Carolina Observatory on Corporate Reputation

UNC Chapel Hill School of Journalism and Mass Communication

Craig Carroll, Assistant Professor, School of Journalism and Mass Communication
Research Streams on Corporate Reputation and the News Media

1. Influence of news content on corporate reputation
2. Organizational influences on the production of business news
3. Media reputation as a proxy for corporate reputation
Influences of news content on corporate reputation

Agenda-setting theory:
While the news media may not be successful in telling us what to think, they are very successful in telling us (the public) what to think about

Previous Research in Political Communication
1. “Most Important” Public Issues of the Day
2. Political Candidates:
   2a. Name Recognition
   2b. Image of Candidates

My Research on Organizations:
3. Companies’
   3a. Organizational Prominence
   3b. Organizational Image
   3c. Corporate Associations
4. Companies around the world

Salience of Issue within Public Opinion
News Media Reporting About Issue

“Real World”

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Organizational influences on the production of business news

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Media reputation as a proxy for corporate reputation

Can we:

1. Learn about journalists by studying their content produced and without talking to them?
2. Recognize public relations-generated news based on content alone?
3. Approximate or predict the effects on corporate reputation without sampling the audiences?

Implications for theory, history, and criticism.
Research Tools

- Media Reputation 2.0
- DICTION 6.0
- Corporate partnerships at $995K since arrival at UNC.
Media Reputation 2.0

A methodology combining relational queries, machine coding, and human coding.
Quantitative → Qualitative

Sample
Screen & Clean
Code
Query
Contextualize
Multiple levels of analysis from the population of newspaper articles developing a list of each company *mentioned, discussed, and featured*.

Honing in on how organizations are discussed in ways that allow for *retrospective analysis, benchmarking, contextualization, & prediction*.

For every company mentioned

- Passing Mention
- Focus of Story
- Focus on Company
- Focus on Issue

Honing in on every company discussed

To the nature of the conversation

- Cataloguing of Topics
- Tone
Discussion of Companies & Company Issues in Editorial Coverage

Total Number of Companies Receiving Editorial Coverage

Number of Companies Simply Mentioned

Number of Companies Actively Discussed

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Backing up for a moment:
What types of coding is or could be done?

- **Manifest:**
  - machine based.
  - Capturing newspaper or TV name, date, location in the paper or time of day on TV, the companies mentioned, journalist name, to the presence or absence of particular topics
  - Black or white; little disagreement in what is captured

- **Patterned:**
  - Most models start with human coding and then programmed into machine coding.
  - Frequency of topic occurrence indicates the degree of presence for companies or their issues
  - Topical Index Terms by Lexis-Nexis or DICTION 6.0

- **Projective:**
  - The New Frontier
  - Requires human coders to verify machine coding.
  - Involves human interpretation to catch humor, irony, or unique expressions
  - Concerns about reliability, validity, and transparency.
The goal is to get to the point where 4 out of 4 coders agree 9 out of 10 times. Fire the 5th coder…

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An example of inter-rater reliability check using online database with a focus group-style “mirror.”

The color indicates the coder. The check mark indicates a “focal company.” The lack of check mark means the company was mentioned but is not substantially discussed.

Christopher Stern's June 20 front-page story, "WorldCom Opponents in Sync," lifted the veil from the telecommunications industry-funded campaign to manipulate public opinion by using so-called public interest groups to carry a message to unsuspecting consumers. I challenge Issue Dynamics and Verizon Communications to answer these questions:

+ Who will benefit by having one fewer competitor in the market?
+ Will long-distance rates increase or decrease if MCI (WorldCom's new name) is put out of business?
+ What will happen to the thousands of MCI workers thrown out on the street if the company is shuttered?

The looting at WorldCom harmed investors, now let's not let it affect consumers, too. Instead of spending millions on a campaign to rid itself of a competitor, the industry should lower rates for consumers and challenge MCI to match those rates. That would be in the “public interest.”

CHARLOTTE NEWTON
Chevy Chase
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Projective coding can be used to benchmark a organization’s news coverage against its core values.

Most of the [Company-name] discussion centered around only a few attributes

While a larger variety concerning social responsibility, workplace, and leadership were neglected altogether.

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Using a database of analyzed news & editorials, means that we can examine different rhetorical strategies

Letters to Editor in response to news connecting companies to the public interest, written by...

- Company CEO or PR
- 3rd Party Pro-Company
- 3rd Party Anti-Company

Published in the section...

- Front Page
- Front Pg. Business Section
- Business Section
- Editorial
- Letters to Editor
- Advertorial
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A data based approach means we can link our data (news & editorials) to other data sources...

