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Greetings from the IJBC Editors



Greetings IJBC Community. Welcome to our July Newsletter. Here we'll give you information about our innovative research spotlight and author insights along with the highlights for the outstanding, forthcoming October, 2019 issue. On a special note, we hope to see you at the 84th Association for Business Communication (ABC) International Conference in Detroit, Michigan, October 23-26, 2019. You can find out more about the conference by clicking here: <https://www.businesscommunication.org/page/2019-annual>. We welcome all comments/questions about *IJBC*. Feel free to send them to jmayfield@tamiu.edu.

Call for Book Reviewers

We invite book review manuscripts on all business communication topics. These reviews should be a maximum of two pages or less. Please submit your manuscript on the *IJBC* site to Dr.

Kathryn Rybka, Book Review Editor, Regional Vice-President ABC, Midwestern United States, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Innovative Research Spotlight and Author Insights

Our spotlight on innovative research shines on a recently accepted article “The Neurophysiology of Corporate Apologies: Why Do People Believe Insincere Apologies?” by Adriana F. Kraig, Jorge A. Barraza, Walter Montgomery, and Paul J. Zak.

Abstract

CEOs typically offer apologies after transgressions are discovered whether mistakes were corrected or not. Seemingly insincere apologies, however, may damage the company by impugning its reputation. This study uses neurophysiologic data to identify why people believe apologies and identify when resolutions have occurred. Participants watched videos of corporate apologies and earned \$3 for each video they watched. They could wager any of their earnings on whether the mistake was resolved with a chance to double their money. Participants could not consciously identify problem resolution, but the similarity of electrodermal activity and a measure of sympathetic and parasympathetic switching could with 61.3% accuracy ($p = .001$). Wagers were unrelated to whether problems were resolved or not. Yet electrodermal activity components predicted whether a wager was made with 75% accuracy ($p = .001$). Analysis of physiologic data showed that when leaders identify the problem in an opening statement, address the audience directly, use concrete language to describe how the company will remedy the problem, and minimize the harm done, physiologic arousal is reduced, signaling that the problem will be resolved. Our analysis shows that people believe insincere apologies when the statements made, whether truthful or not, produce a calming effect in listeners.

Lead author, Dr. Adriana Kraig, shares her research insights below. We also have posted a brief biography for Dr. Kraig.

1) What is your overall approach to research?

I would have to say that my overall approach to research relies primarily on the principle of triangulation. Triangulation is the use of multiple methods to collect data on the same topic; a way of assuring the validity of research by checking the consistency of findings through various situations and measures. Being an eclectic scholar myself, this approach allows me to keep an open mind when investigating different phenomena. I often rely on a variety of different logic models (deductive and inductive) and data collection techniques (physiologic correlates, past billing data, survey responses, in-depth-interviews, etc.)

2) What was your motivation to write this specific article?

My motivation for writing the Neurophysiology of Corporate Apologies began after reading an article about how physiological responses to a narrative can predict the amount of charitable giving. When people resonate with or become immersed in a narrative, as measured by cardiac and electrodermal activity, they are more likely to donate to a charity connected to the narrative. This really expanded my current work as I was already working on a paper about using physiologic arousal measures to predict the success of various loan solicitations. I began thinking about the different types of communication that organizations need to utilize when reaching out to their stakeholders:

- If a company is looking to increase their intake of charitable donations, they want to immerse and stimulate individuals through their narratives.
- If a company is looking to acquire more microfinance loans, they want to calm and assure individuals through their messages.
- If a company is looking to apologize for a transgression that they may have committed, what should they do?

3) How do your training and experience align with this article?

I have always been interested in why people do things and how they make decisions, so I designed a unique combination of training across various sciences for myself (a bachelor's in Mathematics and bachelor's in Psychology, a master's in Economics and a Ph.D. in International Relations and Behavioral Neuroeconomics). The trajectory of my research interests, however, have been taking me back to my psychological roots with a much greater understanding and appreciation of economics and business. Lately, I have been getting more and more intrigued by the paradigm of constructivism, that suggests that people construct their own understanding of the world through experiencing things and reflecting on those experiences. Since communication directly influences how people reflect and understand their experiences, I chose to pursue my investigations through a business communications avenue.

