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Corporate and Organizational Communication

TRUST REPAIR IN TIMES OF CRISIS:
The influence of stealing thunder and culture on employees'
evaluation of organizational trustworthiness, emotions,
and willingness to forgive

by
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Abstract

This study explored how 'stealing thunder may affect the evaluation of organizational trustworthiness, emotions, and willingness to forgive across cultures during an organizational crisis'. The primary goal of this study was to explore whether an employee's cultural background might have an impact on the effectiveness of trust repair strategies. By studying the factor of culture, a clear understanding is gained of how employees might respond to organizational crises which are intentionally caused by mismanagement. There was a gap regarding the behaviors of internal stakeholders during and/or after an organizational crisis caused by mismanagement. Many studies focus on the repair of organizational trust after a crisis, however their focus was on the perspectives of external stakeholders (i.e., consumers, investors). Therefore, this research project aimed at bridging this gap. The present study also focused on the interaction between national cultures and stealing thunder (as a crisis communication strategy), and how these together might influence employees' evaluation of organizational trustworthiness, their emotions and willingness to forgive within the corporate trust repair process.

Stealing thunder and its opponent thunder were used as scenarios for a 2 x 2 between subjects experiment. Two separate groups of employees (Surinamese and Dutch) were consulted. The research had a broad perspective, therefore, respondents were randomly recruited among Dutch and Surinamese citizens in general. Subsequently, various independent sample t-test and multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVA) were executed to analyze the data.

The results showed that stealing thunder is an effective crisis communication strategy as a means to enhance organizational trustworthiness. Besides, it had a significant main effect on the positive emotion, empathy. The study also proved that employees' cultural background is relevant to the judgment of organizations' credibility, emotions, and the willingness to forgive, during a crisis.

In summary, the study outcomes are beneficial for both the crisis communication research field, and organizations (business and nonprofit).

Keywords: *Trust repair and stealing thunder, organizational trustworthiness, emotions and forgiveness, Suriname and the Netherlands*

Acknowledgement

A few years after my graduation from the Surinamese School of Journalism, I decided to take a master course in Communication Science. Not because I was compelled to do so. My initial reason was to enhance my knowledge of communication approaches and processes, and to perform better. Concurrently, I knew that a master course would increase my job opportunities, because the labor market is tight and employers' demands about employees' expertise are growing. I definitely wanted to run ahead of things. This is how my journey started. My choice for the University of Twente was easily made, because of its applied communication studies. However, this journey was an enormous challenge, even beyond my imagination. Living and studying in a foreign country, far away from my surroundings, friends and family, was quite an undertaking. Nevertheless, it was a good decision. Within months, I met new people, learned new things, traveled to countries and places I had never dreamt of, and most of all, I have enhanced my knowledge. Subsequently, completing my mission. Not at all. During this journey, I realized that there are further challenges to exploit my abilities. As with human life, every journey comes to an end. But, before I open the next chapter, I would like to thank a few persons. Many people have supported me during this journey. First, I thank the Good Lord. I was blessed with two terrific supervisors, Mr. Beldad and Mr. Gutteling. Their openness, skillful guidance and remarkable comments were very helpful for my research project. All in all: I have learned a lot and feel very confident to go back home and contribute to the further development of my company and country. I also thank the Maritime Authority Suriname for the opportunity offered to study abroad, in particular the managing director, Mr. Michel Amafo. Furthermore, I would like to thank William Deel, who helped me to stay focused. Last, but not least, my family and friends in Suriname, all Dutch friends and acquaintances of William who gave me a good taste of Dutch warmth. I thank them for their warmth which has helped me to get through the cold climate.

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1.   Introduction

More than ever organizations have to deal with crises that are a threat to both their trustworthiness and continuation. To overcome these problems, crisis communication should definitely be part of the strategic business planning. Additionally, one important reason to respond effectively to a crisis is to rebuild trust. During times of crisis, organizational trust is subject to great pressure; especially if the organization has a trustworthy image. When organizational trustworthiness is subjected to pressure, the (new) management will put a large amount of effort to try to repair trust in among others internal stakeholders, for example employees (which were the focus of this study). However, there is a large gap with regard to trust repair in employees during or after an organizational crisis. Besides, there are no studies conducted on how employees from different cultural background might respond to trust repair strategies. Hence, within this framework, stealing thunder, which seems to be an effective crisis communication strategy, had not yet been studied in relation to employees across cultures.

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1.2 Study relevance

Workers are imperative to organizational productivity. Employees whose trust have been violated due to an organizational crisis, particularly caused by mismanagement, might become disappointed and discontented with their work as well as unwilling to henceforth devote themselves to the company. The well-known saying '*You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink*' clearly confirms this assumption.

According to Miller (2009) when workers are satisfied with the course of events in their organizations, they will be more likely to be efficient, obedient, productive and supportive. In the context of an organizational crisis, workers may become dissatisfied and behave counter organizational targets (Miller, 2009). Organizations do not want to reach this state, since it is common knowledge that unproductiveness is deadly to the continuation of any organization.

Thus, to reach a workable level, Millers (2009) suggest that organizations consider their members' basic needs (e.g., certainty), especially in difficult times. More than ever, this is an enormous challenge, because of increasing *cultural* diversity in the workplace. Take the Netherlands as an example. In 2010 more than five thousand migrant workers, both western

and non-western, were admitted to the Netherlands, almost 400 more than in 2009 (CBS, 2012). Moreover, in 1975 only 2% of the Dutch population were non-western. Thirty-six years later, in 2011, the CBS (2012) reports an increase of 11%. This percentage also reflects the cultural/ethnic diversity on the Dutch work floor.

However, cultural diversity does not have to be a problem. For instance, Miller (2009) claims diversity as an "inclusive" opportunity to merge ideas, talents and energies. Companies with workers from different cultural backgrounds are also more resistant to the challenges of today's global and competitive economic environment (Ting-Toomey, 1992). Besides, cultural diversity makes it possible to enhance flexibility and rapid response to change (Kundu, 2001).

Conversely, a diverse workplace can be a drawback as well. Due to the cultural disparities in how individuals perceive the world around them, employees react differently to organizational circumstances (Ting-Toomey, 1992), and think and behave differently (Hofstede, 2008). Diversity may also cause communication difficulties in organizations. For example, the use of different languages, meanings and feelings in corporate communication strategies may increase ambiguity, complexity and confusion (Kundu, 2001).

In line with the studies discussed in the previous paragraph, it can be assumed that a heterogeneousness workforce is common nowadays. The workforce, among other things, is getting more and more ethnically diverse, not only in the Netherlands, but also in other parts of the world. However, most studies were conducted in western countries with emphasis on western cultures, and not between cultures, as a result data on the impact of crisis communication strategies across cultures are scarce.

