical	Low	128	5.030	0.106	4.821	5.239	-.160
Communication	High	167	5.190	0.089	5.014	5.366	

Descriptive Statistics

DV: Perceived Org.Ethics, IV - OPR

pos	h_symm1	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
0	0	4.4414	1.18501	64
	1	5.3795	1.22497	83
	Total	4.9711	1.29094	147
1	0	4.8828	1.00787	64
	1	5.5655	.75262	84
	Total	5.2703	.93292	148
Total	0	4.6621	1.11785	128
	1	5.4731	1.01644	167
	Total	5.1212	1.13368	295

Between-Within Subjects Table

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Intercept	10.118	1	10.118	10.375***	.001
Gender	1.343	1	1.343	1.378	.241
Age	0.054	1	0.054	0.055	.815
Education	1.499	1	1.499	1.537	.216
Income	1.382	1	1.382	1.417	.235
OPRA	35.110	1	35.110	36.003***	.000
External Condition	7.312	1	7.312	7.498**	.007
Symmetrical Communication	1.005	1	1.005	1.031	.311
External x Symmetrical	0.968	1	0.9680	.993	.320
Error	278.906	286	0.975		

*** $p < .001$ ** $p < .01$ * $p < .05$

Table 21: DV – Conspiracy Attribution, IV – OPRA (covariate)

DV= Conspiracy Attribution			Mean	SD	95%CI Lower Bound	95%CI Upper Bound	Mean Difference
External	Negative	147	5.006[a]	.086	4.837	5.175	.172
Condition	Positive	148	4.834[a]	.085	4.667	5.001	
Asymmetrical	Low	159	4.315[a]	.089	4.139	4.490	
Communication	High	136	5.525[a]	.098	5.333	5.717	-1.211***

Descriptive Statistics

Dependent Variable: consatt

pos	h_symm1	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
0	0	4.2969	1.00680	64
	1	5.4036	1.34620	83
	Total	4.9218	1.32604	147
1	0	4.0273	1.30408	64
	1	5.4315	1.13895	84
	Total	4.8243	1.39589	148
Total	0	4.1621	1.16823	128
	1	5.4177	1.24258	167
	Total	4.8729	1.36009	295

Between-Within Subjects Table

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Intercept	26.856	1	26.856	25.329***	.000
Gender	4.507	1	4.507	4.251**	.040
Age	1.949	1	1.949	1.838	.176
Education	16.741	1	16.741	15.789***	.000
Income	5.007	1	5.007	4.722**	.031
OPRA	19.146	1	19.146	18.058***	.000
External Condition	2.129	1	2.129	2.008	.158
Asymmetrical Communication	76.381	1	76.381	72.037***	.000
External x Asymmetrical	0.025	1	.025	-.024	.878
Error	303.248	286	1.060		
Total	7548.625	295			
Corrected Total	543.858	294			

*** p < .001 ** p < .01 * p < .05

Survey Materials

Vignettes
*The following are the vignette stimuli presented to participants in the research. **Study 1** focused on internal publics (employees) of the 4 restaurants.*
Negative Scenario

Please read the following vignette before proceeding to the next section. **Burger King** has found itself in the news over accusations of systemic flaws in food safety and hygiene protocols. Public scrutiny on health and safety practices at fast food restaurants has increased, and recently customers at multiple **Burger King** locations have alleged receiving undercooked or improperly prepared foods. The corporation is aware of a problem existing between franchise owners and corporate oversight on protocols at restaurants. They have been attempting to quietly solve the problems and end the outbreak of foodborne illnesses without causing a media stir or acknowledging a connection between the incidents of illness reported across the country. However, employees within the **Burger King** corporate structure and at restaurants are increasingly aware of the problem.

Neutral Scenario

Burger King is releasing a new line of meatless products which require different food-handling rules than the meat products of the past (which were largely stored frozen). The meatless options require many restaurants to get new food storage and preparation equipment to limit spoilage and cross-contamination. These upgrades are substantial and will change the classic layout of the kitchen at most franchises in a dramatic way. These upgrades are very costly, and some owners of franchises are upset about the costs. **Burger King** corporate is splitting the costs with independent franchisees who need renovations to offer the new menu items, which has quieted most of the upset owners.

