FRAMING, PUBLIC RELATIONS, AND SCIENTOLOGY:
AN ANALYSIS OF NEWS COVERAGE AND A CONTROVERSIAL ORGANIZATION

by

KRISTY L. MCALLISTER
B.A. University of Central Florida, 2007

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the most common frames used in news coverage of the Church of Scientology from 2009 to 2013. Using textual analysis, with framing and public relations theories as lenses, this study examined recent news coverage – both print and television – to identify frames used, and the potential public relations crises the Church is currently facing due to this media exposure. Analysis showed three major frames used during coverage, along with their corresponding sub-frames, which highlight certain aspects of the frame: Culture of Abuse (Imprisonment, Controlling, Family Disconnection, Exploitation of Children, Violence, and Financial Abuse), The Information Paradox (Conflicting Information, Simple Misunderstanding, and Non-Traditional Approach), and Leadership Issues (The Problem Lies with Leadership, Celebrity Obsession). Also uncovered were three potential public relations crises: The Mistreatment of Church Members, The Misuse of Funds, and Bad Communication Strategy. The research showed a strong strategic preference of the Church to use legal tactics or denial strategies when dealing with crises. A review of public relations theory suggests that the Church use a more open approach and also incorporate mortification strategies to accept blame and repair their damaged image.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The Church of Scientology has a complicated public image. From memoirs of former members to their own advertising campaign, and even a controversial *South Park* episode (aired November 16, 2005), there are complex and contradictory messages about the organization. Recently, the media presence of Scientology has been less humorous and more damaging to their reputation. During the first two months of 2013 two books were published detailing various negative aspects of the Church. These books, one by a Pulitzer Prize winning journalist and the other by the niece of David Miscavige (the current leader of the Church of Scientology) include accusations of coercion, spying, and lying to more serious legal charges of abuse, extortion, and blackmailing. Additionally, the news coverage of these accounts as well as other Church activity has focused undesirable attention on the more controversial aspects of the organization. The purpose of this study is to uncover the commonly applied frames used in news coverage of Scientology. All media accounts of Scientology have the ability to influence how it is perceived by media consumers. This influence has the potential to benefit the organization or harm it, altering perception and reputation, which in turn has potential to a public relations crisis.

The Church of Scientology (CoS) has experienced public relations turmoil since its inception over sixty years ago. Scientology has been investigated by various government agencies, anticult groups, and media outlets; however there are still a large number of people in the general public who are not greatly familiar with CoS (Reitman, 2011$_b$). The Church is known for their intense shroud of secrecy and aggressive legal tactics (Urban,

2006). These tactics limit the amount of information the public receives about the Church, in large part because the Church has a reputation for suing news outlets and individuals who speak out against the organization (Lewis, 2009). The tactics employed by the Church of Scientology may have worked for many years, but in the age of social media, blogs, and Internet news sites, information is more difficult to hide. Damaging stories from former Church members have surfaced about the Church on various websites, prompting investigations by news outlets (Goodstein, 2010; Shermer, 2011$_a$), spreading these stories to a larger audience and increasing the risk of potential damage to CoS's reputation. Dilenschneider (2010) states that information that can potentially harm the organization should be addressed, and there should be public relations plans in place to respond to such threats.

For an organization, public relations can accomplish several important things, including a "strategic function that manages and builds relationships with an organization's publics," (Zappala & Carden, 2004, p. 2). These relationships build goodwill with audiences, both inside and outside of the organization, and inform these audiences of the organization's goals (Zappala & Carden, 2004). The success of public relations efforts relies on the organization's ability to communicate with their audiences (Dilenschneider, 2010). Effective communication can convey values and objectives of the organization to stakeholders, inform them of potential threats or opportunities, or possibly persuade them into action (Zappala & Carden, 2004). Other goals of public relations include generating positive publicity as a marketing effort, managing rumors and perceived threats to the organization, and developing strategies to combat these threats when they become crises that jeopardize the image of the organization (Dilenschneider, 2010; Zappala & Carden,

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2004). Barton (2001) warns that it's not a question of if a crisis will happen, but when (p. 1); so organizations need to have plans in place to best respond to potential threats.

Well-researched theories, developed from practice, can offer prediction and understanding to organizations (Watson & Noble, 2005). Prediction in public relations helps practitioners understand the likely outcomes of actions in specific situations, guiding them to make intelligent, practical decisions (Watson & Noble, 2005). Organizations embroiled in controversy, as reported in the news, are great sites of study for application of these theories. The Church of Scientology, for which the term controversial commonly applies (Urban, 2006), offers a fascinating opportunity to apply theory and offer solutions to the problems they are currently facing. Accounts from ex-members claim that the Church is losing members at an alarming rate, presenting a crisis for the organization. The decline in Church membership is likely caused by violations of stakeholder expectations, damaging the reputation of the organization.

This study looks at the Church of Scientology (CoS) and the resurgence in media coverage; from the tabloidish tale of pseudo-arranged marriages within the organization in the recent *Vanity Fair* article, the detailed exposé of Scientology in Janet Reitman's novel *Inside Scientology*, to accusations of controversial advertising techniques in *The Atlantic*. These stories have produced an increase of coverage, notably negative, in news outlets and an opportunity to explore the framing techniques used by these outlets during their reporting. The stories and examples used by the media, including how these stories are framed, likely play a large role in how the public perceives these issues, and Scientology as a whole. Framing theory shows that the way news outlets portray an issue greatly influences how it is perceived by the audience (Tewksbury & Scheufele, 2009). While

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audience perception of Scientology is not analyzed in this study, examining the frames used in news reporting of Scientology can offer insight on how the issue is presented to audiences. Framing analysis is a valuable area of study due to these effects on public perception. Also, the very limited amount of research or literature on the effects media has had on the perception of CoS (Lewis, 2009; Urban, 2006) makes it an important topic for research.

The following section will include: public relations and image management tactics; tools of crisis public relations and supporting theories; an explanation of framing theory; and also an overview of the history of the CoS, including basic beliefs and practices and a sample of various controversies the organization has faced. Through the use of textual analysis, focusing on framing and crisis public relations theories, this study uncovers and analyzes the most salient frames applied to media coverage of the Church of Scientology by examining articles published about Scientology on major media outlet websites and recent television news coverage. With the public relations lens, the crisis strategies that CoS could potentially employ to combat the threats presented in these circumstances is evaluated.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

There is a wide variety of literature on public relations and media effects theories, which offer an excellent examination tool for use in case studies. Although the Church of Scientology labels itself as a religious order, they do provide goods and services for financial payment just as any other business does. They are subject to reputational and financial damage due to public relations crises, just as other organizations are, so they too could benefit from strategies learned from prior research. In order to fully explore the sample of media coverage taken for this study, and to review public relations and crisis responses strategies organizations should use according to theory, it is important to operationalize the terms associated with the theoretical frameworks used in this examination.

Public Relations

Reputation Management

An organization's reputation is an evaluation stakeholders make, or how stakeholders perceive that organization (Coombs, 2012). The management of that reputation involves various efforts that are specifically designed to influence how stakeholders evaluate the organization (Coombs, 2012). According to Abratt and Kleyn (2012), the reputation of an organization is established over time, as an outcome of interactions between the organization and its shareholders. At any point in time an organization will likely have a number of reputations, rather than just one, depending on the

shareholders concerned. It can be favorable or unfavorable, and is formed through both direct and indirect interactions between the organization and stakeholders (Coombs, 2012). "Interactions with brand-associated stimuli (including mass communication, employees, agents or other individuals and groups that are linked to the brand), enables stakeholders to form their perceptions of an organization" (Abratt & Kleyn, 2012, p. 1050). How an organization is portrayed by media outlets can seriously impact the organization's reputation (Carroll & McCombs, 2003). Gradually, media coverage can define which aspects of an organization should be the most salient, and also which aspects of the company's character or performance should be used to evaluate it (Dowling & Weeks, 2008). Negative media commentary can be a great signal of trouble for an organization. It can signal problems with a company's products or services, or create negative perceptions in the minds of key stakeholder groups by challenging positive beliefs about the company (Dowling & Weeks, 2008). Shamma (2012) says that examining corporate reputation is more important than ever before. He continues:

> ... factors such as: increased public awareness about corporate actions and issues, increased requirement for transparency, higher expectations by multiple stakeholder groups, word-of-mouth and online communication, customer's personal experience with a company's products and services, effect of the influence of opinion leaders, growth in interest groups and increased attention from media have all contributed to the importance of assessing and actively managing a company's reputation (Shamma, 2012, p. 151).

Companies must actively and proactively manage their reputations if they want to prosper (Shamma, 2012). When an organization experiences negative coverage from news

outlets they should first fix the problem that is causing the negative press, communicate the

plan to employees and the media (especially when the problem can't be fixed right away),

and – only as a last resort – argue against the negative message (Dowling & Weeks, 2008).

How quickly the organization grasps the seriousness of the situation and the completeness

of their communications is extremely important in managing a reputation (Barton, 2001);

but, if the issue does turn into a crisis, it is important to have communication protocols in

place to defend the organization using crisis communication strategies.

Crisis Public Relations

Coombs (2012) defines a crisis as: "the perception of an unpredictable event that

threatens important expectancies of stakeholders and can seriously impact an

organization's performance and generate negative outcomes" (p. 2). The stakeholders of an

organization, or those who are affected by or can affect the organization, are the driving

force for defining the crisis (Coombs, 2012). It is the stakeholder's perceptions that matter,

and a crisis within the organization can disturb their perception, opinion, or expectations of

that organization. However, not all crises are necessarily negative or damaging to the

organization. Crisis communication has the potential to fix the problem if managed well; or

make the problem larger if managed poorly (Coombs, 2006). How an organization manages

the crisis, what they say and do, can have a lasting impact on shareholder perceptions.

Coombs and Holladay (2012) explain, "one accepted piece of wisdom in crisis

management is that the best way to manage a crisis is to prevent one. If a crisis is averted,

neither stakeholders nor the organization is harmed" (p. 408). A good crisis prevention

strategy is the best defense for an organization, but there are some crises that cannot be

avoided. Therefore, in addition to addressing crisis prevention, this section also includes

tactics to respond to a crisis, how to repair the organization's image after a crisis, and how additional factors such as figureheads and spokespeople can affect crisis response strategies.

Crisis Prevention and Paracrises. Coombs and Holladay (2012) define a paracrisis as, "a publicly visible crisis threat that charges an organization with irresponsible or unethical behavior" (p. 409). These situations appear very much like a crisis, and if left untreated have the potential to become one. Coombs (2012) warns that while social media can be a great help in monitoring for crisis, it also presents an opportunity for crises to be created. Users, not just organizations or media outlets, now have the ability to control the creation and distribution of information. Currently, social media provides an excellent outlet for disgruntled stakeholders to publicly express their experiences with an organization and opinions (Coombs, 2012). This information should be considered a legitimate threat to the reputation of the organization (Coombs, 2012), especially because the information can spread to a wider number of stakeholders, with the potential to become a full-blown crisis (Coombs & Holladay, 2012). Barton (2001) says that with the Internet, "Public opinion and crisis management are inevitably linked; how an organization is viewed by the masses is a clear reflection of its value and whether it can withstand short- or long-term damage" (p. 44). Crises and paracrises must be handled with extreme care. The Internet does not allow information to be buried (Barton, 2001), and how the organization manages any real or perceived threat is fully visible for speculation by stakeholders (Coombs, 2012).

Crisis Response. Coombs (2006) states that there are three important guidelines of crisis communication: be quick, be consistent, and be open (p. 171). Being quick in crisis communication means letting the stakeholders, primarily the media, know what information

the organization-in-crisis has about the event. A quick response can show that the organization is in control of the crisis (Coombs, 2006), as long as the information is accurate and truthful. If information is revealed which causes the organization to change its story it could damage the perceived accuracy of the crisis communication efforts. Showing consistency makes an organization's messages seem more accurate and planned out, potentially improving perceptions of the organization's reliability. Openness might show stakeholders that the organization has nothing to hide, leading them to believe that the organization is trustworthy. However, according to Coombs (2006), openness should be used with caution, especially when the truth has the potential to be more damaging than the rumors. If this is the case, something to consider is how much to reveal. Full disclosure is generally recommended because of the fear that partial disclosure could create negative long-term relationship problems with stakeholders (Coombs, 2006), but situations do occur where full disclosure would only do more harm than good.

In crisis situations, experts usually recommend accepting responsibility for the situation, but it is not always wise (Coombs, 2006). By admitting wrongdoing, or even offering apologies, the organization can open itself up to lawsuits and financial loss; and statements made by an organization can be used as evidence if lawsuits do arise (Coombs & Holladay, 2008). Fitzpatrick and Rubin (1995) examined the difference between traditional public relations strategies and legal strategies when dealing with crisis events. Common public relations strategies included: stating organizational policies, investigating allegations, being candid, admitting the problem exists, or implementing corrective actions. Common legal strategies included: saying nothing or as little as possible, denying guilt, and shifting or attempting to share the blame with the accusers. They found that the most common crisis

responses were legal strategies. Coombs (2006) says that if the organization is innocent, they will choose a legal strategy to deny their guilt. Scientology's founder, L. Ron Hubbard (1955), expressed the legal stance of CoS in a manuscript before his death:

> The purpose of the suit is to harass and discourage rather than to win. The law can be used very easily to harass, and enough harassment on someone who is simply on the thin edge anyway, well knowing that he is not authorized, will generally be sufficient to cause his professional decease. If possible, of course, ruin him utterly.

Sources which describe the tactics used by CoS state that they use silence, denial, and blame to combat a crisis situation (Reitman, 2011b; Urban, 2006). Scientology has brought hundreds of legal suits against those they consider enemies, and it is estimated that they pay 20 million dollars a year to more than a hundred lawyers (Behar, 1991).

By combining the work of corporate apologia, corporate impression management, and image restoration theory, Coombs (1995) found five critical crisis-response strategies: nonexistence (denial, clarification, attack, and intimidation), distance (excuse and justification), ingratiation (bolstering, transcendence, and praising others), mortification (remediation, repentance, and rectification), and finally suffering (as shown in Figure 1). Factors of attribution should guide the communicator's decision on which response to use. If one wants to eliminate the crisis, they would likely take the stance of nonexistence – denying that the crisis exists (denial), stating that the threats are untrue (clarification), confronting those who reported there was a crisis (attack), and maybe even threatening by use of lawsuits or violence (intimidation). In distancing the organization from the crisis, the organization acknowledges that the crisis exists, but minimizes the effects it has on the

organization by attempting to minimize the organization's responsibility (excuse) or

minimizes the damage by convincing stakeholders that the organization isn't as bad as they

seem (justification).