Therefore, well-founded insight into the reciprocity between culture and trust repair strategies is needed to undertake effective measures during/after an organizational crisis. In the context of rebuilding trust in employees, organizations should consider several factors, such as, the individuals' values, norms and needs, which are influenced by one's cultural background. Psychologists claim that people's reaction to circumstances depend on their feelings and rational weighing of options (Gleitman, Gross & Reisberg, 2011). The Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory (Miller, 2009) gives insight into people's different needs, which are essentials to survive, as well as personal growth and development. How people interact while seeking ways to fulfill these needs depends on their personal way of thinking and behaving

(i.e., how people behave in particular circumstances, communicate with others and care for own and/or others' face). Hofstede (1980) claims that these personal thoughts and behaviors are affected by one's cultural background. The scholar asserts that culture is a stronger predictor for work behaviors, than one's gender, position in an organization and/or age. Thus, in the case of an organizational crisis and trust violation, what might count as "a negligible factor" for one employee, might be perceived as "unforgivable" to the other.

In the context of this study, insight into the evaluation of organizational trustworthiness, the exhibition of positive/negative emotions and the willingness to forgive as response to trust repair across employees from different cultures are relevant. Regarding emotions, Wu et al. (2011), believe that trust is mainly influenced by personal emotions, which are affected by cultural background. In line with this, it is important to consider emotions within trust repair studies. In Wu et al. (2011), Williams (2001) and Andersen and Kumar (2006) claim that emotions influence how people evaluate others' trust repair. Tomlinson and Mayer (2009, in Wu et al, 2011) went a step further and found that emotions has an impact on trust repair. Wu et al. (2011) conducted their study on emotions and trust repair and concluded that positive emotion is a critical factor in trust repair. For instance, Wu (n.d.) asserted that when trust is violated people often display strong emotions such as anger, fear, pessimism, despair and other negative feelings. These emotions on their turn (based on Lewicki's, 1996, dynamics model of trust repair, as cited by Wu (n.d.) may influence rebuild of trust. Thus, to repair trust the scholars proposed that organizations should be open and fair and give confidence to stakeholders, because when stakeholders do not perceive fairness, their disappointment, and anger may increase, and consequently affecting the trust repair process. Another point that is important when rebuilding trust is one's willingness to forgive. Several scholars suggest that the concept of forgiveness should be explored to provide organizations practical implications on how to recover trust after a crisis.

Thus, a clear understanding on how employees respond in a crisis may help organizations to design effective internal communication strategies to repair trust. This is the societal relevance of this study. Besides, this study provides the scientific field (i.e., communication scholars) a broader perspective on organizational crises and trust repair, from the angle of employees' cultural backgrounds.

1.3   Research context

As mentioned earlier, investigating the impact of employees´ cultural background on the effectiveness of trust repair strategies after an organizational crisis was the main goal of this study. The concept of Stealing Thunder, a crisis communication strategy was tested to what extent it influences the evaluation of organizational trustworthiness, emotions (positive/negative), and the willingness to forgive. Stealing thunder is a crisis timing strategy used by organizations to spread negative news about themselves. According to Arpan & Roskos-Ewoldsen (2005) when an organization steals thunder, it breaks the news about its own crisis before the crisis is discovered by the media or other interested parties. The concept of stealing thunder started in American courtrooms as a tactic of lawyers to plead their clients' guilt in mitigation. In a court of law, stealing thunder is most often used when a defendant's weakness is known by an opponent (Wigley, 2011).

In the last few years, several studies have been done on stealing thunder. The outcome in general is that stealing thunder leads to improvement of organizational trustworthiness, minimizing of disappointment and dissatisfaction among stakeholders (e.g., employees) and, increase of organizational credibility. However, all studies were done in western countries, with a lot of emphasis on western cultures. Consequently, leading to the idea if the results mentioned above can be extrapolated to different cultures?

1.3.1 Research subject

The research was conducted between two separate groups: (i) Dutch, and (ii) Surinamese employees. In the first place, this study chose these two countries, because of the researcher's connection with both countries: She lives and works in Suriname and studies in the Netherlands. Secondly, both countries differ significantly in two dimensions (collectivism vs. individualism, and high power distance vs. low power distance) of the Hofstede's five cultural dimensions (Hofstede, 2013). Regarding the power distance dimension, Hofstede (2013) defines this as the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally. Suriname scores high (85) on this dimension, which means that people accept a hierarchical order in which everybody has a place, and the societal roles are well-defined in terms of hierarchy (Hofstede, 2013). Conversely, the Netherlands scores low (38) on this dimension

and has, therefore, a low power distance national culture. This means that in the Netherlands people strive to equalize the distribution of power and demand justification for inequalities of power, and they favor equal rights, and superiors accessible (Hofstede, 2013).

However, in the context of this study the focus was on the difference in collectivism and individualism. According to Hofstede (2013), this dimension explains the degree of interdependence a society maintains among its members. It has to do with whether people´s self-image is defined in terms of "I" or "We". In Individualist societies people are supposed to look after themselves and their direct family (Hofstede, 2013). By contrast, in collectivist societies people belong to 'in groups' that take care of them in exchange for loyalty. Suriname scores very high (80) on the dimension. The Netherlands has a score of 47 and is considered an individualistic society. This means there is a high preference for a loose-knit social framework in which individuals are expected to take care of themselves and their immediate families only (Hofstede, 2013). Contrarily, in Suriname loyalty to others is important. In addition, the society fosters strong relationships where everyone takes responsibility for fellow members of their group (Hofstede, 2013). In the theoretical framework, the impact of a collectivism and/or individualistic culture on employees' emotions, evaluation of organizational trustworthiness and their willingness to forgive is explained in more detail.

1.4   Report overview

The concepts of trust and trust repair are discussed in the theoretical framework. The review is divided in three parts. First, corporate crisis is defined and discussed. Crisis management and crisis communication are thereafter stressed. Then, organizational trustworthiness related to the effectiveness of trust repair strategies are explained in the second part. In the third part, stealing thunder is considered as a crisis communication strategy. Within this scope, the influence of this crisis timing strategy on organizational trustworthiness, emotions (both positive and negative) and the willingness to forgive during the process of rebuilding trust in employees from different cultural background is discussed in great details.

In the third section, the method used for this study are emphasized. The findings are presented in the fourth part. In summary, the results show that stealing thunder had a strong effect on organizational trustworthiness. However, its effects on emotions was not overwhelming. Stealing thunder had only an impact on the emotion, empathy. Regarding

willingness to forgive, the main effect of stealing thunder was not significant. With regard to culture, it seemed that employees' cultural background is relevant for how they respond to crisis communication.