Positive Scenario

Burger King has won a prestigious industry award for food safety and quality. The award, given annually to chain restaurants by the magazine Food and Wine, rarely places a fast-food chain among the pricier casual dining chains. Food & Wine is an international publication that rates and reviews restaurants all over the world. Fast food restaurants are rarely even discussed in the magazine. **Burger King** also has previously never been recognized by Food & Wine. Due to high performance and consistently high ratings from customers, particularly regarding consistency and satisfaction, **Burger King** was recognized over well-known chains such as **P.F. Chang's** and **Red Lobster**.

The stimuli were input identically for all four restaurants with only the name of the restaurant changed. Each participant only saw the stimuli regarding the restaurant they work/worked for.

The following unrelated stimulus was presented with a set of questions regarding the unrelated information. It was presented to the participants in between answering OPRA relationship measure but before the presentation of the experimental stimuli in the study.

Please read the following passage and answer the questions.
Let's assume that you own about 1000 stocks for a consumer goods manufacturer named HUMAN-TECH. Please read the following information about the company and answer the questions.
Successful market performance of HUMAN-TECH
HUMAN-TECH has grown continuously over the last 10 years and the business growth allowed the stock value to increase about 30% every year due to global market demands. Because the firm's services and products are of higher quality and more reasonably priced than competitors, the company will be likely to boast an increasing sales record in the coming 3-5 years.
However, HUMAN-TECH has been criticized for making contracts with factories in developing countries with poor working conditions, exploiting cheap overseas labor. Employees in those factories have to work excessive overtime and are forced to stand for 24 hours. Also, it is claimed that the firm's suppliers allegedly wrongly dispose of hazardous waste, and two explosions last year killed four people while injuring more than 150.

The following are the vignette stimuli presented to participants in the research. **Study 2** *focused on external publics (customers) of the 4 restaurants. They were presented two sets of experimental stimuli, again, identical save for the name of the restaurant. The first was adversarial or ambassadorial conditions, followed by negative or positive external issues scenario.*

Adversarial Condition

Recently, several corporate mid-management employees at **Burger King** started a Reddit page where they disclosed secrets of what they call "a culture of lying." The page disclosed a number of embarrassing, purportedly true accounts of meetings of **Burger King** executives talking about fooling customers and being dishonest about the products. The **Burger King** employees thread was very popular both among employees and customers, and attracted a sizable group of participants.

Ambassadorial Condition

After a social media post went viral accusing Burger King of being racist for forcing employees of color at some locations to wear hairnets, several employees at those locations and corporate employees of color sounded off on social media. They claimed

that the pictures were taken out of context, that all employees at those locations are required to wear hairnets—not just the people of color—and furthermore, that Burger King has always fostered a positive environment focused on diversity.

Negative Scenario

The **Burger King** restaurant chain has come under fire from some of their own employees for lying about the freshness and preparation process of their new meatless plant-based offerings. A recent viral rumor started on Twitter, claiming the plant-based burgers often arrived at the franchise locations thawed and sometimes past expiration date, but that management had overlooked these issues. A **Burger King** employee took to Twitter to announce the company had been lying about the freshness of the meatless options and showing several pictures of meatless patties at locations sitting out in the sun. Their claims were soon echoed by several other employees who voiced their concerns about the organization over social media platforms, with some directly tagging and reaching out to activists in the diet and food safety industries.

Positive Scenario

The **Burger King** chain of restaurants received an industry award for cleanliness and quality of food prepared at their restaurants. Many fast-food chains had recently experienced negative news reports about the problems with cleanliness and a resulting move to increased automation. The win for **Burger King** was shared with the employees who had earned the award with their work. Cash bonuses, time off and other prizes were awarded to employees across the company. Employees throughout the company took to social media to share the bonuses they got from the organization and the award recognition they got from **Burger King**, causing the hashtag #IamBK to briefly become a trending topic across social media.

The following unrelated stimulus was presented with a set of questions regarding the unrelated information. It was presented to the participants in between answering OPRA relationship measure but before the presentation of the experimental stimuli in the study.