Coombs (2006) says that denial and bolstering are reformative attempts and

differentiation and transcendence are transformative. Reformative factors attempt to change

how the stakeholders feel about the situation, where transformative factors look to change

the meaning of the crisis in the stakeholder's eyes.

Nonexistence	
Denial	Denies that a crisis exists.
Clarification	Explains why there is no crisis.
Attack	Confronts those who wrongly report the non-existent crisis exists.
Intimidation	Threatens to use organizational power against some actor.
Distance	
Excuse	Tries to minimize the organization's responsibility for the crisis.
Justification	Seeks to minimize the damage associated with the crisis.
Integration	
Bolstering	Reminds the publics of the existing positive aspects of the organization.
Transcendence	Tries to place the crisis in a larger, more desirable context.
Praising Others	Used to win approval from the target of the praise.
Mortification	
Remediation	Willingly offers some form of compensation or help to victims.
Repentance	Asking for forgiveness.
Rectification	Taking action to prevent a recurrence of the crisis in the future.
Suffering	
Suffering	Win sympathy by portraying the organization as the unfair victim of some malicious, outside entity.

Figure 1: Coombs' (2005) Crisis Response Strategies

Note: Adapted from "Choosing the Right Words: The Development of Guidelines for the Selection of the 'Appropriate' Crisis-Response Strategies," by W. T. Coombs, 1995, *Management Communication Quarterly, 8(4),* pp. 450-454). Copyright 1995 by Sage Publications, Inc.

Attribution Theory and Image Restoration. Attribution theory examines the role that public and stakeholder perception should play in determining the organization's response to a crisis. Attribution theory says that the public will make judgments about the cause of crisis events based on three factors: locus, stability, and controllability; where the locus is the degree of control over the situation, stability is whether the cause of the situation is consistent over time, and controllability how much control the organization has over the event taking place (Coombs, 1995).

Coombs (2006) states, "An organization achieves legitimacy by being competent at its task and meeting stakeholder expectations. A crisis can be a threat to social legitimacy" (p. 178). When these situations arise, which accuse an organization, or members of it, with objectionable behavior it may damage the organization's reputation (Coombs, 2006). "A reputation is how stakeholders perceive the organization. When expectations are breached, stakeholders perceive the organization less positively: the reputation is harmed" (Coombs, 2012, p. 3). At any time situations have the potential to arise that could damage an individual or company's reputation. If reputation damage is caused by questionable behavior, Benoit (1995) states that it is important to use image restoration communication to explain behavior. According to Benoit (1995), there are two fundamental processes to expunge guilt or restore a reputation. The first process involves victimage, scapegoating, or shifting the blame – which means, making yourself or the organization look like the victim, or attempting to shift the blame elsewhere. The second process is mortification, or admitting to wrong-doing, and asking for forgiveness. In addition Benoit (1995) has five strategies for image restoration: denial, evasion of responsibility, reducing offensiveness of the event, corrective action, and mortification, which as seen above is admitting your fault in the event.

Defensive utterances can also be used to restore image by changing another's beliefs about the act in question by making it appear that it wasn't wrong, or shifting the responsibility. Defensive utterances include: justifications, or accepting responsibility for the act, but denying that it was wrong; excuses, admitting the act was wrong, but not accepting full responsibility; and apologies (Benoit, 1995).

Coombs (2007) describes three factors of a crisis situation that help shape the threat to the reputation: the organization's initial crisis responsibility, crisis history, and relationship history – or prior reputation. He states that during a crisis, stakeholders will make their own speculation as to the cause of the crisis, and to help them attribute blame they use the above factors. "The stronger the attributions of organizational responsibility, the more likely it is that the negative aspects of the crisis will damage the organization" (Coombs, 1995, p. 450). If the stakeholders find the organization responsible for the crisis, the reputation of the organization will suffer; especially if the stakeholders end the relationship and begin to spread negative word-of-mouth (Coombs, 2007). This reputational damage may lead to financial damage for the organization, with the potential to threaten the organization's survival (Coombs & Holladay, 1996).

Figureheads and Apologia in Crises. The use of apologia, or the speech of self-defense, is where the accused parties speak in defense of themselves by choosing to face their accusers (Coombs, 2006; Ware & Linkugel, 1973). They state that when a person's moral nature, motives, or reputation is brought into question, a direct response is necessary. The best way to satisfy the demands of the accuser is for the accused to provide a personal response, usually in the form of a public speech in their defense.

Ware and Linkugel (1973) adapted Abelson's four models of resolution (denial, bolstering, differentiation, and transcendence) to be more useful in communication research, and are common elements in self-defense speeches. The most common factors are denial and bolstering, which are obverse to each other. Where denial is simply denying alleged facts, sentiments, objects, or relationships; bolstering would be reinforcing their existence. The remaining two factors are similarly opposing, but are both transformative in nature. Differentiation is where you separate some fact, sentiment, object, or relationship from the larger image that the audience currently views with the attribute – simply attempting to change the audience's meaning – and transcendence is attempting to join the attribute with a larger picture that the audience didn't see it with before – give it new meaning.

In addition, these factors can come together to form four postures in apologia – absolution, vindication, explanation, and justification (Ware & Linkugel, 1973). Absolution combines the differentiation and denial factors and is where the accused seeks acquittal by denying any wrongdoing. Vindication relies on the transcendental factor and attempts to preserve the reputation of the accused by going beyond the specifics of a given charge, generally by comparing their own worth to that of their accuser's. Finally, explanation is simple, by combining bolstering and transcendence, explanation assumes that if the audience understands the motives, actions, or beliefs of the accused it will be impossible to condemn them.

When an organization's, or a figurehead of the organization's, character is attacked, they may use the self-defense patterns of apologia to combat those threats (Coombs, 2006). In their defensive utterances, many scholars would recommend issuing a statement

of apology; however Coombs & Holladay (2008) have observed that apology can be over-used, and is generally over-emphasized in literature as the best response. They state that apology is sometimes compared to denial and excuse responses, because they do little to address the concerns of victims and can open the organization up to bigger legal problems (Coombs & Holladay, 2008). Barton (2001) warns that there are two aspects of a crisis that must be addressed: "respond to the victims first, and then communicate what you're doing, why you're doing it, and how you'll rebound" (p. 44). He continues that, "If you want to lose your goodwill, act slow and say little of significance" (p. 44). However, Coombs (2006) states that "there is empirical evidence to support the value of simply addressing victims with a positive response that falls short of accepting responsibility" (p. 192).

Framing and Effects Theories

Framing "is based on the assumption that how an issue is characterized in news reports can have an influence on how it is understood by audiences" (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007, p 11). The concept of framing is achieved through the use of frames, or "organizing principles that are socially shared and persistent over time, that work symbolically to meaningfully structure the social world" (Reese, 2001, p 12). Through the use of framing devices (visual images, depictions, headlines, quotes, metaphors, key words, specific adjectives, catch phrases, and exemplars), the media have the ability to invite people to think about an issue in a particular way (Tewksbury & Scheufele, 2009; Zoch & Molleda, 2006).

A majority of what the public knows about the Church of Scientology and its affiliated organizations is due to the media, and how the media portrays the Church greatly influences how the public perceives it. According to Zillman, Gibson, Sundar, and Perkins

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(1996), there are two major types of information contained in news stories: base-rate information and exemplifying information. Base-rate information indicates the status of the issue with "reliable, quantitative information about the distribution of cases" (Zillman, 1999, p. 70), where exemplifying information (exemplars) are concrete, often vivid, examples used to illustrate the scope of the phenomenon. Both base-rate and exemplifying information are used by journalists to help explain complex issues in a more understandable and intersting way (Zillman et al., 1996). Due to of framing effects, the selection of exemplars for a particular story can have a serious impact on the audience's perception of the issue (Zillman, 1999; Zillman et al., 1996). According to Zillman et al. (1996), journalists typically choose examples that are characteristic to the focal point of the story. Due to media sensationalism, the focal point of any given story is more often than not the minority population represented within the issue (Zillman, 1999). When a side of an issue is over-represented by exemplars it leaves the audience with the impression that a minority of cases represented in the story is actually the majority, causing a distorted view of the issue (Zillman, 1999; Zillman et al., 1996).

Public relations practitioners of an organization also utilize framing techniques to portray the organization's side of a story. Entman (1993) found that practitioners typically use framing to define the problem, diagnose the cause of the problem, make moral judgments about the situation, and/or suggest remedies. Framing the event can help an organization construct how the stakeholders perceive the situation (Zoch & Molleda, 2006).

History of Scientology

The previously mentioned methods and frameworks associated with reputation management and public relations theories provide an excellent avenue of study. The case

chosen to apply these theoretical resources is the Church of Scientology and related media coverage. To prepare for, and best understand, the analysis of material related to this organization a brief history of the organization and its image is necessary to understand the key terms and context associated with the news stories covered.

Founding

Scientology began with principles from the book *Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health* written by L. Ron Hubbard and published in 1950. Hubbard has been quoted saying, "If a man really wants to make a million dollars, the best way to do it would be to start a religion" (Wakefield, 1991[a]; Pennycate & Urban, 1987), and thus CoS began (Shermer, 2011[a]). Hubbard has claimed to be many things during his life, including an adventurer, explorer, author, philosopher, captain, pioneer, master mariner, U.S. Navy Commander, and even the nation's youngest Eagle Scout (LRonHubbard.org, 2012). He was a relatively successful science fiction writer, who is credited in the Internet Movie Database as a writer, director, composer, producer, actor, and cinematographer (IMDB, 2012). By Scientologists, he is considered a great founder, humanitarian, educator, and the man who "unlocked the mysteries of life" (Pennycate & Urban, 1987; Cruise & Cagle, 2003). By others, he has been called schizophrenic, paranoid (Pennycate & Urban, 1987), and a pathological liar (Behar, 1991).

Basic Beliefs and Practices

The goal of Dianetics is to achieve *clear*, or Hubbard's version of enlightenment. Once cleared, all harmful subconscious thoughts will have been wiped out of your mind, allowing you to live a more productive and happier life (Sweeney & Urban, 2010). One of the main tools used with Hubbard's Dianetics is a process called auditing, a process similar

to therapy, which Behar (1991) describes as a "crude, psychotherapeutic technique."

Former member of the Church, Marjory Wakefield says, "Through auditing, everyone on

Earth could be 'cleared' of their 'reactive' minds, the destructive part of the mind that was

responsible for the suffering on Earth: For sickness, insanity, war. For all our negative

experiences" (Wakefield, 1991$_b$, p. 3). Auditing is conducted through the use of one of

Hubbard's inventions, called an electro-psychometer, or E-meter, which is similar to a

simplified lie detector machine (Behar, 1991; Wakefield, 1991$_b$). The E-meter is used to

measure electrical changes in the skin while the auditing counselor asks a wide range of

personal questions including intimate details, secrets, and embarrassments (Behar, 1991;

Urban, 2006). Behar (1991) found, "Hubbard argued that unhappiness sprang from mental

aberrations (or 'engrams') caused by early traumas. Counseling sessions with the E-meter,

he claimed, could knock out the engrams, cure blindness and even improve a person's

intelligence and appearance" (para. 10). However, reaching the level of clear comes at a

steep price. Auditing sessions and materials required to advance to clear are estimated to

cost $128,000 or more (Behar, 1991; Urban, 2006). During his interviews, Behar (1991)

found from psychologists that counseling sessions with the E-meter have the potential to

produce "a drugged-like, mind-controlled euphoria that keeps customers coming back for

more" (para. 15). To some, effects like these give some insight on why members are willing

to pay as much as they do for these services.

  After Dianetics, and reaching *clear*, Hubbard kept creating additional steps to his

ladder; each more expensive for the followers to climb (Behar, 1991). Followers were

warned that even those who were cleared still face grave spiritual dangers unless they

continued on to these additional, more expensive levels (Behar, 1991). With the addition of

new stages, sessions, and training to Dianetics the Church of Scientology began (Urban, 2006). CoS's ladder added eight higher levels, called OT levels for *Operating Thetan*, which is CoS's equivalent of the spirit or soul (Pennycate & Urban, 1987; Wakefield, 1991$_b$). In these OT levels one would "learn the secrets of the universe, the history of the world, and learn to remember the hundreds of lives you had previously" (Wakefield, 1991$_b$, p. 3). An additional bonus for surpassing clear was the potential to gain supernatural abilities, such as telekinesis, astral projection, or mind reading (Pennycate & Urban, 1987; Wakefield, 1991$_b$). It is estimated that the total cost from entry through the eighth OT level ranges from $277,000 to $380,000 (Urban, 2006). Beyond these levels, Hubbard charged additional "fixed donations" for seminars, books, and manuscripts to help subscribers find out why they weren't moving up the ladder as fast as they'd like, or if they wanted more detailed information on certain aspects of the religion, such as why Thetans attach themselves to this world (Behar, 1991). Once members have reached level OTIII, if they claim they have not received any supernatural powers, they must go through extra auditing, take the course again, and pay the fees again (Pennycate & Urban, 1987).

However, reaching OTIII allows you to finally see the secret documents written by L. Ron Hubbard about the true origins of the human race (Behar, 1991; Urban, 2006; Sweeney & Urban, 2010). In a 1987 episode of the BBC news show Panorama, entitled *Scientology: The Road to Total Freedom?,* secrets of CoS were revealed by reporting what members learned once level OTIII was reached:

> Seventy-five million years ago, the planet Tiglak of the Galactic Confederation
> elected Xenu as supreme ruler, and they were about to un-elect him; but in his last
> moments he decided to take radical measures to overcome the population problem.

Beings were captured on other planets and flown to locations near ten volcanos or

more on Earth. H-Bombs were dropped on the volcanoes, destroying the bodies of

the beings, who as Thetans, attached themselves to one another as clusters. A

revolt followed at the loyal officers against Xenu. Xenu was locked up in an

electronic modern fortress and remains there still. Since that time, beings born on

this planet have had clusters of Thetans attached to their bodies. OTIII can run out

these clusters and cause them to leave us and reincarnate as individuals

(Pennygate & Urban, 1987).

Subscribers to CoS have paid thousands of dollars, more often even into the hundreds of

thousands, before they can finally learn their religion's origin story. Some see it as the

equivalent of Christians being required to pay a very large sum of money before receiving

the part of the *Bible* that mentions Jesus and how their religion believes he died for the sins

of man (Reitman, 2011$_b$). After reaching OTIII, many members have left CoS and detailed

what they've learned and experienced to interested audiences on the Internet (Shermer,

2011$_a$).