Other sources of Competitive intelligence
- Personal Interviews
- Market data
- Financial data
- Case studies
- Personal notes &
- Organizational
- Records

Company’s Behavior Verified Independently

What Other Media Reported
How Other Companies were Treated

Journalist’s History of Reporting

Surrounding News Coverage

How the Company Responded Elsewhere:
1. Advertorials
2. Company Website
3. News Release
4. TV Interview

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Through additional methods, we can link our news & editorial coverage to other sources of data that are relevant to the case at hand.
On July 29, 1994, when a journalist for The New York Times, Gina Kolata, took remarks from an interview John had given her four months earlier on a completely different subject and put it in a page-one article about the possible conflict of interest that Merck, a pharmacy benefits management organization recently acquired by Merck, would henceforth face in handling prescriptions for patients. The powerful last paragraph of the article, according to its point of view, something had to be done to restore profits. The remarks were not printed as a direct quote but they appeared to have been written to produce that effect. The New York Times refused to publish John’s letter to the editor, even though he spoke with editors there and explained what had happened. He received a letter, dated August 13, from news editor William Borders. “As to the quotation from you with which the article ended, you don’t seem to dispute that you said what she (Kolata) said you said, only the context. I am afraid I cannot agree. There is nothing wrong with using in July a quotation from an interview four months earlier, so long as the context is fair, and in this case I think it is. You were talking about the need for Merck to be more profitable, and certainly the Merck case would fit this need.” John subsequently realized that this newspaper (unlike national Public radio, for example) had language and therefore could not be protected by copyright. July 29, 1994.

24,000 U.S. & International News Sources

- Pre-screened database includes the major wires, TV and radio stations, daily and weekly newspapers, trade journals, and magazines, in 18 languages and from 107 countries.

7,000 Government Sources

- Government websites from the U.S. government, all 50 states, and the European Union. We also scan the Federal Register and the registers of 39 states.

1,800 Policy Sources

- Websites of state, regional, and national think tanks, trade associations and advocacy groups.

250,000 Blogs

- Weblogs (blogs), including those focused on politics, news and technology.
Purpose

- To build a body of knowledge about public relations and corporate reputation that assists in the social, moral and economic development of North Carolina.

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Carolina Companies

- We have selected 100 North Carolina companies that we will be monitoring on an ongoing basis:
  - Fortune 1000 companies HQ’ed in NC
  - Fortune 50 with a significant presence in NC
  - Foreign companies with U.S. affiliates HQ
  - Private Companies

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Media Reputation 2.0

Returning to our methodology, contextualizing, querying are fine.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Officer</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Year</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>King, Marianna</td>
<td>Senior Editor</td>
<td>Lee, Sun Young</td>
<td>2nd Year Ph.D. Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah Frazier</td>
<td>Events</td>
<td>Huang, Nell</td>
<td>1st Year Ph.D. Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natalie Williams</td>
<td>Asst. Director, Undergraduate Research</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Josh Criscoe</td>
<td>Webmaster</td>
<td>May-Lynne Chen-Contino</td>
<td>Senior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephanie Nobles</td>
<td>Historian</td>
<td>Becca Denison</td>
<td>Senior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CC Glenn</td>
<td>Senior</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lauren Knight</td>
<td>Senior</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tyler Williams</td>
<td>Senior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kellie Bennett</td>
<td>Junior</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Ariel Cochrane-Brown</td>
<td>Junior</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Meredith Cook</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Kelsey Crews</td>
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<td>Annie Ellis</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Kelcie Glass</td>
<td>Junior</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Leslie Gray</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Jennifer Mabe</td>
<td>Junior</td>
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### The OCR Coding Team Fall 2008

**16 Media Analysts (Interns)**

#### Officers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Officers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Natalie Williams, Asst. Director of Undergraduate Research</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meredith Cook, Intern</td>
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#### Media Analysts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media Analysts</th>
<th>Major</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Miles Cotton</td>
<td>History, Geography, City and Regional Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shirley Delgado</td>
<td>Sociology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whitney Garrison</td>
<td>History, JOMC-Public Relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Green</td>
<td>JOMC-Electronic Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan Harris</td>
<td>JOMC-Advertising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madison Hipp</td>
<td>JOMC-Public Relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelsey Jackson</td>
<td>JOMC - Electronic Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laura Jones</td>
<td>JOMC-Public Relations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Morgan Marshall-Clark</td>
<td>History, Political Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amber Kepley</td>
<td>JOMC-Public Relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. Sawyer Lucy</td>
<td>Economics, Sociology</td>
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<tr>
<td>Juan Camilo Mendez</td>
<td>History</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emilie Moseley</td>
<td>JOMC-Advertising</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anna Loeschner</td>
<td>JOMC-Public Relations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jenny Scholl</td>
<td>JOMC-Advertising</td>
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<tr>
<td>KT Wall</td>
<td>JOMC-Public Relations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emily Widle</td>
<td>JOMC-Advertising</td>
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Our limitations: screening and cleaning.

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## Limitations

1. 20 Portals to capture daily news content about 150 companies (fine).
2. 7-Day Window for downloading content.
3. Requires daily .xls downloading across the 20 accounts. We can use Heritrix to download content.
4. The Screening and Cleaning

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