> **Please read the following passage and answer the questions.**
> Let's assume that you own about 1000 stocks for a consumer goods manufacturer named HUMAN-TECH. Please read the following information about the company and answer the questions.
> *Successful market performance of HUMAN-TECH*
> HUMAN-TECH has grown continuously over the last 10 years and the business growth allowed the stock value to increase about 30% every year due to global market demands. Because the firm's services and products are of higher quality and more reasonably priced than competitors, the company will be likely to boast an increasing sales record in the coming 3-5 years.
> However, HUMAN-TECH has been criticized for making contracts with factories in developing countries with poor working conditions, exploiting cheap overseas labor.

Employees in those factories have to work excessive overtime and are forced to stand for 24 hours. Also, it is claimed that the firm's suppliers allegedly wrongly dispose of hazardous waste, and two explosions last year killed four people while injuring more than 150.

Survey Questions

INTERNAL PUBLICS – STUDY 1
OPRA: Trust

Questions	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Whenever my organization makes an important decision, I know it will be concerned about me.							
My organization can be relied on to keep its promises.							
I believe that my organization takes my opinions into account when making decisions.							
I feel very confident about my organization's skills.							
My organization has the ability to accomplish what it says it will do.							
My organization treats people like me fairly and justly.							

OPRA: Control Mutuality

Questions	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My organization and I are attentive to what the other says.							
My organization believes my opinions are legitimate.							
My organization really listens to what I have to say.							
The management of my organization gives people like me enough say in the decision-making process.							

OPRA: Commitment

Questions	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I feel that my organization is trying to maintain a long-term commitment to me.							
I can see that my organization wants to maintain a relationship with me.							
There is long-lasting bond between my organization and me.							
Compared to other organizations, I value my relationship with this organization more.							

OPRA: Satisfaction

Questions	Strongly disagree				Strongly agree

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Overall, I am happy with my organization.							
Both my organization and I benefit from the relationship.							
I am happy in my interactions with my organization.							
Generally speaking, I am pleased with the relationship my organization has established with me.							

Acquisitive Relationship (Organizations & Publics)

Questions	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My organization offer favors only when it can get something in return from its employees.							
My organization generally consider its own interests over its employees' welfare.							
My organization is nice to its employees only when it knows it can get something in return.							

Communal Relationship (Organizations and Publics)

Questions	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My organization takes care of its employees even when doing so brings few returns.							
I feel that my organization cares for me without calculation.							
I feel cared for by my organization unconditionally.							

Symmetrical communication

Questions	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Most communication between managers and other employees in our company can be said to be two-way communication.							
The purpose of communication in our company is to help managers to be responsive to the problems of other employees.							
Supervisors encourage employees to express differences of opinion.							
Employees are usually informed about major changes in policy that affect our job before they take place.							
Employees are not afraid to speak up during meetings with supervisors and managers.							

The following questions are about the communication with company. Please read the statement and answer how much you agree with the statement.

Asymmetrical communication

Questions	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The purpose of communication in our company is to get employees to behave in the way top management wants us to behave.							
Employees seldom get feedback when we communicate to managers.							
In our company, management uses communication to control employees.							
Managers here are not interested in hearing employee suggestions regarding ways to improve company performance.							

Job satisfaction

Questions	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Generally speaking, I am very satisfied with this job.							
I am generally satisfied with the kind of work I do in this job.							
Most people in this job are very satisfied with the job.							

Q32-1. The following statements ask about your opinion regarding the above case. Please indicate if you agree or disagree with the following statements.

Questions	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I feel the company HUMAN-TECH has no reason to worry about the critics of its management as long as it continues its success.							
I believe it is more important for a business to be concerned with successful outcomes than the means to achieve those outcomes.							
I feel that successful managerial outcomes are the most important aspect by which to judge a corporation.							
I think ethical business is mainly based on market success for the greatest good for the greatest number.							
Based on my moral standard, the company HUMAN-TECH is an ethical business.							
In order to turn profits, ethical managerial process can be compromised at times.							
I think an ethical business should not inflict a loss on investors by all means.							