4) a short bio and a picture



Adriana Kraig earned a Ph.D. in International Relations and Behavioral Neuroeconomics at Claremont Graduate University. She specializes in a mix of research methodology, economics, and political science. Today, she is an Associate Consultant at Opinion Dynamics, the largest independently owned company specializing in conducting research concerning energy efficiency, demand response and renewable energy efforts. Her research interests include the emotional processing of information, the perception of framing in natural language processing, exploring program evaluation for optimization, and using neurophysiologic correlates to predict collective action.

The July 2019 Issue of *IJBC*

We are proud to announce these outstanding articles in the July 2019 Issue of *IJBC*.

Rhetorical Tactics to Influence Responsibility Judgments: Account Giving in Banks Presidents' Letters During the Financial Market Crisis

Rolf Brühl, Max Kury

This content analysis investigates bank presidents' letters in the aftermath of the financial market crisis (2007/2008). We posit that managers use accounts as a rhetorical device in order to influence responsibility judgments of stakeholders. Therefore, we draw on attribution theory, self-presentational theories and research on account giving to develop our hypotheses. From our model of responsibility judgment, we infer how banks will react to their financial performance

after the financial market crisis (2007/2008). We test this with a sample built from 91 U.S. and European banks, which were all severely hit by this crisis. Our results indicate that bank managers use accounts as linguistic devices to influence the responsibility judgments of stakeholders: Refusals and to relativize are used to influence their situational perception, concessions and excuses target on locus and controllability perceptions, and initiatives and outlooks affect stability perceptions.

Cultural Dialectics in International Teamwork Dynamics

Steven R. Levitt

Some people see multinational collaboration as a problem, while others see it as an opportunity. Intercultural teamwork involves a dynamic push-pull tension between diversity and unity which places its study solidly within a dialectic perspective. In-depth interviews were conducted with 27 individuals who held management or supervisory positions, worked on multinational teams, and spent time working abroad. Their companies represent a broad range of industries and collectively these individuals worked on teams in several dozen countries in Asia, Europe, the Middle East, Africa, North and South America, as well as Australia and New Zealand. The results revealed a variety of cultural paradoxes and dialectics, complexities, and differences which affect many aspects of collaborative work. The importance of cultural identity and relationship recur throughout participant narratives. Dialectics include self-other validation, autonomy-connection, national-organizational culture, work-life, ambiguity-certainty, efficiency-redundancy, and direct-indirect communication styles. Intersections among dialectics are also identified.

Learning to Contradict and Standing Up for the Company: An Exploration of the Relationship Between Organizational Dissent, Organizational Assimilation, and Organizational Reputation

Stephen Michael Croucher, Cheng Zeng, Jeffrey Kassing

This study explored relationships between organizational assimilation, organizational reputation, and organizational dissent. Survey data collection using standard instruments was conducted with a sample of employees drawn from three countries (the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia). Analysis revealed that the expression of dissent to management and to coworkers was significantly and positively correlated with both organizational assimilation and organizational reputation. In particular, findings suggest that employees who reported being more socialized within their respective organizations also expressed more dissent to managers and to coworkers. Similarly, employees who reported perceiving their organizations as more ethical and reputable were more likely to express dissent to managers and coworkers. Additional analyses indicated that the relationships identified between variables were immune to the effects of organizational tenure and national culture. In particular, the results show that organizational assimilation is a key determinant of organizational dissent and that organizational reputation is a key reason that employees express it.