In the fourth part, the conclusions derived from the analyses and previous studies, are discussed. The theoretical and practical implications are also emphasized in this part. At the end, recommendations are made for further research. Based on these findings, the present study contributed to the literature regarding understanding on the effectiveness of stealing thunder, and cultural background of employees during crisis, and when repairing trust is the aim. Organizations should therefore take this recommendation by the hearth.

2. Theoretical framework

This theoretical framework provides insight into organizational crises and the concepts of trust and trust repair in employees. The review is divided in three parts. First, corporate crisis is defined and is dealt with from different angles and dimensions as well as the various reasons for responding to a crisis. Subsequently, the factors that determine organizational trustworthiness and the effectiveness of trust repair strategies among employees are explained in the second part. In the third part, stealing thunder is considered as a crisis communication strategy. Within this scope, the influence of this crisis timing strategy on organizational trustworthiness, emotions (both positive and negative) and the willingness to forgive during the process of rebuilding trust in employees from different cultural background is discussed in great details.

2.1 Conceptualizing organizational crisis
2.1.1 Definitions of crisis

Crises occur in different forms and fields (i.e., personal, private, public, national, international). It is not possible to imagine today's life without a crisis. Moreover, many's the crises which are reported in the media daily. According to Anagnos and Mitroff (2001), 'crises are no longer an aberrant, rare, random, or peripheral feature of today's society. They are built into the very fabric and fiber of modern societies.' (p. 4).

There are many definitions for what should be framed as a 'crisis'. In the field of psychoanalysis, a crisis is "an upset in a steady state" (Crisisguide.com, 2011). Drawing on an organizational point of view, Pearson and Clair (1998) define a crisis as follows:

A low-probability, high-impact event that threatens the viability of the organization and is characterized by ambiguity of cause, effect, and means of resolution, as well as by a belief that decisions must be made swiftly. (p. 60).

Cooley and Cooley (2011) took a broader business perspective on the topic and conceptualize crises as occurrences that have the potential to harm an organization, its products, reputation and/or services. The US based International Institute for Crisis

Management (2012) assumes that all hassles that evoke negative affections (e.g., legal, governmental and political) toward an organization, and that affect its financial strength and ability, are a crisis. This institute also emphasizes the role of the media, by which public opinion can be affected. In line with this definition, Mishra (1996) identified four basic elements of a crisis: 1) a major threat to an organizational system, 2) little and immediate response time, 3) stressful and damaging, and 4) difficult to cope with. According to Gottschalk (2002), very often the term 'crisis' is mistakenly used to describe those activities that involve what must be done before or during some kind of emergency. (p. 6). Taking our stance from the different characteristics of a crisis as discussed above, crises are convincingly different from what is called an 'emergency'. In line with Gottschalk (2002), Mitroff (2001) underlines that corporate crisis is about mostly man-made or human-caused events, while an emergency refers to the actions to minimize the impact of natural disasters.

To sum up, an organizational crisis is an ambiguous and damaging event that may hit unexpectedly, and of which organizations lose control. The next section explains the different types of organizational crises.

2.1.2   Types of organizational crises

2.1.2.1 Crisis type

There are seven types of organizational crises: economic, informational, physical, human resources, reputational, psychopathic acts and natural disasters (Mitroff, 2005; as cited by Cooley & Cooley, 2011). Seeger (2006) added industrial accidents and a variety of harm-inducing events to the list. Complementary, Xie and Peng (2009) distinguished two sorts of crisis derived from how they occur: Intentional and unintentional. Cooley and Cooley (2011), based on how crises develop, described two types: The cobra and the python. Cobra crises happen suddenly, while python crises develop gradually. According to Cooley and Cooley (2011), the latter type leads to more damage than the cobra type. Python crises are, for example, bankruptcy, corporate fraud, disasters and/or results of repeated negligence.

Drawing on the distinction made above, python crises are mostly intentional and internal. The International Institute for Crisis Management (2012) has a similar distinction: The smoldering and the sudden crisis. Smoldering crises start small, can be recognized in time and managed even before the public knows about it. Contrarily, sudden crises occur

unexpectedly (e.g., fires, explosions, natural disasters, workplace violence types). Apart from the aforementioned classifications, a crisis can be caused internal or external. Summarizing, crises are unpredictable. Depending on how they develop (i.e., cobra or python) and by whom (internal or external) and the accountability (intentional or unintentional) a strategic path could be outlined. The next section discusses the impact of organizational crises.

2.1.2.2 The impact of organizational crises

Organizational crises do not happen that often (Seeger, 2006), but when they strike, the impacts may be devastating (Pearson & Clair, 1998). For example, in 1994, the Coca Cola Company lost approximately $200 million in expense and lost profits due to the withdrawal of its products from the Belgian market (Johnson & Peppas, 2003). The reason for the withdrawal was contaminated Coca Cola drinks.

Seeger et al. (2006) indicate that the impacts of organizational crises are underestimated in the news media. Embroidering on Seeger at al.'s (2003) view of the wide-spread effects of organizational crisis, the World Bank warns the trade and industry of "cross-border" and complex character of organizational crisis (The World Bank, 2012). According to the financial institute one single crisis in an organization may affect others in the same field, and even others beyond the country's borders.

Victims of organizational crises may vary from managers, shareholders, employees, customers, to investors, communities and competitors. Seeger et al. (2006) distinguish two major groups of victims: the primary victims (e.g., those who are immediate and directed affected, among other employees, investors) and the secondary victims (e.g., families, friends and communities).

Furthermore, a major threat of a crisis is that organizations' trustworthiness may be under attack, especially if the organization is blamed for the crisis. To minimize adverse effects on its existence, organizations should put efforts in among other things, reassuring stakeholders that they are reliable and trustworthy. Therefore, crisis response is important to minimize the damages to organizations and their stakeholders. Friedman et al.'s (2002) definition of stakeholders is "any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization's objectives" (p. 46). A group that is very important to the survival of organizations are employees.

Concerning the negative outcomes, employees' trust may be damaged. Especially in cases where the management is the wrongdoer, employees could feel disappointed. This disappointment can evoke counterproductive behaviors, among other things, slow and sloppy performance, embezzlement, sabotage, absenteeism, lateness, verbal and physical aggression toward coworkers and clients, and poor quality work (Marcus & Schuler, 2004).

Nevertheless, an organizational crisis may have positive negative outcomes as well. Heath (2012) confirms this statement by asserting that crises may not necessarily lead to harm. In some cases the correction of strategic business planning is forced at difficult times. For instance, organizations may change their working procedures and conditions or improve their product quality, depending on the nature of the crisis (Seeger, 2006).