EXPERIMENTAL STIMULI APPLIED

Positive Megaphoning

Questions	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I'd like to post positive comments about my organization in the Internet.							
I'd praise my organization and management to friends and people I know.							
I'd talk to neighbors and friends about how my organization does better than other companies.							
I'd like to make efforts to persuade angry customers/activists in favor of my organization.							
I'd fight for my organization against people who attacked my organization.							
I'd counter any critiques someone says or posts online against my organization.							

Negative Megaphoning

Questions	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I have posted negative notes/reviews about my company on the Internet.							
I have criticized my company and management to friends and people I know.							
I talk to neighbors and friends about how my company does poorer than other companies.							
In the recent past, I have agreed and seconded with negative opinions about my company.							
I would rather be silent even if someone attacks my company with inaccurate information.							

Whistleblowing

Questions	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I'd criticize my company's bad business practices to people I trust.							
I'd like to talk about my organization's bad business practices.							
I'd criticize wrongdoings of my organization to friends and people I know.							
I feel like whistleblowing about troubling business practices committed by our management.							
I'd tell my friends and people I know about the problems of my organization and management.							

Leakage

Questions	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I'd not care whether I slip my tongue revealing some secret business information to friends/family.							
I feel not sorry even if I share important business information with others.							
I would not feel sorry even if I pass along confidential corporate news to friends/family.							
I'd not care even if I share new innovative products/service that our management kept as a business secret.							
I'd not feel sorry even if I talk about competitive business information that our company keeps confidential.							

Ethical orientation

The following questions are about your company. Please read the statement and answer.

Q1. In general, the top managers of my company favor…	A strong emphasis on the results	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	A strong emphasis on the working process
	Those relentless goal-seekers who bring outcomes by working	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Those rule-followers abiding by rules and guidelines in working
Q2. In general, the top managers of my company tend to think…	"There is no *rule* without exceptions."	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	"Rules are rules."
	Social norms and ethics are obstacles to better business	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Social norms and ethics are safeguard of better business
Q3. In dealing with its competitors, my company…	Typically uses any ideas and methods if they lead to wins	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Typically contemplates ideas and methods only within norms and ethics
	Often play tricks or deceives to win	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Seldom play tricks or deceives
Q4. When confronted with decision-making situations involving	Typically adopts a fast-and-aggressive posture with little attention to possible consequences to others to maximize success	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Typically adopts a 'wait-and-see' posture to avoid wrongdoings or loss to others' interests

uncertainty, my company …			
	Typically pays little attention to people who would get negative consequences	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Typically pay careful attention to all possible stakeholders whose interests are affected

Conspiracy

Questions	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
People in power will use shadowy means to gain profit or an advantage, rather than lose it.							
There are always powerful groups plotting to sway the outcomes of elections.							
Nothing in politics or world affairs happens by accident or coincidence.							
Many major events have behind them the actions of a small group of influential people.							
There are people with power who will do anything to hide the truth from public scrutiny.							
In recent major corporate events that happened in my company, a small group of influential managers secretly plotted actions behind the scenes.							
I feel that a small group of influential people carefully conspired to bring about recent changes in my company.							
I feel the supervisor (team leader) secretly plotted to make the recent changes in my team, excluding most members.							
I think my employer discounts the real risks and troubles of Coronavirus to get more business.							
The management of my company hides actual risks and falsely reports safety in workplace.							

This is last part of our survey. The following questions are asking about your demographic information.

Q41. What is your gender?
      1. Male   2. Female

Q42. What is your age?