Scientology and Controversy

   Defense mechanisms. Urban (2006) states that Scientology's policies on secrecy,

investigations, and counter attacks stem from Hubbard's paranoia he developed during the

Cold War era. He says, "Hubbard himself states emphatically that Scientology was born as

a response to the new weapons of mass destruction and the possibility that the human race

might destroy itself in the near future" (Urban, 2006, p. 367). He continues that Hubbard

believed these weapons could be controlled, but the control of the man at the trigger was

the issue. This line of thinking spawned Dianetics, "a new hope amidst a society struggling

in the aftermath of World War II and its devastation, a hope that human beings could turn their powers to self-betterment rather than self-annihilation" (Urban, 2006, p. 367). This cultural climate, Urban (2006) claims, allowed for the success of Scientology. Hubbard began relationships with government agencies in hopes to help them thwart the impending Communist threat. He even offered the services of Dianetics to help with investigations (Urban, 2006). However, government agencies eventually became suspicious of Hubbard. Once the I.R.S. and F.B.I. began investigating the Church, leaders within the organization developed "elaborate tactics of counter-espionage of their own, undertaking covert operations that almost rivaled those of the F.B.I." (Urban, 2006, p. 377).

In 1967, Hubbard created the order of *fair game* designed for those opposed to the Church (Pennycate & Urban, 1987). According to the principle of fair game, the Church was allowed to use any means available to counter-attack and defeat its enemies (Urban, 2006). The order, as written by Hubbard, reportedly states that, "If you stay within the law, they are fair game. They may be deprived of property, injured by any means, tricked, sued, lied to or destroyed" (Pennycate & Urban, 1987).

The fair game order was adopted for any person who posed a major threat to the organization (Urban, 2006), and many of those who attempted to leave the Church were treated similarly, if not considered fair game themselves. Those who have left the Church state that it is a nearly impossible task (McDermott, 2010; Pennycate & Urban, 1987; Sweeney & Urban, 2010). The Church's first line of defense against those who would wish to leave is performing an *internal inquiry* or *security check* through their Ethics department, using an E-meter and a series of questions aimed to see if a potential threat exists (McDermott, 2010; Urban, 2006). Next, if they felt a member's faith was waning, they might

send them to their *Rehabilitation Project Force*, what CoS calls a private religious retreat

within the Church as an alternative to being expelled; however those who have experienced

it call it a work or slave camp (McDermott, 2010). If they still insist on leaving, the Church

will attempt to intimidate, extort, or blackmail that person by threatening to disclose intimate

secrets revealed through their recorded confidential auditing sessions or by any other

means possible (Pennycate & Urban, 1987). They will be forced to sign confession letters

praising the good works of the Church (Pennycate & Urban, 1987; Sweeney & Urban,

2010). The organization will threaten to label them a *suppressive person*, where they

become expelled from the Church and no other member is allowed to have contact them,

including siblings, spouses, or children still inside the Church (McDermott, 2010; Sweeney

& Urban, 2010). Finally, according to Church law, if someone breaks their religious

covenant, the standard procedure is to pay a *freeloader debt*, or an extremely large bill for

services rendered (Sweeney & Urban, 2010). The Church may see these practices as

protection against potential crises, but these controversial tactics have since been

publicized by news organizations, where, in many cases, these journalists have become fair

game themselves (Sweeney & Urban, 2010).

   Cult label and anticult groups. One word sometimes used to describe the Church

of Scientology is "cult" (Behar, 1991; Jones, 2012; McMorris, 2010; Urban, 2006;

Richardson & van Driel, 1984; Reitman, 2011[b]; Shermer, 2011[b]). The term cult has been

associated with many new or alternative religions in their early stages, not just CoS (Jones,

2012). Feltmate (2012) says, "Throughout American history, marginalized religious groups

have been effectively attacked and stigmatized as cults, generating considerable fear and

inspiring social retaliation" (p. 202). However, there have been many new religious

movements to drop the stigma, fear, and persecution to become accepted religious

institutions (Shermer, 2011$_b$). Examples of these religious movements include the Methodist

and Catholic churches (Feltmate, 2012). The anticult organization, Cultwatch (2012),

defines a cult as: "A cult is a group, which often damages their members emotionally,

spiritually, financially, and sometimes physically. Cults break up families and shatter

friendships." They maintain that cults are unable to survive when their secrets are known,

therefore the leaders of such organizations aggressively attempt to prevent the discovery of

such secrets. Lewis (2009) states:

> New religions are generally misunderstood and little known. Scientology is
>
> numerically small and has a strong emphasis on secrecy concerning its teachings
>
> and, in the company with other new religions, Scientology has received negative
>
> publicity which impacts upon community perceptions (p. 389).

In 1988, van Driel and Richardson identified frequently employed characteristics of

"cults" and "sects" as described by the media. They examined media coverage of 16 new

religious movements including Unification Church, Church of Scientology, Hare Krishna,

Divine Light Mission, and Campus Crusade; as well as four marginal religious groups, such

as the Jehovah's Witnesses and Mennonites, for their analysis. They found the most

commonly used characteristics for a cult were: "1) Deprivation of personal freedom of

members, confinement of members; 2) Charismatic leadership; 3) Extreme

authoritarianism, dictatorial arrangement, ultra-discipline; 4) Behavioral control techniques,

psychological manipulation, brainwashing; 5) Preoccupation with wealth, relative luxury of

leader; 6) Society and unbelievers viewed as evil, fear and hatred of the outside world; 7)

Apocalyptic world view, belief in millennium" (van Driel & Richardson, 1988, p. 177). Various

stories from ex-members and journalists link these descriptions of a cult to CoS (Reitman, 2011b; Shermer, 2011b). Shermer (2011b) states, "In my opinion, if Scientology is not a cult then nothing is a cult and the term has no meaning" (p. 17).

While the term to describe CoS is still up for debate: religion, movement, cult, or sect (Shermer, 2011b); the fact that it is controversial cannot be denied. Urban (2006) says: "From Tom Cruise's wedding to South Park's scathing cartoon parody, the Church of Scientology has emerged as one of the wealthiest, most powerful, but also the most controversial new religious movements of the last fifty years" (p. 356).

One of CoS's most notable battles with an anticult group was with the Cult Awareness Network (CAN). CAN publicly attacked Scientology as "the most rapacious of all 'deviant cults' in the United States" (Urban, 2006, p. 380). CAN's executive director at the time, Cynthia Kisser, went as far as to say, "Scientology is quite likely the most ruthless, the most classically terroristic, the most litigious and the most lucrative cult the country has ever seen. No cult extracts more money from its members" (Behar, 1991). In 1991, Scientology began a barrage of at least fifty lawsuits against CAN, in both federal and state courts across the United States. CAN was driven so far into debt that they ended up filing for bankruptcy in 1996. What was left of CAN when CoS was finished with it was sold at auction, and eventually purchased by entities associated with Scientology itself. Now, when you contact the Cult Awareness Network, since named "New CAN," you are actually speaking with a member of the Church of Scientology (Urban, 2006), and when you visit their website you are informed of the corrupt nature of "Old CAN."

Scientology and Time Magazine. In 1991, *Time Magazine* journalist Richard Behar published a damaging account of CoS entitled "The Thriving Cult of Greed and Power."

Included in Behar's research were over one hundred fifty interviews with various experts and ex-Scientologists and hundreds of court records and internal CoS documents. Within the article, Behar details decades of harassment, extortion, lies, paranoia, false promises, and questionable behavior on behalf of the Church of Scientology, its founder, and its affiliated organizations through witness and victim accounts. The article also calls out the public relations powerhouse behind the Church of Scientology International, Hill and Knowlton, who was employed with the task of attempting to shed the Church of an unfavorable image (Behar, 1991). Soon after the article was published, the Church began a vicious campaign in an attempt to discredit *Time Magazine*. However, one week after the article was published, the Hill and Knowlton agency was forced to resign the $2 million CoS account due to pressures from the parent company, WPP Group (Levin, Donaton, & Fahey, 1991).

Trapped in the Closet. In November of 2005, the Comedy Central cartoon show *South Park*, aired an episode entitled "Trapped in the Closet" ridiculing Scientology and exposing the secrets of OTIII in an outlandish and humorous manner. In the episode, one of the show's main characters, Stan, participates in a Scientology auditing session which convinces the Church that he is the reincarnation of their founder, L. Ron Hubbard. By the end of the episode, high-ups in Scientology reveal that the church is a for-profit con, and call their own religion "crap" (Parker, 2005). The episode brutally makes fun of the Church, Tom Cruise, and even John Travlota; created so much controversy that the actor who voiced the character "Chef," Isaac Hayes, a Scientologist, resigned because of it (IMDB, 2012).

The Scientology organization reportedly began investigating the writers of South

Park, Trey Parker and Matt Stone, after the episode aired in an attempt to find

"vulnerabilities" (Huffington Post, 2011). In 2006, *South Park* was nominated for an Emmy

for this episode (IMDB, 2012), which has been seen as a blow to the reputations of both

Tom Cruise and the Church (Hofler, 2006).

Scientology's defectors. Marjory Wakefield spent several years as a member of

the Church of Scientology, and has since written several books and manuscripts detailing

her traumatic experiences within the Church. It is through her, and those like her, the

damaging secrets of Scientology began to reach the public's ears. As said by Wakefield

(1991$_b$):

> ... I was never warned. The word 'cult' was not in my vocabulary. No one had ever
>
> told me to beware of strange people with strange stories, free meals, or impossible
>
> promises. I walked into the trap full of trust and hope, never suspecting that the
>
> noose was slowly being drawn tightly around my mind, trapping me unknowingly and
>
> unquestioningly in one of the most dangerous cults ever to exist (p. 4).

From those who have left the Church, there are tales of extortion, abuse, labor camps, and

forced abortions within the organization. The article in *Time Magazine* describes tragic

stories of former Scientology members. Stories which have ended in suicide and financial

ruin, attributed to the Church and their pressure to pay outrageous fees (Behar, 1991).

Australia's news show *Four-Corners* dramatized the story of Claire and Marc Headley. Their

tale began as a love story in Scientology's "Sea Org," or "Sea Organization," which is the

Church's missionary sect. The couple met, fell in love, and got married; but their contract

with Sea Org does not allow for members to have children, because it would interfere with

their work. When Claire found out she was pregnant, she was coerced into having an abortion by a superior officer without ever being able to tell her husband the news. Claire and Marc have since left the Church, a nearly impossible task in itself, and are now part of a group suing Scientology for human trafficking, labor law violations, and forced abortions (McDermott, 2010).

Many Scientologists have left the church once they reach the coveted OTIII level (Sweeney & Urban, 2010). By this point, members have been with the church for many years, sometimes as many as thirty, when they discover the Church's origin story. Once they know, they express feelings of betrayal. These members had paid a very large sum of money when they are finally told the outrageous origin story of Scientology. Defectors say that they were told not to look for any information on the Church or Scientology from outside sources, such as television or the Internet. If they learned any of the holy scriptures before they had advanced enough in Scientology's ladder to be prepared for it (by paying for it), they would die (Behar, 1991; Pennycate & Urban, 1987; Urban, 2006; Sweeney & Urban, 2010).

Scientology celebrities. Scientology's relationships with high profile celebrities, such as Tom Cruise and John Travolta, are also a potential source of crises for the Church. Travolta has been a positive spokesperson for Scientology; but, in 1983 he revealed to a magazine that he was "opposed to the church's management," and yet he remains with the Church to this day (Behar, 1991). High-level Scientology members, who have since left the church, speculate that Travolta stays with the Church because he has been threatened with the public release of damaging details of his sexual life, retrieved through auditing. They believe that the threat of this information required him to quickly announce his engagement

to, and marry, Kelly Preston, another member of Scientology to keep his favor with the Church (Behar, 1991).

Initially, it could be said that Tom Cruise's connection to Scientology showed the Church in a positive light. In a 2003 article with *People Magazine*, Cruise described how his interest in Scientology began because Hubbard had been researching the field of mental and learning disorders for decades, and his knowledge offered a way to treat dyslexia, which Cruise was plagued with. Cruise turned to Study Technology, developed by Hubbard, which Cruise claims cured his dyslexia and enabled him to read (Cruise & Cagle, 2003). However, more recently, Cruise's efforts to support Scientology have not been as successful. His lashing out at Brooke Shields for taking medication for postpartum depression and claiming that she does not "understand the history of psychiatry" produced a negative image of Cruise in many people's minds. Shields then turned to *The New York Times*, publishing an article in hopes of informing the public of the seriousness of postpartum depression in retaliation to Cruise, further damaging the perception the public has of him (Shields, 2005). More recently, the October 2012 article in *Vanity Fair* entitled "What Katie Didn't Know: Marriage, Scientology-Style" revealed an even more outrageous side of Cruise, and a bizarre and deceptive side of Scientology (Orth, 2012). The article claimed that Cruise's relationship with Scientology caused the split between himself and Nicole Kidman, Penelope Cruz, Iranian actress Nazanin Boniadi, and eventually even Katie Holmes.

Media Strategies of CoS

Compared with most businesses, CoS does not seem to use traditional public relations and marketing techniques to manage its reputation. Unlike other businesses, a

majority of the public is not likely to see commercials for Scientology, even though they are aired in a small number of markets. Although the CoS website, scientology.org, does list press releases in the newsroom section, the details held within them probably won't be read in any major newspapers. Messages disseminated by CoS generally includes information on recent expansions and purchased properties, increases in membership, and the good works the Church is doing in various communities (Pennyate & Urban, 1987; Reitman, 2011$_b$); however, what is reported by the media is usually the opposite. The Church is actively purchasing properties, and combined property values are estimated in the billions of dollars (Reitman, 2011$_b$), but media reports state that their churches and centers are empty and simply a false front. In 1991 the Church claimed to have 8 million members (Behar, 1991) and in 2011 they said it was closer to 10 million (Reitman, 2011$_b$), but it is actually estimated that number of Scientologists in the United States is likely around 25,000 (McMorris, 2010) and there are only around 50,000 active Scientologists worldwide (Behar, 1991).

Journalists and editors make the decision about what to publish based in part by access to information provided by an organization through press releases and other organizational rhetoric (Coombs & Holladay, 2009). In 2010, two weeks after the earthquake in Haiti, actor, pilot, and Scientologist, John Travolta, flew his private plane into Haiti to deliver food and medical supplies. Instead of focusing on the positive aspects of the action, journalists reported that a longtime member of the Church of Scientology brought a shipment of E-meters and yellow-clad Scientology volunteer ministers (McMorris, 2010).