To summarize: An organizational crisis may have major impacts on organizations and could lead to better or worse. Therefore, organizations attach great importance to crisis management as a mean to rebuild trust. In the next paragraph, the factors that determine organizational trustworthiness and strategies to rebuild trust among employees are explained comprehensively.

2.2   Organizational crisis and trust

2.2.1   Defining trust

The concept of trust has been studied in different fields and from different angles. Trust is the fundament of all relationships (e.g., religious, interpersonal, private and business). Owing to its binding characteristic, trust is perceived an essential prerequisite in each (healthy) interaction.

Xie and Peng (2009) define organizational trust as a concept by which stakeholders evaluate corporate trustworthiness and their corresponding trust intent. Kim, Dirks and Cooper (2004) assert that trust is a psychological condition which starts with an individual decision to become vulnerable to another person based on expectations. Mishra (1996) reviewed various studies and conceptualized trust, based on four dimensions, as follows:

> *Trust is one party's willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the belief that the latter party is 1) competent, 2) open, 3) concerned, and 4) reliable*. (p. 5).

Trust is a complex attribute with many facets (Seeger, 2006). If well-establish trust is a leading factor to openness and problem solving (Klein-Woolthuis, Nooteboom, & De Jong, 2010). Contrarily, the same scholars point out that trust cannot be developed easily. Besides, once built, it is vulnerable to pressures and can easily be broken down. Trust is also difficult to rebuild. Take organizational trustworthiness, this concept is built of three dimensions: (1) ability, (2) benevolence and, (3) integrity (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995). The three together form the basis for the evaluation of organizational trustworthiness. First, ability refers to the competencies to reach its goals. Second, benevolence is how the organization behaves as a whole based on its concern for the well-being of stakeholders. The third dimension, integrity refers to the extent to which the organization makes work of its underlying moral principles (Mayer et al, 1995).

As a consequence of an organizational crisis, employees' trust in a given organization could be violated if their expectations do not match the organizational outcomes (Kim, Dirks & Cooper, 2004). The next section emphases more on trust repair among employees in general.

2.2.2 Rebuilding employees' trust

Gillepsie and Dietz (2009) forecast that when employees' trust in their employers is violated due to internal organizational failure, they may lose their empathy for the organization and exhibit counterproductive work behaviors (Miller, 2009). These behaviors on their turn may cause downturns in operational productiveness.

Xie and Peng (2009) define corporate trust repair efforts as activities to positively influence stakeholders' (e.g., employees) beliefs and intentions toward an organization. Many workers take the management into their confidence, invest their firm belief, reputation and ambitions in a given organization, and when it turns out that those were not taken seriously, they may feel disappointed (Gillepsie & Dietz, 2009).

In that case, trust repair strategies could be implemented to rebuild employees' trust. However, Klein-Woolthuis et al. (2010) discover that trust repair is not an easy process and that to be effective the focus should be on re-establishing trust behaviors, as well as

minimizing gaps in stakeholders' beliefs in the organization. In line with Woolthuis et al. (2010), Gillepsie and Dietz (2009) argue that organizations should be aware that employees' judgment about their employers' trustworthiness is grounded in organizations' (inter)actions and event cycles sanctioned by, and embedded in, the organization's system components (p. 130).

Drawing on this argument, the scholars propose a four-stage process. In the first phase, employees should be informed comprehensively about the crisis. Gillepsie and Dietz (2009) emphasize that – to be effective – this response needs to be well considered, timely, and credible.

The next step is to diagnose what has caused the crisis, changes to be made and how to prevent identical events in the future. In the third stage, intervention plans should be outlined and discuss with the employees, then, as final, the whole process should be evaluated. By doing this, the organization must incorporate crisis preparedness mechanisms into its structures and functioning. This is called crisis management. Crisis management is defined by Coombs (2007) as follows:

> *A process designed to prevent or lessen the damage a crisis can inflict on an organization and its stakeholders.* (p. 1).

Coombs (2007) identifies three phases that embody crisis management: (i) Pre-crisis (this stage is concerned with prevention and preparation), (ii) crisis response (when a crisis hits and the organization's response to it), (iii) post-crisis phase (preparation for the next crisis and fulfilling commitments made during the crisis response phase.

Harking back to Gillepsie and Dietz's (2009) four-stage process and Coombs' (2007) distinction, as discussed earlier in the paragraph, crisis communication plays a major role in managing corporate crises aiming at trust repair. The next section discusses the relationship between crisis communication and trust repair.

2.3   The relationship between crisis communication and trust repair

Coombs (2006, in Cooley & Cooley, 2011) identified two major approaches to crisis communication response strategies: (i) an accommodative continuum and (ii) a defensive

continuum. The defensive approach is aiming at protecting the organization's trustworthiness. The accommodative, in contrast, focuses on the organization's concerns for the victims and stakeholders. According to Cooley and Cooley (2011), the way in which a crisis damages the reputation of an organization, its members and progress depends on how the crisis was managed, namely the crisis response.

The primary aim of crisis response (or the crisis communication style) is to reduce adverse effects and to prevent negative behavioral intentions (Coombs, 2006; as cited by Cooley & Cooley, 2011). Coombs (2007) proposes that to be effective, crisis response strategies should be in line with the crisis responsibility attributed to the organization.

Gillepsie and Dietz's (2009) have the same insight. They suggest that already in the first communication, organizations should acknowledge the failure that causes the crisis. It is also correct to simultaneously express sincere regret for the consequences. Gillepsie and Dietz's (2009) believe that these responses will positively affect the trust repair process, and as a consequence, employee evaluation of organizational trustworthiness.

Coombs (2007) also claim that being quick in communicating with stakeholders may be perceived as 'being in control of the crisis situation', and, therefore, is a means to repair trust. The argument is that if an organization's succeeded to be the first to reveal its own negative news, and being consistent and accurate, stakeholders (e.g., employees) will evaluate its trust behaviors positively, which may lead to trust repair.

Alternatively, both Gillepsie and Dietz's (2009) and Coombs (2007) gave a warning for inaccurate and incorrect information. When an organization lies about the true cause of a crisis, or withhold important information in its initial response, this behavior will bring more damage to the trust-relationship with among others, employees. Pearson and Clair (1988) confirm this statement, and proposed that crisis management efforts will be more successful if information is disseminated quickly, accurately, directly, and candidly to critical stakeholders.

In addition, Heath (2012) positions crisis communication at the heart of crisis management, by how and which organizations may respond effectively 'to best protect their capital, human resources and credibility' (p. 1). Benoit (1997; Coombs, 1999; in Seeger, 2006) agreed that crisis communication, if used properly, is an excellent tool for organizations to repair damaged images after a crisis. In addition, trust repair and crisis response go hand in hand. The discussion above makes clear the importance of crisis communication. It can be

assumed that crisis communication and trust repair go hand in hand (Cooley & Cooley, 2011). The next section elaborates on stealing thunder, which is a crisis communication strategy as well as a crisis timing strategy.