The Diffusion Process of Strategic Motivating Language: An Examination of the Internal Organizational Environment and Emergent Properties

Jacqueline Mayfield, Milton Mayfield

Motivating language (ML) is a leader oral-communication strategy which has been significantly linked to such positive employee outcomes as higher job performance, increased job satisfaction, lower intention to turnover, and decreased absenteeism. However, most ML research has not targeted an organizational system at multiple levels. In brief, we have not looked at how this beneficial form of communication is actually implemented throughout an organization, including at the CEO level. In response to this gap, our main goals were to identify robust hypotheses on ML diffusion for future empirical testing, better understand the emergent processes of ML adoption within an organization, and advance development of related theory. These goals were achieved through an agent-based simulation model, drawn from management, communication, and social network scholarship. More specifically, overview, design concepts, and details protocol and NetLogo software were applied to simulate ML diffusion among all leader levels within an organization. This model also captured the influences of predicted moderators, and results were then interpreted to create testable hypotheses. Findings suggest that top-leader oral language use and organizational culture have the most profound impact on ML diffusion, followed by rewards, with partial weak support for the effects of training, turnover, and time. Recommendations were also made for future research on this topic, especially for empirical tests.

Distant Relations: The Affordances of Email in Interorganizational Conflict

Anne Marie Bülow, Joyce Y. H. Lee, Niki Panteli

This article explores the role of email in the ambiguous circumstances of an established international partnership that is developing into competition. Using the naturally occurring interaction of a longitudinal ethnographic study, we study the ensuing task and relationship conflicts through the communication medium. Results show that the conflict is facilitated by email, not as an unfortunate side-effect but as a strategic choice of distance, partly for passive protection but also for active control of the interaction. We use the results to chart the multiple situated identities of the communicators that are made salient in their virtual interaction. The double aspect of social and organizational contexts is shown to have an effect on different issues, such as organizational authority at the home organization, the buyer-supplier relationship, nonnative language use, and norms of communication style in the interaction.

Media Frames and Crisis Events: Understanding the Impact on Corporate Reputations, Responsibility Attributions, and Negative Affect

Alicia Mason

This study aims to grow our current understanding of situational crisis communication theory by expanding on the conceptualization of *causal responsibility* as the primary mechanism contributing to the cognitive formulation of blame by stakeholder groups. By doing so, this research sought to assess the differential impact of common media frames of crisis events in order to inform organizational crisis communication efforts. A total of 186 students participated in an experimental study from a Midwest university. A series of multivariate analyses of variances were computed to assess the hypotheses advanced in the study. Results indicated that crisis frames can negatively affect organizational reputations. Episodic frames were found to amplify the reputational threat levels in both the victim and accidental clusters. Findings also indicated that when stakeholders perceive the source of the media report as being highly credible, more negative perceptions toward the organizations involved in the crisis were generated. The results help inform the corporate communication response process designed to address the “image” of a crisis as an attribute of consideration, in relation to the framing of the crisis event. Limitations and future directions are offered.

A Look at Leadership Styles and Workplace Solidarity Communication

Stephanie Kelly, Patrick MacDonald

Leadership styles that promote upward and downward communication have been shown to foster a plethora of positive outcomes within the workplace, group collaborations, and team contexts. Similarly, supervisor-subordinate solidarity communication has been related to desirable workplace outcomes. The purpose of this study was to investigate leadership styles as related to solidarity communication. The authoritarian leadership style was associated with the lowest solidarity and consistently yielded the least job satisfaction and highest burnout in subordinates. Furthermore, subordinates with authoritarian leaders did not fit the supervisor-subordinate solidarity model. A more nuanced explanation of leadership communication as related to solidarity is discussed.

Book Review: Language in Business, Language at Work, by Erika Darics (ABC’s Regional Vice President for Europe, Asia, and the Pacific) and Veronika Koller (a highly active ABC member and contributor)

Jonathan Clifton

Thanks to our community for all of your support from the IJBC Editorial Team

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Contact Editors-in-Chief Jackie Mayfield and Milton Mayfield at jmayfield@tamiu.edu or mmayfield@tamiu.edu with research news or announcements that you would like included in the next newsletter.

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The Association for Business Communication (ABC) is an international, interdisciplinary organization committed to advancing business communication research, education, and practice.