The Church had a recent attempt to repair its image, but not to much success. In January of 2013 the Church of Scientology purchased some ad space on the website of the

publication *The Atlantic*. The advertisement took the form of an advertorial, or an ad designed to look like the editorial content around it, leaving Twitter abuzz with comments from journalists and consumers (Farhi, 2013). The ad, titled "David Miscavige leads Scientology to Milestone Year," was called "one long tribute to David Miscavige, the 'ecclesiastical leader of the Scientology religion'" (Berman, 2013) and "paid religious content bordered on 'blatant propaganda'" (Warzel, 2013). *The Atlantic* soon took the ad down from its website, issued a statement of apology to its readers, and announced that it will be reevaluating its advertising policies (Bazilian, 2013).

It is undeniable that CoS has problems with its image in the media and is in need of a new communication strategy to repair their reputation. Shamma (2012) says that quality communication programs within an organization can change the way the public views the organization. He continues that this is because good communication programs within an organization effectively communicate messages on the organization's behalf and can also "enhance perceptions about the activities that are relevant to specific stakeholders and can also trigger an overall positive evaluation of the company as a whole" (Shamma, 2012, p. 154). Reputations are important for organizations to maintain because they are widely acknowledged to be the most valuable asset of an organization (Peloza, Loock, Cerruti, & Muyot, 2012). Reviewing strategies in reputation management can help controversial organizations repair their image, with both the public and key stakeholder groups.

Research Questions

Zoch and Molleda (2006) say, "framing is critical to the construction of social reality – the way people view the world" (p. 282). Textual analysis is a useful method for identifying and understanding the frames used in discourse, because it focuses on not just what was

said or written, but the context in which it was said or written as well (Gee, 2011). Gee (2011) also states that the goals of discourse analysis should: "1) illuminate and gain us evidence for theory of the domain, a theory that helps us explain how and why language works the way it does when put into action; and b) contribute, in terms of understanding the intervention, to important ideas and problems in some area and interests and motivates us as global citizens" (p. 12).

Abratt and Kleyn (2012) state that the corporate brand is comprised of two aspects: stakeholder images of the organization's identity and corporate expression, which is the identification placed on the organization by its shareholders and how the organization attempts to portray itself (p. 1050). News organizations are known to effect audience perception and understanding of issues through framing (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). Due to these effects, the formation of images and identities associated with an organization by stakeholders is aided by news messages, specifically how the organizations are portrayed in these messages. In order to gain further insight into framing theory, in particular how it relates to a controversial organization, this research aims to determine how the media portray CoS through framing techniques.

RQ1: What frames emerge in recent news coverage of CoS?

As stated earlier, corporate expression is a component of the organization's brand, making it important to evaluate tactics employed by organizations for their effectiveness. The way organizations manage crises can be used as case studies to further assist in the development of theory, and to aid the strategy of other organizations.

RQ2: Based on the frames that emerge, what strategies could be employed by

CoS in response?

CHAPTER THREE: METHOD

Because of the history of using textual analysis in the examination of news coverage, and also public relations case studies (Choi, 2012; Daymon & Holloway, 2011; Fairclough, 2005; Faucher, 2009; Legg, 2009; Livesey, 2002; Mendes, 2011; Peñaloza de Brooks & Waymer, 2009; Pollach, 2003), textual analysis was chosen as the method for this study. Principles of past research examples were applied to examine this controversial entity. Through the discourse analysis methods presented by Jørgensen and Phillips (2002) and Gee (2011) the frames used in news coverage of CoS were uncovered. Then, by examining the CoS crises published online by these news outlets, the crisis response tactics CoS should take were evaluated using the five crisis response strategies (nonexistence, distance, integration, mortification, and suffering) as well as their individual tactics, as defined by Coombs (1995).

Textual Analysis

Weber-Fève (2009) states that textual analysis is simply the "practice of close reading" (p 433). Textual analysis has been used to examine a wide variety of texts, including newspaper articles, books, and political speeches, in a number of fields; making it an extremely valuable tool for both academic and professional use (Weber-Fève, 2009). Weber-Fève (2009) describes the four levels of textual analysis as: linguistic, semantic, structural, and cultural. During these four levels, the researcher will analyze: vocabulary, grammar, and the author's individual style; denotations and connotations; possible

relationships between the author's words; and finally, the connections between aspects of the text within a cultural context.

Textual analysis can be accomplished through different methods. Common methods for qualitative analysis include content analysis, discourse analysis, and conversation analysis (Dilevko & Gottlieb, 2009). All three of these methods recommend categorizing and coding ideas and thoughts for a better understanding of the text. During this process, the researcher becomes more familiar with the data through the codes, which are the connections the researcher makes between the data and the categories they created (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). However, Lindlof and Taylor (2011) also express words of caution in coding. They state that, "codes, categories, and category definitions continue to change dynamically while the researcher is in the field, with new data altering the scope and terms of the analytic framework" (p. 250). As the categories are defined, the researcher might realize that more data is needed to better explain the issue. This new data might influence or impact the definition of existing or emerging categories created by the researcher (Dilevko & Gottlieb, 2009).

However, a main difference between these three methods of analysis is what is done with the data once it is coded, and how much context is taken into consideration. For content analysis, the main goal is to produce counts and measurements of the created categories and variables (Dilevko & Gottlieb, 2009). While some scholars argue that content analysis' emphasis on data counts is a purely quantitative method, others point out that all analysis of text is qualitative, even if some observations are expressed numerically (Dilevko & Gottlieb, 2009). While categories are important in discourse and conversation analysis, they are generally defined with regard to specific roles and behaviors. However, discourse

analysis pays attention to the context in which the text is produced, where conversation analysis limits the context to what is actually written or said during the interaction instead of looking at it within the broader picture (Dilevko & Gottlieb, 2009).

Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis focuses on discourse and discursive practices; or words, utterances, and interactional routines in discourse (Dilevko & Gottlieb, 2009) and how these texts are produced and consumed (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). Discourse analysts attempt to record, transcribe, and analyze discourse; which can be oral, written, or visual, and created in a variety of contexts (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). This methodology characteristically involves three steps: collecting and selecting, reading and analyzing, and then interpreting the specimen or specimens (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011).

The actual word 'discourse' involves the idea that "language is structured according to different patterns that people's utterances follow when they take part in different domains of social life" and "discourse analysis is the analysis of those patterns" (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 1). It involves the use of language as a social practice, generally within a specific field, that gives meaning to the speech from a particular perspective (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002).

Gee (2011) offers a detailed method of conducting discourse analysis, which includes a list of building tasks which cue questions to aid in analysis for understanding context in a communicated artifact. These building tasks include: significance, practices, identities, relationships, politics, connections, and sign systems and knowledge (p. 102). The questions offered in Gee's method help identify important aspects of the text by teaching you to focus on things of significance, how to look at the context, and how to

identify connections between this message and other messages, objects, or people it might give reference to. These aspects may have an impact on the framing of the message.

Framing Analysis

To begin the framing analysis, a systematic approach was employed to examine the information within the articles by categorizing specific word choices and placement, context, and even quotes and visual components of the message; then categories and codes were assigned for further analysis. Word choices are especially important, and therefore examined very carefully beginning by making note of word frequency and intensity. Specific words, especially strong or intense words applied to CoS, might lead people to view the text in a particular light. Faucher (2009) examined the how the use of specific language in news coverage of violent acts, such as the use of the words "criminal," "murderer," or "thief," become a part of the description of the individuals that they are referring to. This illustrates the power that frames can have on the perception of an issue. For example, the use of the words "religion" or "cult" might automatically trigger a perception in the consumer's mind. A good place to start is to look for words that are surprising, significant, or raise questions (Weber-Fève, 2009), then determine the context of the message by examining the text surrounding these key words.

After closely reading each article, a broad brush was used to look for thematic similarities between the messages. Frames typically define problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgments, and suggest remedies (Entman, 1993, p. 52). Searching for this content within the messages will aid in the discovery of frames used. Questions were then asked, adapted from Mendes (2011), such as: How was the problem or issue defined? How were Scientologists or the Church portrayed? and What solutions were proposed? As

stated earlier, framing theory explains the use of framing devices (headline, word choice, examples, and visual components) which can play a large role in message framing (Zoch & Molleda, 2006), so these components will be examined carefully during analysis.

Lindlof and Taylor (2011), recommend dividing the data into categories, or "concepts, constructs, themes, and other types of 'bins' in which to put items that are similar" (p 246). From there codes should be created, which are "the linkages between data and the categories the researcher creates" (p. 248). These messages were then sorted into categories of contexts, or message frames, paying particular attention to the use of metaphors, rhetoric, and linguistic choices used by the author. These categories might align with existing material covered, such as associations with previous crises or even the frames used to describe cults, discovered by van Driel and Richardson (1988); or completely new frames discovered through analysis.

Coombs (2007) states that, "the crisis type is how the crisis is being framed (p 137)" and "a crisis type is a frame that indicates how people should interpret the crisis events (p 137)," therefore, because no literature exists on the framing of news coverage specific to Church of Scientology, this research was conducted with the plan to discover and define these frames through observation, guided by any sources available; including strategies, categories, and factors of crisis communication. Once the frames were found, they were further examined to identify any potential public relations threats which could create, or have created, crises for the organization. These crises were then evaluated using the public response strategies identified by Coombs (1995): nonexistence, distance, integration, mortification, and suffering; along with their individual tactics (identified on Table 1).

Sample

The desire of this study was to examine what the average viewer would gain through recent news reporting by examining the most influential stories that have been published in print or have aired on television about CoS within the last few years, therefore a purposive sample was used. The articles were restricted to major exposés and other relevant stories that critically examined aspects of CoS. Articles from gossip sections or tabloid websites were not selected for analysis. Beginning with Janet Reitman and Lawrence Wright's investigative articles: Inside Scientology, originally published in *Rolling Stone* on March 9, 2006, and then re-published on February 11, 2011 (Reitman, 2011$_a$); and The Apostate, published on February 14, 2011 in *The New Yorker* (Wright, 2011). Coverage pertaining to recent events that increased news coverage related to CoS was also examined: stories involving the release of Lawrence Wright's book, "Going Clear: Scientology, Hollywood, and the Prison of Belief" on January 17, 2013; the release of Jenna Miscavige-Hill, Ex-Scientologist and niece of the Church of Scientology's leader, and Lisa Pulitzer's book, "Beyond Belief: My Secret Life Inside Scientology and My Harrowing Escape" on February 5, 2013; the publishing and removal of the controversial Scientology advertorial in *The Atlantic* on January 14, 2013; recent lawsuits pressed against CoS; and the airing of CoS's Super Bowl commercial in 2013. In total, fifteen pieces were chosen for analysis: three investigative articles, four television news shows, seven news stories, and one Scientology commercial (see Figure 2). Investigative articles were longer articles, which covered many events and issues through research and interviews. News stories pertained to one specific event or issue.

Investigative Articles		
Scientology: The Truth Rundown, Part 1 of 3 in a Special Report on the Church of Scientology	Joe Childs and Thomas C. Tobin (The Tampa Bay Times)	June 21, 2009
Inside Scientology	Janet Reitman (Rolling Stone	February 11, 2011
The Apostate: Paul Haggis vs. The Church of Scientology	Lawrence Wright (The New Yorker)	February 14, 2011
Television Coverage		
Scientology: How Was Abuse Addressed	Anderson Cooper 360	April 1, 2011
Director Calls Some of Scientology Teachings 'Madness'	Rock Center	January 17, 2013
Jenna Miscavige Hill on Leaving Scientology	The View	February 5, 2013
Scientology Leader's Niece Speaks Out	Piers Morgan Tonight	February 5, 2013
News Stories		
Ex-Scientologist: Cruise Was Church Top Recruit	CNN	July 11, 2012
An Effort to Untangle Scientology's Mysteries: 'Going Clear,' by Lawrence Wright, Examines Scientology	Janet Maslin (The New York Times)	January 13, 2013
Going Clear' Takes On Scientology's Celebrity Fixation	Evan Wright (The Los Angeles Times)	January 14, 2013
Atlantic's Scientology Ad Crossed the Line	Ian Schafer (CNN)	January 16, 2013
Couple's Lawsuit Accuses Church of Scientology of Fraud, Deception	Joe Childs and Thomas C. Tobin (The Tampa Bay Times)	January 23, 2013
Scientology's Worst Enemy	Sara Stewart (The New York Post)	February 5, 2013
With a Super Bowl Ad, Scientology Gets a Crowd	Tanzina Vega and Michael Cieply (The New York Times)	February 5, 2013
Scientology Super Bowl Commercial		

Figure 2: Sample

CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS

Through the examination of various recent television and print news reports involving the Church of Scientology, analysis uncovered a few over-arching frames used in media coverage, with several sub-frames. Additionally, these stories detailed different problems and potential crises the Church is currently facing, which has been examined through the lens of public relations and crisis communication perspectives.

Framing and Scientology

Analysis showed three major framing categories that were applied in the recent news coverage of what can be categorized as organizational crises in the Church of Scientology (2009-2013). These categories include mistreatment and abuse of members, the Church being misunderstood, or problems arising from leadership. As framing theory states that frames typically present themselves as problems, causes, moral judgments, and remedies (Entman, 1993), news content frames were then separated into categories of similar events or actions pertaining to or attributed to Scientology. Each of the frames and sub-frames are defined below, with examples of their use from news sources.

Culture of Abuse

The culture of abuse frame included claims from former members of mental, physical, emotional, and financial abuse by the Church of Scientology These attributes were identified in news coverage of the Church imprisoning members (Scientology Imprisons Members), controlling members (Scientology is Controlling), breaking up families (Family Disconnection), abuse and exploitation of children (Exploitation of Children), being

physically violent to members as a typical means of discipline (Culture of Violence), and financially abusing members or their religious and tax exempt status for personal gain (Financial Abuse). This frame, and the sub-frames within, were the most frequently identified during analysis, primarily due to the major exposés and coverage pertaining to Jenna Miscavige-Hill's book.

Scientology Imprisons Members. This sub-frame describes reports of members being physically detained or imprisoned in "dungeons" or "rehabilitation facilities" throughout the organization, from Sea Org clergy to those in the highest ranks. The confinement has been described as a punishment for misbehavior, or when members might be leaning to leave the Church. In the very long process for members to "free" themselves from the organization, they may be sent to a "reeducation camp" to decide whether they truly want to leave. The below examples are testimonies from former members of CoS, detailing their experiences being imprisoned by the Church. The first quote is from a family that appeared on NBC's *Rock Center* in 2013, describing their experience being detained by the Church when they attempted to leave.