2.4   Stealing thunder

Stealing thunder is an excellent crisis communication strategy that provides organizations the opportunity to gain momentum in their response approach. This concept is an information revelation strategy that has long been used by defense attorneys in American courtrooms. This tactic often puts into action to plead their clients' guilt in mitigation (Williams, Bourgeois, & Croyler, 1993), particularly, when a defendant's weakness is known by the prosecution (Wigley, 2011).

In two studies conducted by Williams et al. (1993) among college students, it proved that negative information could be positively affected by stealing thunder. The students were more likely to rate defendants' credibility higher when they had revealed negative information about themselves (stole thunder) compared to when somebody had revealed negative information about the same defendants (Williams & Dolnik, 2001, as cited by Arpan & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2005).

Starting in American courtrooms, stealing thunder has also gradually been used by (famous) individuals and politicians. In addition, Wigley (2011) examined media coverage of a high profile athlete and a late night talk show. Both were confronted with a crisis. The outcome was that when thunder was stolen, news headlines and articles were more positively framed.

Apropos of crisis communication, stealing thunder has proven an effective strategy for organizations (Arpan & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2005). An organization steals thunder when it reveals information about its own mistake or failure (Arpan & Pompper, 2003) before the bad news is discovered by the media or other interested parties (Arpan & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2005). Conversely, thunder is known as 'when outsiders (i.e., the media or key stakeholders) spread the news before the organization was able to do so'.

2.4.1 Stealing thunder and organizational trustworthiness

The main goal of stealing thunder is to reduce damage to organizational trustworthiness. In addition, many studies have proven that when stealing thunder is used, organizations are perceived as more credible (Arpan & Pompper, 2003; Arpan & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2005). Three well-known theories (imagination formation theory, the effect of forewarning and the commodity theory) underline the effectiveness of stealing thunder on organizational trustworthiness during crises (Arpan & Pompper, 2003). According to these theories, when stakeholders are warned about a negative occurrence, their ways of looking at it will be less hard, and their judgment on organizational trustworthiness will be influenced positively.

Arpan and Roskos-Ewoldsen (2003) noted stealing thunder as effective and that it may even result in higher credibility ratings, than when negative information was revealed by another party. Moreover, stealing thunder may help lessen the impact of negative information about organizations in crisis situations (Wigley, 2011). In the last few years, several studies have been conducted on stealing thunder.

However, the outcome in general is that stealing thunder leads to improvement of organizational trustworthiness, and, increase of organizational credibility (Arpan & Pompper, 2003; Arpan & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2005; Wigley, 2011; Williams et al, 1993). Based on these assumptions, it can be hypothesized that:

H1: **If an organization in crisis steals thunder, its trustworthiness will be perceived as higher, than if it does not steal thunder.**

2.4.2 Stealing thunder, emotions and willingness to forgive

With regard to how employees may respond emotionally (e.g., willingness to forgive their employer) when their organization steal thunder, there is a huge paucity. However, there are a few studies (e.g., Seon-Kyoung, 2011; Seon-Kyoung, Gower, & Cho, 2011) that claim the effectiveness of stealing thunder on work-emotions. Seon-Kyoung et al. (2011) asserts that when organizations admit responsibility strategy for the crisis, employees' anger and blame can be minimized. In general, the use of stealing thunder may lead to minimizing of

disappointment and dissatisfaction among other employees. Therefore, it can be hypothesized that:

H2a: **If an organization in crisis steals thunder, participants will exhibit higher positive emotions, than if it does not steal thunder.**

H2b: **When an organization in crisis steals thunder, participants will exhibit less negative emotions, than if it does not steal thunder.**

Another consideration regarding stealing thunder is its influence on employees' willingness to forgive. Xie and Peng (2009) claim forgiveness as very important for effective trust repair strategies. Nevertheless, the importance of forgiveness within trust repair processes, among others, communication scholars have not yet focused that much on it. However, based on the arguments of Seon-Kyoung et al. (2011), as discussed earlier, when organizations admit responsibility strategy for the crisis, employees' anger and blame can be minimized. Therefore, it is expected that the use of stealing thunder may influence employees' willingness to forgive. In line with this finding, the following is hypothesized:

H3:   **If an organization in crisis steals thunder, participants will be more willing to forgive the organization, than if it does not steal thunder.**

Although stealing thunder may lead to more positive judgment during hard times, there is also criticism on its ineffectiveness. Several scholars (Williams, Bourgeois, & Croyler, 1993; Arpan & Pompper, 2003) assert that when an organization steals thunder, its act can be seen as 'disguising the real facts'. For instance, the media will pay more attention to the case and also put efforts in finding out why the organization reveals the 'bad news', before its opponents did.

Another demerit of stealing thunder, is how cultural-resistant it is. Although it is clear that stealing thunder compared to thunder, has more positive effects on organizational trustworthiness and stakeholders' emotions, most studies were conducted in western socities. As a result of which data on the impact of cultural differences in the effectiveness of stealing

thunder are scarce. Moreover, there is no insight into how people from different cultural background may respond (in this scope of this research, their emotions and willingness to forgive) to organizations that use stealing thunder, especially when management is fully accountable for the crisis.

The literature has a large gap on this issue. Nevertheless, to rebuild employees' trust in their employers, as mentioned earlier, organizations should take several factors into consideration, such as the individuals' values, norms and needs, which are influenced by one's cultural background. Thus, the next section emphasizes on the concept of culture, national cultures, and both cultures and emotions and willingness to forgive.

2.5   National cultures in perspectives

There are several definitions for the concept of culture. Hall (1973) explains culture as how the world is perceived and organized by a group of people. House, Javidan, Hanges and Dorfman (2002) went a step further and conceptualize culture as follows:

> "*The shared motives, values, identities, beliefs and interpretations or meanings of significant events that results from the common experiences of members of collectives and are transmitted across age generations*" (p. 5).

Hofstede (1980) has a firmer stance on this. He describes a culture in terms of groups of people with collective behaviors, and mindsets. According to his distinction, different cultures are distinguished. Drawing on this definition, Hofstede (1980) argues that culture definitely affects work-related values, attitudes and behaviors. He differentiates between, among other things, collectivistic and individualistic national cultures. Hofstede (2013) claims that loyalty in a collectivist culture is paramount, and overrides most other societal rules and regulations. The society fosters strong relationships where everyone takes responsibility for fellow members of their group (Hofstede, 1980; Hofstede, 2013). For instance, in collectivist societies offense leads to shame and loss of face. Conversely, in individualistic cultures individuals are expected to take care of themselves and their immediate families only. For

example, in individualistic societies offense causes guilt and a loss of self-esteem (Hofstede, 2013).