_____ years

Q43. What is your highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?
1. High school incomplete
2. High school graduate or GED (includes technical/vocational training that doesn't count towards college credit)
3. Some degree (some community college, associate's degree)
4. Four year college degree/bachelor's degree
5. Some postgraduate or professional schooling, no postgraduate degree
6. Postgraduate or professional degree, including mater's, doctorate, medical or law degree

Q44. Which of following describes your race?
1. White
2. Black or African-American
3. Asian or Asian-American
4. Native American/American Indian/Alaska native
5. Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islanders
6. Some other race, specify: _____

Q45. Last year, that is in 2017, what was your total family income from all sources, before taxes?
1. Less than $15,000
2. $15,000 to less than $30,000
3. $30,000 to less than $45,000
4. $45,000 to less than $60,000
5. $60,000 to less than $75,000
6. $75,000 to less than $90,000
7. $90,000 to less than $105,000
8. $120,000 to less than $135,000
9. $135,000 to less than $150,000
10. $150,000 or more

EXTERNAL PUBLICS – STUDY 2

OPRA: Trust

Questions	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
When this company makes decisions, they seem to have the customer's best interests in mind							
This company can be trusted to keep its promises.							
I believe that this company takes my opinions into account when making decisions.							
I feel very confident about this company's ability to deliver what it advertises.							
This company has the ability to accomplish what it says it will do.							
This company treats people like me fairly and justly.							

OPRA: Control Mutuality

Questions	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This company and I pay attention to what each other says.							
This company believes my opinions are legitimate.							
This company really listens to what I have to say.							
The management of this company gives people like me enough say in the decision-making process.							

OPRA: Commitment

Questions	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I feel that this company is trying to maintain a long-term commitment to me.							
I can see that this company wants to maintain a relationship with me.							
I have a long-lasting bond with this company.							
I value my relationship with this company more than most companies.							

OPRA: Satisfaction

Questions	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Overall, I am happy with this company.							
Both the company and I benefit from our relationship.							
I am happy with my interactions with this company.							
Generally speaking, I am pleased with the relationship this company has established with me.							

Acquisitive Relationship (Organizations & Publics)

Questions	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This company only does things that improve my experience when it can make more money.							
This company generally consider its own interests over its customers' satisfaction.							
This company is kind to its customer only when it knows they will buy something.							

Communal Relationship (Organizations and Publics)

Questions	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This company takes care of its customers even when doing so doesn't increase profits.							
I feel that this company cares for me regardless of money.							
I feel cared for by this company unconditionally.							

The following questions are about the communication with company. Please read the statement and answer how much you agree with the statement.

Symmetrical comm

Questions	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Most communication between this company and customers can be said to be two-way communication.							
The purpose of communication in this company is to help managers to be responsive to the problems of customers.							
Management in this company encourages customers to express their disappointments and suggest alternatives.							
Customers are usually informed about major changes in policy that affect the product they buy before the changes take place.							
Customers are not afraid to speak up regarding problems with service or products the company delivers.							

Asymmetrical comm

Questions	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The purpose of communication in this company is to get customers to behave in the way top management wants us to behave.							
Customers rarely get feedback when they contact the company.							
In this company, management uses communication to control customers.							
Managers at this company are not interested in hearing customer suggestions regarding ways to improve company performance.							

Satisfaction

Questions	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Overall, I am happy with this company.							
I am happy in my interactions with this company.							
I find the quality of the products to be worth the cost							

Question							
I find the service to be of generally high quality.							
I believe the company treats its employees fairly.							
I believe the company acts generally out of interest for profit.							
I believe all other things being equal, the company will act in a generally moral way.							
I believe there's no amount of profit too small to make the company act in an immoral way to earn more.							

Q32-1. The following statements ask about your opinion regarding the above case. Please indicate if you agree or disagree with the following statements.

Questions	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I feel the company HUMAN-TECH has no reason to worry about the critics of its management as long as it continues its success.							
I believe it is more important for a business to be concerned with successful outcomes than the means to achieve those outcomes.							
I feel that successful managerial outcomes are the most important aspect by which to judge a corporation.							
I think ethical business is mainly based on market success for the greatest good for the greatest number.							
Based on my moral standard, the company HUMAN-TECH is an ethical business.							
In order to turn profits, ethical managerial process can be compromised at times.							
Questions							
I feel the company HUMAN-TECH is a bad business even though it continues its success.							
I believe the successful outcomes cannot justify the means to those outcomes.							
I believe that following moral obligations in managerial process is the most important aspect by which to judge a corporation.							
Based on my idea of fairness, the Company HUMAN-TECH is an unethical business.							
I think this company is unethical because it has little ethical concerns in labor rights.							
I think the company should abide by law in order to be an ethical company rather than to avoid criticism.							
Although the company did not directly hire the overseas labor workers, the company should be responsible for the poor working conditions.							
I think an ethical business should not inflict a loss on investors by all means.							