At least not to be excommunicated, and be disconnected from anybody we've ever known. So, we go back and they sort of keep us in a dungeon, what we called the dungeon. Which was the basement of the 13-story building, in a windowless room... [for] ten to twelve weeks.... they put a guard on me, everywhere I went. To go eat. I go to into the ladies room, the guard stands outside the door. It's all intimidation (Corvo, Bettag, & Hartman, 2013).

This next example comes from Lawrence Wright's investigative article, The

Apostate, for *The New Yorker.* Wright interviewed many ex-Scientologists as part of his

research for the article, this is what he found.

Sea Org members who have "failed to fulfill their ecclesiastical responsibilities" may

be sent to one of the church's several Rehabilitation Project Force locations.

Defectors describe them as punitive reeducation camps. In California, there is one in

Los Angeles; until 2005, there was one near the Gold Base, at a place called Happy

Valley. Bruce Hines, the defector turned research physicist, says that he was

confined to R.P.F. for six years, first in L.A., then in Happy Valley. He recalls that the

properties were heavily guarded and that anyone who tried to flee would be tracked

down and subjected to further punishment. "In 1995, when I was put in R.P.F., there

were twelve of us," Hines said. "At the high point, in 2000, there were about a

hundred and twenty of us." Some members have been in R.P.F. for more than a

decade, doing manual labor and extensive spiritual work. (Davis says that Sea Org

members enter R.P.F. by their own choosing and can leave at any time; the manual

labor maintains church facilities and instills "pride of accomplishment") (Wright,

2011).

Both examples prove that CoS will go extreme lengths to keep members from

leaving the Church, and explain the "Rehabilitation Project Force" locations designed to

detain those who have strayed from Scientology's beliefs. Besides putting physical

restraints on Church members to keep them from leaving, CoS has also used other

methods of retaining members, which can be seen in the "Scientology is Controlling" frame

below.

Scientology is Controlling. This frame involves the strict rules and regulations of the organization, but also includes mental control – including claims of brainwashing. Many stories describe how Scientology is controlling, not just in allowing or not allowing members to do certain things, but also whether or not couples can have children, where they can work, and if they can leave the organization. Some of these stories even talk about members being pressured to have abortions, being "forced" to do other things, or having the inability to be yourself or think for yourself. Many of the pieces discussed how CoS controlled various aspects of member's lives. The following example is from Janet Reitman's investigative article, Inside Scientology, which puts a lot of focus on L. Ron Hubbard's role in the creation of the Church of Scientology, and his strict rules for behavior.

> And then there are Scientology's rules. A fiercely doctrinaire religion, Scientology follows Hubbard's edicts to the letter. Dissent or opposition to any of Hubbard's views isn't tolerated. Nor is debating certain church tenets — a practice Scientologists view as "counterintentioned." Comporting oneself in any way that could be seen as contrary to church goals is considered subversive and is known as a "suppressive act" (Reitman, 2011[b]).

> Lawrence Wright's article, The Apostate, consists of many stories of ex-Scientologists. The next example comes from the story of a young couple who met and were married within the Church of Scientology's Sea Org, but were not allowed to have children because of Sea Org's strict regulations. When the couple became pregnant, they claim Church officials forced them to abort the child.

> Claire and Marc fell in love, and married in 1992. She says that she was pressured by the church to have two abortions, because of a stipulation that Sea Org members

can't have children. The church denies that it pressures members to terminate pregnancies. Lucy James, a former Scientologist who had access to Sea Org personnel records, says that she knows of dozens of cases in which members were pressed to have abortions (Wright, 2011).

Another quote is from author Jenna Miscavige-Hill, when she appeared on the TV show *Piers Morgan* in 2013. When asked what the worst part of Scientology was, she replied:

"I mean, as a child, you know, of course the labor that we've already spoken about, but I would say the worst part about Scientology is that it's their doctrine or the highway. If you don't agree with Scientology teachings, you know, you either have a word that you don't understand or it's because you've done something bad, which is what is so ironic about that Super Bowl ad. It talks about how, um, you know, "seekers of knowledge" and "think for yourself," but you can't think for yourself while you're there" (Wald, 2013).

There are reports of CoS not only controlling members by physical detainment or a strict set of rules, but also by denying access to information and personal documents. Former members have said that Church officials would not allow members to search for information on the Internet, members are given a limited education, their personal records – such as birth certificates or driver's licenses – are taken away from them, and they are left with no money – making it impossible for them to survive in the world outside of Scientology. Even if it weren't for the threat of being physically detained, knowing they will have nothing but the clothes on their back if they leave keeps many from making the

attempt. Another way the Church controls members is by restricting their access to their family.

The Family Disconnection. Other stories detail how the Church separates families. This is often done through the process of "Disconnection," where members are not allowed to have contact with those who have left the church. Families are also separated when parents and/or children are required to work in different areas within the organization. The quotes below illustrate these disconnections. This first example is from Janet Reitman's investigative article, Inside Scientology, published in Rolling Stone magazine on February 11, 2011. Here Reitman details the experience of a former Church member when she separated from the Church, and how it affected her family life.

> When Christman split from the church, her husband and most of her friends – all of them Scientologists – refused to talk to her again. Apostates are not just discredited from the church; they are also excommunicated, isolated from their loved ones who, under Scientology rules, must sever or "disconnect" from them. Scientology defines those associated with Suppressive People as "Potential Trouble Sources," or PTS (Reitman, 2011$_a$).

The next quote is from a teenager who appeared with her family on NBC's *Rock Center*. During the interview she details her experiences in child housing, where Scientology kids live, separated from her parents.

> I watched families separated. There is an eight-year-old child that was with us that nobody cared about her at all. She saw her mother even less than I did. And I had to put her to bed every night asking for her parents [starts to cry]. I just couldn't look at

other people's faces and tell them that what we were doing was right. I just couldn't

do it anymore (Corvo, Bettag, & Hartman, 2013).

Within the organization, many families are separated and adults and children live in

separate areas. In some of these locations the children are expected to work, often doing

harsh manual labor jobs.

Exploitation of Children. A recent focus, highlighted in Jenna Miscavige-Hill's new

book, describes how CoS children are required to perform multiple hours of labor daily,

subjected to the same rules as adults, and even forced to sign the billion-year contracts as

children to join Cadet Org and Sea Org, the clerical branches of the Church. The examples

below are from former members who either experienced the child labor required by the

Church, or learned about it. The first quote is from Jenna Miscavige-Hill when she appeared

on *The View* to talk about her book on February 5, 2013.

> You know, the things that it shows in the pictures [of The Ranch, provided by the
>
> Church], like for example those dressers, we varnished all of them. The rock walls
>
> that you might have seen, we hauled the rocks. So, the reason the Ranch is so
>
> beautiful is because we, the children, worked four hours every single day and we
>
> made it that way (McKiernan, Siege, & Gentile, 2013).

A similar example is from director and former Scientologist Paul Haggis from the

January 17, 2013 episode of *Rock Center* – when they discussed Lawrence Wright's book

which is based in part on Haggis' experiences within the Church.

> Haggis was particularly shocked when he read allegations on anti-Scientology
>
> websites of children made to work 12 to 16 hours a day. "It's horrible treatment these
>
> kids had. Terrible. I mean, to work so often and all day long in these terrible

conditions. F*** [word censored] them for that. Yeah, they should be taken down for

that" (Corvo, Bettag, & Hartman, 2013).

A Culture of Violence. These frames implied that physical violence – such as

hitting, kicking, punching, and slapping – was simply in the organizations' nature. It could

have been mentions of violent acts committed by everyday staff, or violence committed on

the orders of someone else. Other reports might lean towards violence being "dealt with

internally." Some outlets speculate that these acts being handled internally, opposed to a

qualified agency such as the police, are not being handled properly – if at all. Many current

stories talk about various lawsuits and government agency investigations that are being

pressed and conducted against the Church, a large number dealing with the topic of the

abuse of its members. This culture of violence is said to penetrate the entire organization,

and is explained as a "typical" reaction to unfavorable acts within the Church – such as not

following the rules and directions or for producing a poor quality of work.

Surprisingly, though, they disagree on who was perpetrating it. Both sides describe a

work environment inside the Church where punching, choking, and kicking as a

means of discipline and intimidation occurred on numerous occasions and no one,

ever, filed criminal charges or even called the police (Cutler, 2010).

This next example explains the violence on multiple levels, using it to threaten

members for money, against those who disagree, against critics, and other members.

What they're doing is abusing their own members, shaking them down for money,

wreaking vengeance on people that disagree with them, uh... punishing its critics,

and physically abusing people and holding them against their will inside the highest

levels of the Church (Corvo, Bettag, & Hartman, 2013).

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Financial Abuse. Recent lawsuits, which have been publicized in news coverage, claim that the Church not only abuses its members physically, but also financially. Some claims by members state that the Church requested large amounts of money for specific purposes, such as the construction of a specific component of a Church building, but the money was not used for its intended purpose. Other stories focus on the Church's tax-exempt status, and how because of this they are not required to disclose financial earnings or reports. Additionally, their First Amendment status allows them to do things that other organizations and businesses are not able to do, a power which the Church abuses.

In the first example Lawrence Wright revisits the testimony of Claire and Marc Headley, who claim they were previously forced into abortions by the Church. Once they left the organization, the Headleys joined and filed many lawsuits against the Church. As the example explains, the Church of Scientology used their First Amendment protection as a defense and not only won the lawsuit, but were also awarded money from it.

> In 2009, the Headleys filed their suits, which maintained that the working conditions at the Gold Base violated labor and human-trafficking laws. The church responded that the Headleys were ministers who had voluntarily submitted to the rigors of their calling, and that the First Amendment protected Scientology's religious practices. The court agreed with this argument and dismissed the Headleys' complaints, awarding the church forty thousand dollars in litigation costs. The court also indicated that the Headleys were technically free to leave the Gold Base. The Headleys have appealed the rulings (Wright, 2011).

The Church also uses its religious status as a defense to avoid disclosing financial information about the organization, and many news stories point this out during their reporting – as seen in the examples below.

> But discerning what is true about the Church of Scientology is no easy task. Tax-exempt since 1993 (status granted by the I.R.S. after a long legal battle), Scientology releases no information about its membership or its finances. Nor does it welcome analysis of its writings or practices (Reitman, 2011$_a$).

However, recent news coverage suggests that the Church will not be able to keep its records secret from all who wish to gain access. Current lawsuits against the Church about their financial practices may force them to open up about their financial operations.

> For years, the church has defended itself from such claims by asserting that the First Amendment prevented courts from prying into operations deemed religious in nature. But Babbitt said those arguments would not stand up in this instance (Childs & Tobin, 2013).

The claims of abuse attributed to the Church in stories by former members can be physical, psychological, emotional, or financial, and they occur at a variety of stages in the member's relationship with Scientology. However, CoS states that these claims are merely the accusations of disgruntled ex-members and the Church is just misunderstood.

The Information Paradox

The Information Paradox frame was generally used in defensive messages by the Church of Scientology, but can be found any time there is disagreement in the information provided by CoS compared with testimony or other evidence, or a lack of information stemming from not knowing how Scientology works or not understanding why Scientology

works the way it does. It included the sub-frames: Conflicting Information, Simple Misunderstanding, and Non-Traditional Approach, which delve deeper into these misunderstandings.

     Conflicting Information. There are many stories that focus on how things the Church says about itself or its members do not match up with facts or statistics, such as their attendance, their good works, or even the history of their founder, L. Ron Hubbard. The conflicting information frame involves contradictory claims and explanation of behavior given by former members, current members and organizational leaders. The following examples point out these discrepancies, often alluding to the ridiculousness of the Church's claims. The first example comes from Lawrence Wright's article, as he speaks to Tommy Davis, a spokesperson for the Church of Scientology, about the membership figures of the Church.

> The church won't release official membership figures, but it informally claims eight million members worldwide. Davis says that the figure comes from the number of people throughout the world who have donated to the church. "There is no process of conversion, there is no baptism," Davis told me. It was a simple decision: "Either you are or you aren't." A survey of American religious affiliations, compiled in the Statistical Abstract of the United States, estimates that only twenty-five thousand Americans actually call themselves Scientologists. That's less than half the number who identify themselves as Rastafarians (Wright, 2011).

In another example, in an article about Wright's newly released book, the author describes how Wright handled the conflicting information found on Scientology's founder, L. Ron Hubbard.

The book goes on to tell the Hubbard story in a carefully evenhanded way. Mr.

Wright acknowledges that "the tug-of-war between Scientologists and anti-

Scientologists over Hubbard's biography has created two swollen archetypes: the

most important person who ever lived and the world's greatest con man." And he

sees that "to label him a pure fraud is to ignore the complex, charming, and visionary

features of his character that made him so compelling." He also tries to correlate the

extremes of Hubbard's science fiction writing (he was hugely prolific) with a religion

based on events that took place 75 million years ago in a Galactic Confederacy ruled

by the tyrannical overlord Xenu (Maslin, 2013).

The Church of Scientology typically did not have good responses for these

differences in information about their membership or their founder. They claim that their

attendance figures are based on the number of people who offer donations and there isn't a

way to accurately account for membership. When it comes to the mixed information on their

founder, however, they have some very interesting explanations – one of which includes a

massive cover-up attempt at the highest levels of government.

Simple Misunderstanding. These are claims, generally made by the Church or

members, that the organization is painted negatively due to misunderstanding, harsh

reports by disgruntled ex-members, or even media bias. The quotes below are examples of

how Tommy Davis, a CoS spokesperson, claims that Scientology defectors are the cause of

untrue speculation about CoS.

Davis, early in his presentation, attacked the credibility of Scientology defectors,

whom he calls "bitter apostates." He said, "They make up stories." He cited Bryan

Wilson, an Oxford sociologist, who has argued that testimony from the disaffected

should be treated skeptically, noting, "The apostate is generally in need of self-justification. He seeks to reconstruct his own past to excuse his former affiliations and to blame those who were formerly his closest associates" (Wright, 2011).

These quotes usually claim that the stories are made up by disgruntled ex-members and attempt to gain sympathy for the organization. However, sometimes they try to turn it into a positive, by not only saying you shouldn't believe these stories but also focusing on the programs the Church has to improve the community.

A chief complaint is that reporters, eager for a story, take the words of lapsed members as gospel. Davis says Scientology gets little credit for the success of its social-betterment programs, which include Narconon and also literacy and educational programs. "Look around," says Davis. "People are out here busting their butt every day to make a difference. And one guy who leaves because he wants to go to the movies gets to characterize the whole organization? That sucks" (Reitman, 2011[a]).