Triandis (1995; in Sandage, Hill & Vang, 2003), conceptualizes individualism as a social pattern. He distinguished four characteristics of this culture. First, he explained that individualistic communities perceive themselves as relatively independent of others. Secondly, they favor individual needs, and attitudes over collective needs. Moreover, they prioritize personal goals and boundaries over group goals and social identity, and fourth, they encourages rational cost-benefit analyses of social relationships. According to Triandis (1995) as cited by Sandage et al. (2003), collectivism is totally different. He discovered also four characteristics for collectivistic communities: (a) interdependent with others; (b) emphasizes social norms, obligations, and duties; (c) prioritize family or group's goals over personal goals; and (d) values social connectedness and commitment even when it is disadvantageous to individuals (Triandis, 1995; in Sandage, Hill & Vang, 2003).

In addition, Kadiangandu et al. (2007) explains that in collectivistic worldviews the self is socially embedded and collective norms, relationships and well-being, are valued. By contrast, Kadiangandu et al. (2007), claim that individualistic worldviews are independent and self-reflective oriented, and personal responsibility and personal well-being are valued. Drawing on these findings, the next paragraph focuses on employees' emotions and willingness to forgive across cultures, specifically during a trust repair process.

2.5.1 Employees' cultural background and organizational trustworthiness

Little work has examined the role of culture and its influence on perceived organizational trustworthiness. However, a few research confirm the differences in how people from different culture judge trustworthiness. Nishishiba and Ritchie (2000) examined Japanese (considered as a collectivistic culture) and American (considered as an individualistic culture) business people and figured out that Japanese employees tend to emphasize their membership in, and relationship to others. By contrast, the scholars stated, American employees are more likely to emphasize personal qualities. Nishishiba and Ritchie (2000) also discovered that Japanese employees look differently to work. To them work is "something that everybody should do regardless what gets out of it. Contrarily, American

employees view work mainly as an exchange, by which personal efforts should be recognized and rewarded, and consequences should be punished (Nishishiba & Ritchie (2000). Camp II (2002) conducted a similar study. He compared Canadian and Japanese business students in how they develop trust and perceive trustworthiness. Camp II concluded that at least two dimensions of culture, individualism/collectivism and universalism/particularism, do matter in trust development. For example, participants from Canada were more likely to evaluate trust as a formal "exchange", while those from Japan focused more on informal exchanges. In short: Both Camp II (2002) and Nishishiba and Ritchie (2000) argued that collectivistic culture values group coherence more, than individualistic cultures.

In addition, Suriname is considered a collectivistic culture, just like Japan, and the Netherlands is seen as an individualistic culture, compared to the United States of America. Therefore, it can be expected that participants from Suriname, with also a collective culture will rate organizational trustworthiness higher, than participants from the Netherlands. Based on these assumptions, it can be hypothesized that:

H4: **Participants from Suriname will rate the trustworthiness of the organization higher, than participants from the Netherlands.**

2.5.2   The impact of culture on emotions
2.5.2.1 Defining emotions

An emotion is "a valenced affective reaction to perception of situations" (Richins, 1997, 127; as cited in Sørensen, 2008). One major difference of culture which reflect emotions, is the concept of the body. Postert (2012) suggest that emotional experience is built from culture-specific interactions shaped by a specific social context. Additionally, Matsumoto (2008) confirmed that there are at least two mechanisms by which cultural differences in emotional expressions are produced. One mechanism goes through cultural differences in norms of expression management and regulation as a function of social circumstances. These are called display rules (Ekman & Friesen, 1969; as cited by Matsumoto). According to Ekman and Friesen (1969) as cited by Matsumoto (2008), these display rules influence emotional expressions. The second mechanism are cultural differences in the kinds of events that trigger

emotions and how people express oneself (Matsumoto, 2008). Schimmack, Oishi, and Diener (2002) also found that culture influences the appraisal of emotional situations. Mesquita (2001) noted that in cultures labeled as collectivistic, emotions emerged as relational phenomena, embedded in relationships with others and perceived to reflect the state of those relationships. Alternatively, Mesquita (2001) argues, that emotions in individualistic cultures refer much less to the social environment. Mesquita (2001) exemplifies that collectivist cultures treat emotions as pieces of information into one's beliefs about the world. This scholar claim that individualist cultures consider emotions as pertinent to beliefs. Emotions in the collectivist groups result more often in belief changes than do emotions in the individualist culture (Mesquita, 2001). Based on the assumptions above, it is expected that participants from Suriname will score higher on the positive emotions, and lower on the negative emotions. Therefore, it can be hypothesized that:

H5a: **Participants from Suriname will score positive emotions higher during an organizational crisis, than participants from the Netherlands.**

H5b: **Participants from Suriname will score negative emotions lower during an organizational crisis, than participants from the Netherlands.**

2.5.3 Culture and forgiveness
2.5.3.1 Defining forgiveness

For many years, forgiveness was seen as a religious issue and not for (social) scientific importance (Mc Chesney & Thomson, 2010). Until the last 20 years of the 20th century, scientists had not thought of exploring the concept of forgiveness (Mc Chesney & Thomson, 2010. According to these scholars, forgiveness has an intrapersonal and an interpersonal dimension. In the case of employees who should forgive their top managers for an intentional crisis, interpersonal issues are involved. Enright (2013) conceptualizes interpersonal forgiveness as follows:

When unjustly hurt by another, we forgive when we overcome the resentment

toward the offender, not by denying our right to the resentment, but instead of

trying to offer the wrongdoer compassion, benevolence, and love; as we give

these, we as forgivers realize that the offender does not necessarily have a right

to such gifts. (p. 1).

Although studies in forgiveness are rapidly accumulating, little attention has been given to cultural variations in forgiveness. Willingness to forgive may be more characteristic of collectivistic cultures than individualistic cultures (Sandage & Williamson, 2005; in Kadiangandu et al, 2012). For the reason that in collectivist cultures, forgiveness is conceived as extensible to groups of persons (e.g., an association, the state, the church) and even sometimes is offered on behalf of close relationships (Kadiangandu et al., 2007). In addition, Boonyarit, Chuawanlee, Macaskill, and Supparerkchaisaku (2012) pointed out that it is also important to understand how religiously based values and practices can influence behavior. They conducted a study on how Thai nurses experience the forgiveness process as members of a collectivist culture heavily influenced by Buddhism, concluded that Buddhism clearly influences the daily working lives of Thai people in terms of how they deal with issues in the workplace where the need for forgiveness arises.