EXPERIMENTAL STIMULI APPLIED

Positive Megaphoning

Questions	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I give credence to positive comments about the organization made by employees on the Internet.							
When I read something positive about the organization written by an employee, I tend to think it reflects well on the organization.							
I talk to neighbors and friends, or share social media content, about how the employees of the organization say positive things, or things in defense of the organization.							
When I read something positive about the organization written by an employee, I find it persuasive.							

Negative Megaphoning

Questions	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I give credence to negative comments about the organization made by employees on the Internet.							
When I read something negative about the organization written by an employee, I tend to think it reflects poorly on the organization.							
I talk to neighbors and friends, or share social media content, about how the employees of the organization say negative things or point our problems.							
When I read something positive about the organization written by an employee, I find it persuasive.							

Ethical orientation
The following questions are about this company. Please read the statement and answer how you feel about the management and the business they run.

Q1. In general, the top managers of this company favor…	A strong emphasis on the results	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	A strong emphasis on the working process
	Those relentless goal-seekers who bring outcomes by working	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Those rule-followers abiding by rules and guidelines in working
Q2. In general, the top managers of this company tend to think…	"There is no *rule* without exceptions."	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	"Rules are rules."

	Social norms and ethics are obstacles to better business	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Social norms and ethics are safeguard of better business
Q3. In dealing with its competitors, this company…	Typically uses any ideas and method that lead to wins	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Typically contemplate ideas and method only within the norms and ethics
	Often play tricks or deceives to win	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Seldom play tricks or deceives
Q4. When confronted with decision-making situations involving uncertainty, this company…	Typically adopts a fast-and-aggressive posture to maximize success, with little attention to possible consequences to others	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Typically adopts a 'wait-and-see' posture, to avoid wrongdoings or loss to others' interests
	Typically pays little attention to people who would get negative consequences	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Typically pays careful attention to all possible stakeholders whose interests are affected

Conspiracy

Questions	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
People in power will use shadowy means to gain profit or an advantage.							
There are always powerful groups plotting to sway the outcomes of elections.							
Nothing in politics or world affairs happens by accident or coincidence.							
Many major events have behind them the actions of a small group of influential people.							
There are people with power who will do anything to hide the truth from public scrutiny.							
For this company, I feel there is a small group of influential managers secretly plotting actions behind the scenes.							
For this company, I feel a small group of influential people carefully conspired in the current situation.							
I think this company discounts the real risks and troubles of food safety to get more business.							
The management of this company hides actual risks and falsely reports food safety for its customers.							

CAPTCHA Question

My Favorite item at Burger King to eat is:

Burgers
Chicken Sandwiches
Salads
Plant-based Meatless Sandwiches
Deserts

Demographics Section

This is last part of our survey. The following questions are asking about your demographic information.

Q41. What is your gender?
      1. Male   2. Female

Q42. What is your age?
      _____ years

Q43. What is your highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?
      1. High school incomplete
      2. High school graduate or GED(includes technical/vocational training that doesn't count towards college credit)
      3. Some degree (some community college, associate's degree)
      4. Four year college degree/bachelor's degree
      5. Some postgraduate or professional schooling, no postgraduate degree
      6. Postgraduate or professional degree, including mater's, doctorate, medical or law degree

Q44. Which of following describes your race?
      1. White
      2. Black of African-American
      3. Asian or Asian-American
      4. Native American/American Indian/Alaska native
      5. Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islanders
      6. Some other race, specify: _____

Q45. Last year, that is in 2017, what was your total family income from all sources, before taxes?
      1. Less than $15,000
      2. $15,000 to less than $30,000
      3. $30,000 to less than $45,000
      4. $45,000 to less than $60,000
      5. $60,000 to less than $75,000
      6. $75,000 to less than $90,000
      7. $90,000 to less than $105,000
      8. $120,000 to less than $135,000
      9. $135,000 to less than $150,000
      10. $150,000 or more