Both of these examples come from investigative articles, which according to the authors, reporters, and critics, attempt to tell the story in an even-handed way. However, prior to telling the stories of the "bitter apostates," the authors always establish the credibility of the sources making the claims or state that there are a large number of former members with similar stories.

The Non-Traditional Approach. Many speculate that the Church's controversy is because their beliefs and conduct are not traditional, when compared to other religions. Their structure for advancement through the Church, and the high-cost associated, and their origin story are a major part of the speculation. Also, that the leader of the Church lives

more like a celebrity than the leader of a religion, or other aspects are not like other religions, yet the Church tries hard to keep its religious appearance. As seen in the next two examples, the high cost to advance through Scientology is featured in many news stories, many providing financial quotes on various services offered by the Church as examples of how expensive advancement really is.

But many Scientologists pay dearly for the service. Unique among religious faiths, Scientology charges for virtually all of its religious services. Auditing is purchased in 12.5-hour blocks, known as "intensives." Each intensive can cost anywhere from $750 for introductory sessions to between $8,000 and $9,000 for advanced sessions (Reitman, 2011$_a$).

This next example not only highlights the high cost of advancing through Scientology, but also compares it to more traditional religions.

Hubbard's real innovation was figuring out how to sell enlightenment more effectively than his competitors. Traditional churches offered it for free, then hoped for donations. In Scientology, novices were required to pay from the beginning (Wright, 2013).

The financial aspect of Scientology is not the only part that is controversial, it's what members are ultimately paying for. Once they reach a certain level within the Church, members are given the secrets to Scientology at the O.T. III level, which many subscribers find wasn't worth the time and money they paid.

"The process of induction is so long and slow that you really do convince yourself of the truth of some of these things that don't make sense," Haggis told me. Although he refused to specify the contents of O.T. materials, on the ground that it offended

Scientologists, he said, "If they'd sprung this stuff on me when I first walked in the door, I just would have laughed and left right away" (Wright, 2011).

During an interview, former Scientology member, Paul Haggis, told writer Lawrence Wright about his experience reaching the O.T. III level. He explained that only because he had been involved with Scientology as long as he had, and paid as much as he did to get there, did he stay after he had gained this new information about his religion.

Leadership Issues

Most of the leadership frame involves David Miscavige, the current leader of The Church of Scientology (The Fault Lies with Leadership). In this frame coverage describes his volatile personality and how he is angry, explosive, and violent and encourages or forces violent behavior. Some former members state that the current leadership is the reason the Church is declining – in both membership and values. This frame also addresses the problem of celebrity involvement within the organization (Celebrity Obsession).

The Fault Lies with Leadership. This sub-frame included claims of violence, bad management, and an explosive personality made against Scientology's C.E.O., David Miscavige. Miscavige, is currently taking a lot of heat in the media. Accounts of his volatile behavior were found in nearly every source reviewed for this analysis. Some former members even blame him for negative turn the Church has taken. The following examples show quotes taken from two news stories and one television episode, illustrating how many of the faults, including the abuse that can be seen within the Church and allegations of the Church misusing funds, can be attributed to Miscavige.

"You cannot call yourself a religious leader as you beat people, as you confine

people, as you rip apart families," she said. "If I was trying to destroy Scientology, I

would leave David Miscavige right where he is because he's doing a fantastic job of

it" (Childs & Tobin, 2009).

Other leadership complaints do not mention Miscavige directly, but point to the highest

levels of the organization, which Miscavige is a part of, as the cause of the Church's

decline.

I don't think anybody would join Scientology in order to be abusive. You know, they

go into Scientology because they want to help, but at the deeper levels, as you go

further and further into the Church, the distortions become more and more apparent.

And it's at those levels that I think Scientology has lost its way (Corvo, Bettag, &

Hartman, 2013).

The Church is also facing several lawsuits, many of them centering on the

unsatisfactory financial habits of the organization, specifically where it pertains to David

Miscavige.

The lawsuit focuses on Scientology leader David Miscavige, saying he exerts control

over an "interdependent network of entities" that extracts as much money as it can

from parishioners and denies promised refunds. It alleges the church improperly

uses donations to finance Miscavige's "lavish lifestyle" and to stifle critics with private

investigators and lawyers (Maslin, 2013).

Stories like these are often one of the top complaints of former members. The Church

doesn't comment much about the claims made regarding Miscavige's financial habits,

however they do use their religious status to keep this information secret.

Defectors also talked to the F.B.I. about Miscavige's luxurious life style. The law

prohibits the head of a tax-exempt organization from enjoying unusual perks or

compensation; it's called inurement. Tommy Davis refused to disclose how much

money Miscavige earns, and the church isn't required to do so, but Headley and

other defectors suggest that Miscavige lives more like a Hollywood star than like the

head of a religious organization—flying on chartered jets and wearing shoes custom-

made in London (Wright, 2011).

The Celebrity Obsession. These stories focus on Church celebrities endorsing the

Church, defending the Church, or appearing at Church events. These stories may also

describe how the Church intentionally seeks out celebrities to make the Church more

appealing, draw in new members, or receive credibility. Also, that their treatment of

celebrities is far greater than the Church's non-celebrity followers. Some speculate that the

Church uses these celebrities as the public face of the Scientology, rather than actual

Church executives. In the next example Jenna Miscavige-Hill describes the difference in

treatment within the Church between a celebrity member and the average Scientology

member.

> The Scientology experience that celebrities experience is completely different than
>
> the average public Scientologist. For one thing, they have their own church, which is
>
> so much more beautifully decorated, alone, than every other church. They have their
>
> own private entrance, they have their own private classrooms, they're only allowed
>
> to have certain auditors - the most highly trained - and that sort of thing. I would say
>
> one of the main things is they're not constantly bombarded for requests for

donations... not in the way the average public Scientologist is (McKiernan, Siege, & Gentile, 2013).

There are other claims that L. Ron Hubbard knew the power that celebrities held, in terms of public opinion and credibility. He intentionally targeted celebrities for the benefits they could offer the Church. In return, the Church offered preferred treatment to the celebrities to keep them from leaving.

She says Hubbard targeted celebrities specifically to add credibility to the Church's beliefs and to encourage more people to join. Pressley, who was a Scientologist for 16 years, described internal wish lists and strategies discussed among church leaders in the 1980s to recruit other celebrities - including Brad Pitt and Demi Moore. Those discussions about how to bring Moore and Pitt into the fold never bore fruit, Pressley said. The church would work to win over celebrity recruits, Pressley said, by giving them individual attention and by explaining how Scientology could help them achieve their highest goals as artists. In exchange for tailored treatment, Pressley says Scientology leaders expected celebrities to stay committed to the church's teachings and speak glowingly of its benefits (CNN, 2011).

Aside from the treatment of the Church's celebrities, other critiques focus on how celebrities becoming spokespeople for the organization. The next example describes Tom Cruise's role within Scientology, his relationship with David Miscavige, and the treatment he receives for being the face of Scientology.

Since Hubbard's death in 1986, Cruise has become Scientology's leading pitchman. Wright portrays him as being in the thrall of David Miscavige, the Rasputin-like figure who now runs the church. The most revealing story in the book concerns Miscavige's

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alleged masterminding of a scheme to headhunt a young church member for Cruise to marry. According to Wright, after Cruise dumped her (to marry Katie Holmes), the church ordered her to scrub toilets with a toothbrush because she confided in a friend about her experience with Cruise and couldn't stop crying (Wright, 2013).

Another aspect of having celebrities as figureheads for the organization is how those celebrities contribute to the image. In the case of Tom Cruise, entertainment news outlets are not portraying Cruise in a positive light. L. Ron Hubbard and the Church were so focused on the positive effects of having celebrity members, perhaps they did not think of the potential damage they could cause the Church's reputation.

Public Relations and Scientology

During the analysis of news coverage frames, several key problems arose that have the potential to be labeled as crises for the Church. Three potential crises were found: public testimonies about The Mistreatment of Church Members, allegations of The Misuse of Funds, and Detrimental Communication Strategy. Each of these potential crises is defined below and CoS responses from these sources, as crisis-response strategies identified by Coombs (1995).

The Mistreatment of Church Members

This potential crisis arises through the claims of emotional, mental, and physical abuse by former members. News coverage of work camps, child laborers, low pay, and confinement present the Church with a variety of alleged issues that should be addressed. It has been detailed in the "culture of abuse" frame. Church responses include: nonexistence (denial, clarification, attack, and intimidation), distance (excuse), integration (bolstering), and suffering (Coombs, 1995).

Nonexistence. In the nonexistence posture identified by Coombs (1995), the

organization attempts to convince the public that there is no crisis – either by denying the

crisis exists, clarifying why there is no crisis, confronting those who wrongly accuse them, or

make threats using organizational power (such as threatening with a lawsuit). In Church

responses to claims made about the mistreatment of Church members, all four postures

were used. In the first examples below, you can see the typical denial stances, which are

typically followed by clarification of why there is no crisis – such as improper investigations,

lack of evidence, and even false evidence or lies.

> "There is no record – no police reports, no medical records, no photos – to support
>
> these allegations" (Corvo, Bettag, & Hartman, 2013).

These examples show that the Church does not give a simple denial response. Most

responses are also accompanied by an explanation for why they are denying the charges,

or why the information should be discredited.

> The Church denies any of this abuse happened. They say, "Haggis' 'investigation'
>
> was a 'sham'" (Corvo, Bettag, & Hartman, 2013).

Often, when denying a crisis exists, Church responses will also cite organizational

procedure, rules, or guidelines as part of their defense as a way to discredit the accuser.

> Church officials say Hayden and Lucy were never confined, nor placed under guard.
>
> And they say Hayden and Lucy "... agreed to participate in the Sea Organization's
>
> formal process of severing relations with the religious order" (Corvo, Bettag, &
>
> Hartman, 2013).

Scientology officials also make claims that those who publish negative information about the Church are simply anti-Scientology critics who will do anything to make the organization look bad.

> As for the author, Lawrence Wright, Church officials say his book is an "error-filled, unsubstantiated, bigoted anti-Scientology book..." and they say no independent evidence exists to corroborate claims of abuse (Corvo, Bettag, & Hartman, 2013).

In these nonexistence postures the Church of Scientology attempts to convey that there is no crisis. In a few cases, such as those citing policies and guidelines, they are not only clarifying why no crisis exists, but also attributing the fault to the accusers – or distancing themselves from the crisis, as seen in the distance posture detailed below.

Distance. An organization uses a distance posture in attempts to minimize the organization's responsibility for the crisis, or minimize the damage associated with it. This can be done by putting the blame elsewhere – such as on another party, policy, or even the victim – or denying the extent of the damage. In many of CoS's distance stances, they put the blame into the hands of the victim by stating that it was always their choice – they were never forced to do anything they did not want to do.

> Church officials say, that according to their policies, Sea Org members must leave the order if they want to have children, because their duties are too demanding. They also say they do not pressure women to abort (Corvo, Bettag, & Hartman, 2013).

When asked about the physical abuse that occurs within the Church, spokesman Tommy Davis gave the following reply regarding those who committed the violent acts.

Well, they were removed. The point is that they were removed. The choice is the

individuals who were attacked on whether to file charges or not. [It] was completely

their choice (Cutler, 2010).

The next example is a CoS response regarding members who claimed they were given an

enormous "freeloader" bill when they attempted to leave the organization. They did pay the

money, but the Church states the money wasn't demanded, but requested as a voluntary

donation for services rendered.

The Church says any money the James' paid was a voluntary donation (Corvo,

Bettag, & Hartman, 2013).

After attributing the blame for the crisis to another party, CoS's statements sometimes

claimed that they were the victim in the crisis – usually by stating that their accuser provided

a false account. In news coverage, the truth is unconfirmed and the information is typically

portrayed as hearsay. The Church's responses to these claims are outlined in the suffering

strategy, seen below.

Suffering. The suffering stance attempts to gain sympathy from the public by

claiming they are the victim of a malicious outside entity. With CoS, the organization

typically blames their woes on former members who are disgruntled and out to get the

Church. This next example includes the views of Tommy Davis, leading CoS spokesperson,

and how former member Marty Rathbun has an ulterior motive for trying to make the

organization look bad.

Davis later claimed that Rathbun is in fact trying to overthrow Scientology's current

leadership and take over the church. (Rathbun now makes his living by providing

Hubbard-inspired counseling to other defectors, but he says that he has no desire to

be part of a hierarchical organization. "Power corrupts," he says) (Wright, 2011).

The stances taken by the Church of Scientology regarding the mistreatment of its

members (nonexistence, distance, and suffering) not only do not take responsibility for

these crises, but attempt to shift the responsibility elsewhere – including the victims. This is

similar to their responses to accounts from former members who say they were financially

abused by the organization, as identified in the following section.

The Misuse of Funds

News coverage about money from the Church being used on un-necessarily

expensive projects, large gifts for specific members, or any other use other than what was

promised. These crises can be found in aspects of all three frames (Culture of Abuse, The

Information Paradox, and Leadership Issues). Typical Church responses to coverage about

their abuse of financial power include: nonexistence (denial, and clarification), and suffering.

Nonexistence. When using the nonexistence frame, the Church typically denies that

the crisis exists and they clarify why there is no crisis, typically by stating that all funds go

toward their intended purpose. The next example shows the Church's response when

asked about a lawsuit that is being filed against the organization by former members who

claim the money they donated was not used for the intended purpose.

Clearwater church spokeswoman Pat Harney said: "The church has not been served

and has no comment. However, we understand from media inquiries this has

something to do with fundraising, and we can unequivocally state all funds solicited

are used for the charitable and religious purposes for which they were donated"

(Childs & Tobin, 2013).

Suffering. The Church also uses the suffering stance when faced with claims of financial abuse. The response by CoS, as seen below, attempt to show that the Church is the victim of a lawsuit – filed by a couple who claims they were deceived into donating funds for the construction of a building that CoS never intends to finish.

> Los Angeles-based church spokeswoman Karin Pouw said Wednesday, "Shame on the *Times*. This frivolous suit is filed by the same group of apostates the *Times* has been supporting for four years with Mike Rinder as its consultant." Pouw also said statements made in the Garcias' lawsuit about Miscavige are "blatantly false." She added that the Super Power building "is nearing completion and will be opened as planned later this year to the joy of Scientologists around the world" (Childs & Tobin, 2013).

Reports of the Church's negative financial practices were frequently identified in recent news coverage, and found in all three major framing categories – ranging from abusing their members for money to the improper use of those funds on Scientology's leadership team and celebrity followers. Many responses to these financial issues come from the Church's leading spokesperson, Tommy Davis, however, some recent responses are made by their relatively new public relations firm. A large majority of the organization's "bad communication" statements were made by Tommy Davis and Mike Rinder, when the two of them made up the Church's public relations team – and even though Davis and Rinder haven't worked together for years this information is still referenced in recent news coverage.