Kadiangandu, Gauché, Vinsonneau, and Mullet (2007) findings are also in line with that of Boonyarit et al (2012) and Sandage and Williamson (2005, in Kadiangandu et al, 2012). The researchers suggest that forgiveness is more valued and numerous in collectivistic cultures than in individualistic cultures. Kadiangandu et al.'s. (2007) study was conducted between the Congolese (collectivist culture) and the French (individualist culture) in the way both groups conceptualize forgiveness. From this research, Kadiangandu et al. (2007) discovered that in societies where individuals are primarily viewed as members of groups, as in Congolese villages, forgiveness might be more frequently considered simply because it constitutes a strategy that allows being relieved from resentment toward members of the group. This may ease life considerably where contacts with others is an everyday necessity.

Sandage, Hill, and Vang (2003) have also considered the concept of culture in their research on forgiveness. They investigated the dynamics related to conflict resolution and forgiveness in traditional Hmong culture in the United States of America. Traditional Hmong

culture is collectivistic. The scholars (Sandage et al. 2003) found that willingness to forgive differs between cultures due to different ways of handling interpersonal processes of conflict and forgiveness. Based on these assumptions, the following hypothesis formulated:

H6: **Participants from Suriname will be more willing to forgive the organization during times of crisis, than participants from the Netherlands.**

2.6 Culture and stealing thunder

Moreover, consistent with the findings of previous research, it can be expected that employees' cultural background will increase the effectiveness stealing thunder, by which participants from Suriname will score higher on the evaluation of organizational trustworthiness, positive emotions, and trusting the organization, and lower on negative emotions, than participants from the Netherlands when the organization steals thunder. Considering the weak theoretical support for the presumptions made above, three exploratory research questions were formulated, instead of hypotheses. They are formulated as follows:

RQ1: **To what extent do people from collectivistic and individualistic cultures differ in their perception of organizational trustworthiness, their exhibition of positive and negative emotions, and their willingness to forgive, when stealing thunder is used?**

### 3.	Research methodology

### 3.1	Study design

A 2 (crisis communication strategy: s*tealing thunder vs. thunder*) x 2 (cultural background: *Dutch vs. Surinamese*) between subjects experiments was carried out. Consequently, there were four conditions for the experiment. The independent variable 'c*risis communication strategy*' with its two levels (s*tealing thunder vs. thunder*) was manipulated with a fictive transport company (Distributie NV) was encountering a financial crisis. The choice of a company in the logistic sector was easily made to prevent respondents from making association with one of the crisis-plagued sectors (i.e., the financial sector) nowadays.

There were two scenarios. In the s*tealing thunder* condition, the manipulation was a circular letter in which the crisis was announced by the executive board. For this condition, the logo of the fictive company was used and the letter was signed by the chair of the executive board. In the *thunder* condition, a 'scoop' newspaper article of a fictive news agency 'Dagelijks Nieuws' was simulated. In all conditions, the content of both the circular letter and the newspaper article, were similar. However, to manipulate the 'information source' the lead sentences varied somewhat. For example, the sentence in the *stealing thunder* condition read: "*Our company, one of the biggest logistic companies in Suriname/the Netherlands (depending on the condition) is currently encountering a huge financial crisis*" (Appendix A & B), and In the *Thunder* condition: "*Distributie NV, one of the biggest logistic companies in Suriname/the Netherlands (depending on the condition), is currently encountering a huge financial crisis. This information comes from good authority*" (Appendix C & D).

With regard to the cultural background, it was kept constant in all four conditions. For being able to determine whether respondents' cultural background might influence their responses, the two groups of respondents were randomly assigned and equally treated to the experiment: Dutch and Surinamese employees.

### 3.2	Research instrument

An online questionnaire (Appendix E) in Dutch was used as a research instrument. It consisted of three parts aiming at measuring three dependent variables: Emotions, willingness to forgive, and organizational trustworthiness. Short and translated versions of the well-known scales (e.g., the job-related affective well-being scale and the forgiveness questionnaire) were

processed in the questionnaire. The time needed to fill in the whole questionnaire, including reading the scenario, was kept to a maximum of 10 minutes.

3.2.1   Measures

3.2.1.1 Emotions

In total, six different types of emotions were examined (3 negative, and 3 positive). The emotions chosen, were used to modify the 20-item short version of the job-related affective well-being scale (JAWS; Van Katwyk, Fox, Spector, & Kelloway, 2000). The six emotions as mentioned earlier had each two dimensions, as a result of which the JAWS modified for this research had twelve items. The twelve-item scale had an internal consistency of .76 for positive emotion, and .80 for negative emotion.

The adaptation went as follows: First, the twelve words were translated into Dutch. Then, they were incorporated into a new JAWS-scale. Instead of the five-point scale anchors of the original short-version JAWS responses (*never*, *rarely*, *sometimes*, *quite often*, *extremely often* or *Always*), a six-point Likert's scale was used ranging from *strongly disagree, disagree, disagree a little, agree a little, agree, strongly agree*. Besides, part of the introductory sentence '*the prior 30 days*' in the original scale was changed to '*in view of the scenario*' to fit the scope of the actual experiment.

Originally, the JAWS was designed to assess people's emotional reactions to their job, whereas the items vary from negative to positive. Each item is an emotion, and respondents were asked how often they have experienced ease at work over the prior 30 days. Subsequently, the original 20-item short version of the JAWS has a very high internal consistency reliabilities of .88 for negative emotion and .90 for positive emotion (Spector, 2006).

Taking our departure from the aim of the study, *optimism*, *empathy* and *assurance* were chosen as positive emotions, and *fear*, *anger* and *sadness* as negative emotions. The negative emotions were based on a distinction of Smits, De Boeck, Kuppens, and Van Mechelen (2002). Contrarily, the positive emotions were based on Desmet (2012). The choice for the emotions as aforementioned, was based on the context of the study. In the next paragraph, the emotions are explained in more detail.

3.2.1.2 Positive emotions

Optimism = the feeling and belief that good things will always happen. Desmet (2012) distinguishes two dimensions for this emotion: *anticipation*, and *hope*. Both were used in the scale. A question under this range was "*The information about this company makes me feel hopeful*".

Empathy = the positive feeling that emerges in understanding other people's feelings and problems. It is some kind of understanding when someone does you wrong. This emotion has three dimensions: *kindness*, *respect*, and *sympathy* (Desmet, 2012). The dimensions *sympathy* and *respect* were chosen. A question under this range was "*The information about this company makes me feel sympathy*".

Assurance = the feeling of calm confidence about your own or other persons' abilities to overcome difficulties and/or do something right. The dimensions are *courage*, *confidence*, and *pride* (Desmet, 2012). *Courage* and *Confidence* were chosen for the scale. A question under this range was "*The information about this company makes me feel confident*".