Bad Communication Strategy

Statements by news outlets state that the Church is secretive and prone to legal strategies. If this is the Church's strategy, it has the ability to have a serious, negative impact on the organization. Church responses, when faced with negative accusations from former members and journalists, include: nonexistence (denial, clarification, attack, and intimidation), distance (excuse), integration (bolstering), and suffering.

Nonexistence. The nonexistence example below comes from Janet Reitman's investigative article and refers to Mike Rinder and Tommy Davis, who were spokespeople for CoS at the time (Mike Rinder has since left the Church). In this quote they deny the allegations that they refuse to let members leave the church, they clarify why it's not true, and then even contribute a hint of a threat if you speak against the Church.

> I spend a lot of time talking about the question of apostasy with Rinder and Davis. Both feel the church has been miscast. "Somewhere there is a concept that we hold strings over all these people and control them," says Rinder. But provided you don't denounce Scientology, it's perfectly fine to leave the church, he says. "Whatever, What's true for you is true for you." Nothing will happen to those who lose their faith, he says, unless they "tell bald-faced lies to malign and libel the organization — unless they make it seem like something it isn't" (Reitman, 2011$_a$).

The statements identified as "bad communication" are those made by the Church where they portray themselves negatively. As stated earlier, these statements are usually those made by Scientology spokesman, Tommy Davis, who is typically portrayed as a very angry and explosive personality.

Distance. The distance responses used by the Church might acknowledge some aspect of the crisis, but they try to distance the organization from blame. In the comment below, Tommy Davis – the Church's top spokesperson – states that the violence from the Church is due to a few former members and does not happen throughout the entire organization, and then attempts to discredit the source.

Scientology, Davis said, doesn't pretend to be perfect, and it shouldn't be judged on the misconduct of a few apostates. "I haven't done things like that," Davis said. "I haven't suborned perjury, destroyed evidence, lied—contrary to what Paul Haggis says." He spoke of his frustration with Haggis after his resignation: "If he was so troubled and shaken on the fundamentals of Scientology . . . then why the hell did he stick around for thirty-five years?" He continued, "Did he stay a closet Scientologist for some career-advancement purpose?" Davis shook his head in disgust. "I think he's the most hypocritical person in the world" (Wright, 2011).

Integration. Another way CoS might try lessen the damage of the crisis is through the integration stance, which tries to make the organization seem better, despite the crisis. This stance is typically used by shifting the focus to their good works instead of the crisis. In this example the Church explains that the information is false, and then tries to bring some attention to their social programs to show that the organization is a force for good.

A chief complaint is that reporters, eager for a story, take the words of lapsed members as gospel. Davis says Scientology gets little credit for the success of its social-betterment programs, which include Narconon and also literacy and educational programs. "Look around," says Davis. "People are out here busting their butt every day to make a difference. And one guy who leaves because he wants to

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go to the movies gets to characterize the whole organization? That sucks" (Reitman, 2011_a).

Various strategies (such as nonexistence, distance, and integration) were often discovered within the same organizational message. By stating that a crisis doesn't exist, but then explaining how the crisis is someone else's fault, CoS sends a contradictory message. These contradictions are a major component of the Church's "bad communication strategy," as identified in this section. These contradictions may have been a simple error on behalf of CoS communicators, or something intentional on behalf of the journalist during the frame building process. The Church of Scientology has made previous claims that journalists, and the former members that provide testimony to them, are intentionally trying to damage their reputation. Claims like these can usually be found in the suffering strategies, explained further in the following section.

Suffering. Another strategy used by CoS is the suffering tactic, where they attempt to make themselves look like the victim in the situation, generally by claiming that former members are bitter and spreading lies about them, or claiming that critics are treating them unfairly. The first quote below was Scientology's response to the recent criticism from their advertorial placed in *The Atlantic* magazine. They state that the response to the ad is unfair, and critics are only responding the way they are because it is the Church of Scientology.

The Church said, quote, "We believe freedom of speech was never intended to be selective in who it applies to." Close quote (Corvo, Bettag, & Hartman, 2013). This next example is a response from when the organization was asked about the celebrities in the Church. They use the Catholic church as a comparison in this suffering strategy to show that CoS is being treated unfairly compared to other religions.

"The Church does not speak about the beliefs and practices of parishioners. I have never seen CNN ask the Roman Catholic Church to discuss an individual parishioner by name and it points out the insensitivity of your questions" (CNN, 2012).

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

The following section further explicates the findings in the light of previous research and theory. It includes a continued discussion of the frames discovered during analysis, as well as responses to public relations crises, as guided by theory. Potential avenues for further research are also introduced.

Framing and Scientology

Framing Devices

When authors are constructing frames, certain devices can be utilized, such as headlines, quotes, examples, sources, and metaphors. This section examines the strategies and use of framing devices in news coverage of Scientology and their possible impact on the messages.

Word Choices and Metaphors. The first part of analysis involved identifying and examining word choices used by the authors. When constructing a frame, authors typically choose words or images that have the ability to influence how the issue is interpreted or evaluated by the audience (Tewksbury & Scheufele, 2009). During analysis these words were identified by choices that were surprising, significant, or raised questions, as suggested by Weber-Fève (2009). The frequency and intensity of these word choices was also an important consideration. Tewksbury and Scheufele (2009) found that word choice plays an extremely important role in issue perception – even one single word can affect the cognitions and attitudes of the audience. Intense words were discovered in all sources

chosen for analysis, however, these strategic word choices were most prevalent when the author was discussing the financial and religious aspects of Scientology, particularly where these two aspects merged. The use of the word "sold" was used frequently when referring to services offered by the Church, in one particular example the author described how "enlightenment" is "sold" by Scientology in gradual steps (Wright, 2013).

The authors didn't discourage themselves from using intense words to describe Scientology's leaders, L. Ron Hubbard and David Miscavige. They spoke not only of Hubbard's "celebrity fixation" and celebrity "scheme," but also his "improbable life," his "inability or unwillingness to distinguish fact from fantasy," and how he may have been a "pathological liar." In recent news coverage, Miscavige is called "volatile," a "Rasputin-like figure," and "stark, staring mad." Intense word choices were also used for Scientology's financial practices, such as "fraudulent," "deceptive," and "high-pressure."

The use of quotation marks on certain terms brought attention to them, particularly when comparing Scientology terminology to other religions. Quotations were nearly always used on the terms that Scientology adopted from other religious organizations, such as "church" or "mission." One example states, "A Scientology 'church' was basically a place where books, tapes, classes and therapy sessions were sold" (Wright, 2013). Another compares Scientology "missions" to McDonald's franchises, where management gets a share of the profits.

The framing of this issue doesn't happen by word choice alone, but also who says those words and in what context. All framing devices play an important role in the perception of the issue, but the exemplars – or testimony and other story examples – might have the biggest affect on issue salience and perception (Zillmann, 2002).

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Source and Example Choices. The goal of most authors is to tell a good story, one that their audience finds appealing and engaging. This is achieved by providing information on the subject; either base-rate information, such as facts and figures, or exemplifying information (Zillman, 1999). Stories, quotes, and other testimony often provide vivid examples, which can help illustrate the scope of the issue (Zillman et al., 1996). The case studies and extreme examples found in exemplifying information are often easier for the audience to remember, and can have a longer-lasting framing effect (Zillmann, 2002). These sources also added a visual aspect to the reporting – sometimes through photographs, but especially on television appearances. Television reporting typically told the stories of former members, usually families who have experienced abuse and hardship within the organization. Being able to see the faces of those providing testimony on the subject adds credibility to the information and can also create emotional links to the story by appealing to existing culture-based values of the audience (Tewksbury & Scheufele, 1999). Zillman (1999) found that these vivid examples, especially those that with high emotionality, have the ability to influence judgments and perceptions of the issue greater than stating the information alone.

Nobody can deny that the Church is non-traditional when compared to the more common religions in the United States. CoS has positioned itself to be seen as a religion, even taking on the look of traditional religious clergy, however they also act like a business. Unlike most other contemporary iterations of religion, their religious manuscripts, materials, and counseling are not offered for free – subscribers must pay, an often a hefty price. During analysis it was found that news sources almost always list the sum of money subscribers pay for CoS services, possibly in an effort to shock the audience.

Also, it was noted that the authors of these news reports typically establish the credibility of their sources when introducing them. They might mention their great achievements, such as winning an Academy Award or a Pulitzer Prize, or they often will detail the position they held within the Church or their length of service to authenticate their statements. Even the news story authors and television hosts discussing the newly released books of Lawrence Wright and Jenna Miscavige-Hill established the credibility of the books' sources and their authors. In one news story it was mentioned that Wright had "previously received a Pulitzer Prize" and in every reporting of Jenna Miscavige-Hill it was mentioned that she was the niece of Scientology's CEO. The way the sources were portrayed by the author, or through content editing on television programs, also contributed to their credibility. All sources providing testimony about the negative aspects of the Church of Scientology were well-spoken and appeared composed, where spokespeople for the Church, particularly Tommy Davis, were portrayed as explosive or angry – generally shouting or using swear words.

Choice of Quotes. What the authors didn't say themselves, but allowed to be said using quotes from another source, was also noted (also mentioned in the section about cults, below). This careful approach to telling the story has the ability to frame the situation or argument without showing a clear bias from the author. Using quotes and source testimony can also protect the author if the organization finds the information distasteful – after all, it wasn't technically the author that said it. With The Church of Scientology's litigious nature, shielding oneself from a libel lawsuit is likely a priority for authors, editors, and publishers.

The quotes themselves also have the ability to express severity or vividness of the information in a way the author may not be able to otherwise. Many quotes from Scientology's founder, L. Ron Hubbard, were used by the authors for just this purpose. In context, these quotes often had the ability to discredit not only Hubbard, but also the entire organization. Wright (2013) offers this example, "Hubbard told his first wife, 'I have high hopes of smashing my name into history so violently that it will take a legendary form.'"

Problems, Causes, and Remedies

As previously stated, Entman (1993) found that frames typically diagnose problems, identify causes, make moral judgments, and suggest remedies. This information helped guide the framing analysis, leading to the identification of many problems for the Church in the frames used. Accordingly, the following section will evaluate these problems through a public relations lens.

As for causes, testimony from former members of the Church, and even some current members, have claimed that things have gone downhill since L. Ron Hubbard died and David Miscavige took over the reins of the Church. Some state that the Church has strayed from the original teachings, and that now corruption and violence taint the ranks. Some of these reports state that Miscavige has not been seen in public for years, living in seclusion and refusing to take interviews with the media. Perhaps the lack of a prominent figurehead in CoS brought more focus on celebrity figures than ever before, making people associate Scientology more with Tom Cruise than its actual leader.

While the frames discovered did diagnose problems, and sometimes attribute causes, interestingly enough not one source suggested a remedy for the Church's problems. As much of Scientology's problems were attributed to Miscavige, this is the only

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area where a possible suggestion for a solution might be found. As found by Childs & Tobin (2009), "If I was trying to destroy Scientology, I would leave David Miscavige right where he is because he's doing a fantastic job of it."

Over-Arching Frames

While each frame and sub-frame identified during analysis has specific features that pertain to it alone, many characteristics found within the sub-frames were shared amongst other frame categories (see Figure 3). In particular, those involving conflicting information, misunderstandings, or relating to the non-traditional nature of CoS were found in nearly all other frames and sub-frames. No matter the content of the news story, it was almost always pointed out that the Church of Scientology had a different statement, set of facts, or account than the testimony of ex-members or critics. Most of the coverage that used this frame appeared to attempt a more balanced reporting, which was how the difference in information was offered. They would mention a claim made by either the Church of Scientology, a former member of the Church, or an outside organization, and then counter it with one from the opposing viewpoint. The interesting notion was that even though it either was, or was simply just claimed, to be in balanced reporting, it still eluded that obviously both of these statements cannot be true, therefore someone must be lying.

A question then is, who do you believe, the Church or the opposition? CoS states that these critics are merely disgruntled ex-members who are now out to smear the reputation of the Church. However, one source points out that while claims may be made by disgruntled ex-members, "there's such an abundance of them and their stories corroborate each other" (Corvo, Bettag, & Hartman, 2013) making them hard not to consider, especially with what we know about exemplification theory.

	Culture of Abuse	The Information Paradox	Leadership Issues
Exploitation of Children	★★★	★	
Scientology Imprisons Members	★★★	★	★★
The Family Disconnection	★★★	★	★
Scientology is Controlling	★★★	★	★★
A Culture of Violence	★★★	★	★★
Financial Abuse	★★★	★	★★
Conflicting Information		★★★	★
Simple Misunderstanding		★★★	★
The Non-Traditional Approach	★	★★★	★
The Fault Lies with Leadership	★★	★	★★★
The Celebrity Obsession		★	★★★

Figure 3: Scientology's Frames and Sub-Frames

Note: Number or stars illustrates the strength of the relationship (three stars = strongest relationship, no stars = little to no relationship detected).

The Cult Question

While not mentioned enough to award a frame to itself, nearly every article used the word 'cult' at least once. While the authors were careful to never outright call Scientology a cult, they did allow it to be said passively or within quotes from sources. One television news reporter did openly ask ex-Scientologist, Paul Haggis, if Scientology was a cult. His answer:

> Oh, of course it is. Of course it is. It's a system of belief, that, I mean, you've got all these folks inside this fortress who won't look out and won't look at any criticism and can't bear to any investigation and think that everyone is against them. How would you describe that? It's a cult. Of course it is (Corvo, Bettag, & Hartman, 2013).

Incorporating the Cultwatch (2012) definition of a cult, as stated earlier: "A cult is a group, which often damages their members emotionally, spiritually, financially, and sometimes physically. Cults break up families and shatter friendships." Also, taking into consideration the characteristics of cults in media reporting, as identified by van Driel and Richardson (1988), you can see that many of the frames discovered in the analysis of can clearly align with most of these descriptions.

van Driel and Richardson's (1988) "deprivation of personal freedom of members and confinement of members" can be seen in the Culture of Abuse frame, specifically in the Scientology Imprisons Members and Scientology is Controlling sub-frames. Their description of "charismatic leadership" has been used to describe Hubbard when he led the Church, and as David Miscavige isn't quite as charismatic as once portrayed, it can now be seen in the sub-frame The Celebrity Obsession. "Extreme authoritarianism, dictatorial arrangement, and ultra-discipline" can also be found in the Culture of Abuse frame (and

sub-frames Scientology is Controlling and A Culture of Abuse), but also within the

Leadership frame, specifically The Fault Lies with Leadership, in news coverage pertaining

to David Miscavige.

Other characteristics discovered by van Driel and Richardson (1988) were identified

within the analyzed texts. Examples include "behavioral control techniques, psychological

manipulation, and brainwashing" in The Non-Traditional Approach and Scientology is

Controlling sub-frames; "preoccupation with wealth and relative luxury of leader" in The

Non-Traditional Approach and The Fault Lies with Leadership sub-frames; and "society and

unbelievers viewed as evil, fear and hatred of the outside world" in Conflicting Information

and Scientology is Controlling sub-frames. The only one of van Driel and Richardson's

(1988) cult descriptions that could not be identified during analysis was "apocalyptic world

view or belief in millennium." The data examined in this study did not mention an "end of the

world" scenario for the Church of Scientology, in fact, they believe your spirit will live for

billions and billions of years (thus the billion-year Sea Org contracts).

Being described as a cult is not a positive attribution. Cults are known for having

strange beliefs and going against the grain (Stark & Bainbridge, 1985). Stark and

Bainbridge (1985) discovered three different types of cults, identified by the level of

participation required: audience cults, client cults, and cult movements. Audience cults are

the kinds you might see at conventions, talking about flying saucers or astrology. Client

cults are those which sell some benefit to their members, but require little involvement –

such as when Dianetics first offered the ability to achieve "clear" to its members. Cult

movements, however, "require members to dispense with their secular lives and devote

themselves entirely to cult activities" (Stark & Bainbridge, 1985, p. 29). They state that

audience cults and client cults are seldom criticized too harshly and are generally left to their own devices – it is not until they more solidly become a movement, and demand more from their members, that they receive more serious opposition. They claim that it wasn't until Scientology evolved from a client cult to a cult movement that their troubles truly began (Stark & Bainbridge, 1985).

The cult label can seriously damage their reputation. As an organization that thrives on the contributions of members, this association – and its harsh characteristics – is likely hindering any efforts made to recruit or maintain members. When combined with recent stories of abuse, extortion, manipulation, and imprisonment, found in the news framing of the Church of Scientology, it is apparent that they have an image crisis on their hands. Based on the frames identified, three major crises were identified, which were explored further in light of theory.

Public Relations and Scientology

The three potential crises that the Church of Scientology is facing are listed below, including the traditional public relations strategies, as defined by Coombs (1995 & 2006), utilized by the Church of Scientology and what strategies they should use according to theory (see figure 4).

	Church of Scientology's Strategy		Recommended Strategy	
Mistreatment of Church Members	Nonexistence ➡	Denial, Clarification, Attack, Intimidation	Mortification ➡	Remediation, Repentance, Rectification
	Distance ➡	Excuse		
	Integration ➡	Bolstering		
	Suffering			
The Misuse of Funds	Nonexistence ➡	Denial, Clarification	Mortification ➡	Remediation, Repentance, Rectification
	Suffering			
Bad Communication Strategy	Nonexistence ➡	Denial, Clarification, Attack, Intimidation	Mortification ➡	Rectification
	Distance ➡	Excuse		
	Integration ➡	Bolstering		
	Suffering			

Figure 4: Public Relations Strategies

Note: Response strategies and their specific postures (from Coombs, 1995 – see Figure 1 for complete description).

The Mistreatment of Church Members

      Some of the claims made against the Church of Scientology aren't just potential public relations crises, but also present the Church with legal challenges as well. The Church is involved with various lawsuits and criminal investigations for not just emotional and psychological traumas inflicted on members, but also for physical abuse. The F.B.I. is currently investigating the Church for human trafficking and physical violence. According to Coombs and Holladay (2007), the two priorities in crisis management and crisis

communication are to first "help victims and protect potential victims from harm" and second to "protect the organization from crisis-related collateral damage, including financial and reputational loss" (p. 301).

While the Church may very well be attempting to help the victims and preventing the violence and mistreatment from occurring again, they should be communicating their efforts to stakeholders and the public. Their current communications either deny that the violence is taking place, state that the matter is being "handled internally," or shift the responsibility to initiate action on members directly affected by the acts. Barton (2001) explains:

> If you master just two aspects of any crisis, master these: respond to the victims first, and then communicate what you're doing, why you're doing it, and how you'll rebound. If you want to lose your goodwill, act slow and say little of significance (p. 44).

The Church should follow the mortification crisis-response strategy, which begins by offering remediation to victims, asking for forgiveness, and then taking action to ensure it will not happen in the future by openly conducting its own investigation of these allegations, or at the very least release a statement indicating that they're cooperating in the official investigations by government agencies. The claims made against the Church, and various members within it, are extremely serious and have a real potential to bring harm to the organization. Threats to the organization, like these, should be taken extremely seriously – and yet, we aren't seeing the responses we would expect to see if a similar situation were to be encountered by a different organization. Public relations scholars study past cases and theory to help practitioners. There is a reason why organizations, when faced with a crisis, typically offer some sort of apology (whether they are at fault or not), they offer to help any

victims, generally offer some sort of compensation (all aspects of mortification), and they do this all publicly. This is what stakeholders and the public expect. When stakeholder expectations are not met, it alters the perceptions of that organization and can further damage the organization's reputation (Coombs, 2012).

The Misuse of Funds

While news reports do tend to focus accusations of "money hungry" ways of the Church, that is not necessarily a public relations issue in itself. Those who give willingly to the Church do so on their own, and since the Church's expensive services are widely talked about in news coverage (and The Non-Traditional Approach sub-frame), we realize that is simply the way the Church does business. The area of potential crisis, however, is when the Church's actions don't match their stakeholder's expectations. When Church members believe they are contributing money for a particular cause, but then realize that the cause they were contributing to never existed, or that their funds were instead going to a cause they didn't approve, it can cause some discontent from stakeholders.

Church records state, "If someone isn't happy with Scientology – which is a very small minority of people – he simply has to make a proper request for his donations back, agree to forgo further services and his donations will be returned" (Childs & Tobin, 2013). However, sources claim that their requests to have unused deposits returned were denied by the Church, resulting by numerous lawsuits against the organization.

The most damaging aspect is that the allegations of the misuse of funds run throughout the Church. Beginning with false claims of good deeds, Church funds providing lavish gifts on celebrity members, to the rock star life of the Church's leader, this frivolous financial mentality seems to encompass the entire organization. With these allegations

touching every aspect of the organization, the locus of responsibility is likely very high. Coombs (1995) says that, "The stronger attributions of organizational responsibility, the more likely it is that the negative aspects of the crisis will damage the organization" (p. 450). While the Church does need financial contributions to survive, they should conduct themselves legally and ethically. They make no claims that they are looking into the matter, and no apologies for failing to perform to stakeholder expectations.

Similar to the crises related to the abuse of members, the Church should respond to these matters with mortification strategies. In remediation, they should offer some sort of compensation to members involved, or at least give their money back, if nothing else. Then, they should use repentance to apologize and ask for forgiveness. Finally, they should use rectification to prevent this from happening again. Some of these members gave thousands of dollars to contribute to the construction of a single feature on one church facility. These members are obviously willing to fund projects the Church wants to accomplish, as long as the money actually goes to these projects. By simply following through on promises, many of these issues could have been avoided.

Bad Communication Strategy

Coombs and Holladay (2009) say, "Research has shown that crisis response strategies – what an organization says and does after a crisis – can affect a variety of important crisis communication outcomes including the organizational reputation, anger, negative word-of-mouth, and account acceptance" (p. 2). Many stories describe the "secretive" and "litigious" nature of the Church – stating that the Church's typical responses are to either say nothing or sue. The Church's reputation is based on what people think of their behavior, actions, and track record (Pang, 2012, p. 360). When news reports about

their behavior and actions don't coincide with communications from the organization, the organization can lose credibility.

Coombs (2012) says that, "In terms of crisis communications, recommendations are to be quick, consistent, and open" (p. 140). He continues that being open means being available to the media, willing to disclose information, and being honest (Coombs, 2012, p. 144). The openness aspect of crisis communication is something Scientology should change about their current practice. Hiding behind silence, lawyers, tax-exempt status, and First Amendment religious rights gives the view that CoS is a closed, mysterious organization that has something grave that it is not disclosing.

However, during this analysis, even though the nonexistence strategy of intimidation was used, none of the reports indicate that they followed through with the threat. Coombs (1995) describes intimidation as the threat to use organizational power, which could include lawsuits or physical violence. In the past, many stories about CoS accused them of threatening, and following through on, both lawsuits and physical violence against people who speak against them or threaten the organization in some way, including ex-members, journalists, and government agencies (Sweeney & Urban, 2010; Urban 2006). An article used in analysis even mentioned that, when it comes to critics, the Church seems to be taking a more "measured" approach lately (Vega & Cieply, 2013).

One of van Driel and Richardson's (1988) characteristics of a cult, "society and unbelievers viewed as evil, fear and hatred of the outside world," might also be negatively impacting the communications strategies of the organization.. The "us vs. them" mentality appears to lead many members to truly view those who criticize the organization as its enemies. With the view that the outside world is "out to get them," they have shut out all

anti-Scientology messages on the grounds that they are defending themselves from their attackers.

These defensive tactics extend to their public relations responses, and can help explain why the denial stance and attacking the accuser is typically incorporated into their messages. They truly believe they are under attack and must defend the organization against the unfair criticism, and while denial is not unusual for organizations, attacking the accuser is not a typical approach. The nature of the organization closes them off to alternate views, and they likely believe they are providing the correct responses to the claims made against them. Their own perception of themselves is partly to blame for their negative public image. Because they have labeled themselves as the wrongly accused victim, and the public as their harsh accuser, perhaps they have actually created the opposition which they feared. The public's perception of this organization is far different than how those within see it. The Church thinks it is being misrepresented, but the public believes it is misrepresenting itself, causing an identity crisis.

The Church appears to have constructed a product that people will stand by – even those deemed "evil apostates" like Paul Haggis will admit that they got something good out of Scientology. CoS could open the organization up a little bit and let members provide testimonials about the benefits they have received, allowing for more positive information to be presented. Another option is to let news outlets come in and tour the facilities, showing the world you have nothing to hide – and mean it. Scientology doesn't have to disclose all of its "secrets." This information appears to have been leaked through memoirs and reports anyway. As Maslin (2013) states, due to the Internet and investigative books on Scientology – like Janet Reitman's and Lawrence Wright's – the "sci-fi absurdity has become old news."

The lack of visibility of CoS's leader, David Miscavige, may also have the potential to harm the Church's communication strategy. Barton (2001) says that organizational leaders "are accountable for all aspects of their organization, and the public expects them to be acutely sensitive to serious incidents" (p. 4). He continues, "They are expected to be sympathetic when injury or harm occurs, to be responsive to public opinion, and to provide clear information on the situation" (p. 4).

Public relations theory and strategies show that the strategies used by the Church of Scientology on all issues aren't the best choice for their reputation and image (Benoit, 1995; Coombs, 2012). The Church is consistent in their messaging (denial and defensive tactics), but according to image restoration theory they are consistently wrong. Even the Catholic Church, who maintained a similar denial strategy, eventually changed their stance and accepted mortification strategies to attempt to improve their image. If CoS did accept all recommendations, due to the extent of damage done, it is impossible to tell if they could in fact repair their image at this point – but it is a start. A goal for this study was to uncover, if CoS truly has such a negative image in the media, stemming from the testimony of former members, how has the organization survived? Perhaps these negative portrayals have been taking a toll on the organization – there is evidence that their membership could be declining, and perhaps the increase in the number of those who have left the Church is a cause for the increase in the negative testimonies and news coverage of the organization. Reputation should be a top consideration for an organization. By not taking reputation into consideration in communication strategies, the Church can incite further damage, further infecting the organization.

Suggestions for Future Research

There are many ways this research can be expanded and improved upon. First, the frames identified in this study represent current events and problems the Church is facing, which might not be the same frames used in coverage from different time periods. Examples include: frames used during Scientology's inception, when Hubbard died and Miscavige took over, or during the Church's battle with the I.R.S. over unpaid taxes and the denial of a tax-exempt status. These events in the organizations history would provide an excellent source of study. Reviewing news coverage over a longer period of time could also provide a greater scope of this fascinating organization.

Also, this study only looks at the information that is presented to the public about the Church, it does not directly examine the audience's reactions or perceptions. Further research could uncover if this news coverage has an agenda-setting function or changes the perceived importance of these issues. One could also explore any possible framing effects and if this coverage impacts or influences public opinion, and in which ways. Public perception is an important influence for organizations, especially when combined with the reach of the Internet. Coombs (2012) found that the comments of online users can have a significant effect on an organization. Analyzing public comments about an organization can give insight to how that public perceives it. All information analyzed during this study was found online and many of these news websites had user comment sections below the story. These comment sections could prove a valuable source for examining public opinion in future studies.

Finally, what I believe would be the most interesting, and most difficult, study to attempt would be to examine the organizational messages from the Church of Scientology

to its followers. As mentioned earlier, this organization is secluded and has very strict regulations about the information that comes into and leaves the organization. We are able to gather information to help us understand how the organization is portrayed externally, but only those within the organization can view how it is portrayed internally. Access to internal Scientology documents would yield a much greater understanding of the inter-organizational perception of this complex and fascinating phenomena.

Conclusion

There are many paradoxes in the information available about Scientology. The Church describes good works and social programs, but news coverage details illegal and unethical behavior. The Church says that everyone is welcome and that they offer "knowledge" and "truth," however, former members describe experiencing confinement, abuse, and lies. The Church rehabilitates drug addicts and criminals, and yet they reportedly detain and assault their own members. One goal of this project was to attempt to understand how, if the organization truly does all the things they are accused of doing, they can continue to survive. Public relations case studies show how influential an organization's reputation is to their survival. If a brand is associated with illegal acts and is accused of objectionable behavior it can damage that reputation (Coombs, 2006).

None of the frames uncovered in this study portray the Church of Scientology in a positive light. The Church may attempt to show their positive influences on society and their welcoming nature, but they do not come off that way in news reports. With such a negative portrayal, it is hard to understand how has CoS remained intact. As said before, "Robustly researched theories offer prediction, understanding, and replication," which guide practitioners to make better decisions (Watson & Noble, 2005, p. 92). Even though the

Church of Scientology is a unique organization, they too can benefit from case history and

theory, and effects theories can help predict and explain how the audience can be affected

by these messages (Zillmann, 2002). Other organizations can potentially view this

organization as an example, understanding the importance of maintaining reputations and

developing practical and functional communications strategies in their own industries.

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