3.2.1.3 Negative emotions

Anger = a strong feeling of wanting to hurt or criticize someone because they have done something bad to one or they have been unkind to one. According to Smits et al. (2002), this emotion has four dimensions (*rage*, *anger*, *irritation* and *disgust*). The dimensions *anger* and *irritation* were chosen. A question under this range was "*The information about this company makes me angry*".

Fear = the feeling one get when he/she is afraid or worried that something bad is going to happen. Smits et al. (2002) distinguished also four dimensions: *fear*, *anxiety*, *worry*, and *nervous*. *Fear* and *anxiety* were used in the questionnaire. A question under this range was "*The information about this company makes me fear*".

Sadness = this emotion evolves when a happy time is ending, or when you feel sorry about someone else's unhappiness, or the unhappy feeling one have when in a very difficult or unpleasant situation. This emotion has four dimensions: s*adness, unhappiness, loneliness,* and *Depression* (Smits et al, 2002). *sadness* and *unhappiness* were chosen for the questionnaire. A question under this range was "*The information about this company makes me sad*". In total six negative emotions were chosen.

3.2.1.3 Willingness to forgive

Respondents' willingness to forgive the fictive organization based on the manipulation (read: scenario) used, was measured with a translated (English into Dutch) and a modified version of the forgiveness questionnaire (Mullet et al., 2003). The original Forgiveness Questionnaire consisted of 27 items on an 11-point scale that goes from *disagree completely* to *completely Agree*. For the original scale, the total items indicate an internal consistency of .94.

However, after a pre-test (read results pre-test farther down on page 34) thirteen items which were confusing, were deleted and/or rephrased. As a result of the deletion, the final version modified consisted of 14 items ranged on a 6-point Likert's scale (*strongly disagree, disagree, disagree a little, agree a little, agree, strongly agree*). The six-point Likert's scale was chosen, rather than a 5- or 7-point Likert's ranging, to prevent respondents going for an easy response (e.g., *neither agree nor disagree*). Three factors were measured: (i) Lasting resentment. A question for this factor was, '*As far as I am concerned, I don't feel able to forgive even if the company has apologized*'. The second factor was sensitivity to circumstances. A question for this construct was, '*As far as I am concerned, I forgive more easily when the consequences of the crisis have been cancelled*'. Unconditional forgiveness was the third factor, which a question as, '*As far as I am concerned, I can easily forgive even if the company has not begged for forgiveness*'. The version used for this research had also a very high internal consistency of .87.

3.2.1.4 Organizational trustworthiness

Organizational trustworthiness consists of three dimensions: (i) ability, (ii) benevolence and, (iii) integrity (Mayer et al., 1995). Based on this distinction a six-item scale (two items for each dimension) was developed, with an overall Cronbach's alpha of .92. The items were on a five-point scale (ranging from 1 '*To a very low degree*' to 5 '*To a very high degree*'). *Ability* was measured with two items (e.g., *This company is capable of satisfying its commitments*). Cronbach's alpha for this factor was .85. Moreover, *benevolence* was measured with also two items (e.g., *this company is concerned with the interests of employees*). Cronbach's alpha for this factor was .94. Finally, *integrity* was measured with two items (e.g.

this company operates sincere). Cronbach's alpha was .91. The total scale had a very high internal consistency of .92.

3.2.1.5 Demographics

To bring the collected data into perspective, demographics about respondents' age, sex, country of origin, educational level, and work experiences were also collected. These questions were asked before and among the scales in order to provide variety in the questionnaire. At the very beginning, respondents were asked if they were familiar with the transport sector (the topic of the scenario).

3.3   Procedure

There were four different, but identical questionnaires published online, except for the scenarios: In the Dutch condition (*stealing thunder vs. thunder*), and two in the Surinamese condition (*stealing thunder vs. thunder*). Thereafter, the questionnaires assigned to the Suriname condition, even as those in the Dutch condition, were linked. With technical support of Thesistool.nl, respondents then were randomly assigned to one of the conditions, depending on their cultural background.

Respondents were recruited using a snowball-system.

First, the links were sent to acquaintances, fellow students, friends and relatives with the request to forward these to potential respondents in their own network. In addition, urgent requests were sent via emails and posted on Facebook. Since, the cultural background of respondents was very important for the research, requests to both groups were kept strictly separate. Also, respondents were asked to read the scenario carefully and to imagine that they were employed by the fictive company and to answer all questions from that perspective.

Moreover, at the start of the questionnaire, the aim of the research was briefly explained to them and they were assured that their participation was completely confidential and that their personal details would not be used to identify them, and/or shared with third parties. Besides this, they could say if they would like to receive a copy of the report as a benefit.

3.4   Pre-test

Before, the final questionnaire was designed; it was pre-tested to minimize biases in the scenarios and scales. In total, five respondents participated in the pre-test, of whom two men and three women. The ages ranged from 22 to 55 years, with a mean of 29.6 years. All participants were Dutch students from a well-known Dutch university. All five had part-time appointments with their employers, and they were not familiar with the transportation sector. Their work experience varied from 1 to 5 years (M= 2.60, SD= 1.67).

First, the respondents were randomly assigned to one of the two scenarios by using the option "randomizing" on the online thesis website, www.thesistool.nl. After reading the scenario, they were asked to just imagine that he/she was employed by the fictive company and to answer the questions from that perspective.

The focus of the pre-test was to test the clarity in the content of the questionnaire, to evaluate the scenarios and scales on realism and suitability. One general remark was that the emotions were not suitable for the scenario. There were several recommendations, some of which were adapted to the final questionnaire. Moreover, respondents could not image, regarding the stealing thunder scenario, that managers would be that fair nowadays. Based on respondents' remarks, minor changes were made to the questionnaire.

3.5 Data analysis

The computer program used for the statistical analysis was SPSS 21.0, in the course of which several independent sample t-tests, and three multivariate analysis of variance were conducted. For instance, hypothesis 1 through 6 were tested with independent sample t-tests to explore the main effects of stealing thunder and culture on organizational trustworthiness, emotions, and willingness to forgive.

A multi regression analysis was performed for the testing of research question 1. This question regarded whether or not culture influenced the effect of stealing thunder on organizational trustworthiness, emotions, and willingness to forgive. Furthermore, all hypotheses were tested one-sided (right-tailed, and in two cases left-tailed) due to the formulations. This act had consequences for the p-value, which was repeatedly divided by 2. If the mean scores were in the opposite direction, the p-value was calculated by subtracting the number divided from 1.

To optimize the confidence level, a larger interval of 99% was used for all analyses. This means that there was a 1 percent chance that the results were wrong. Thus, 1 times out of 100, the true population mean would not be included in the specified interval.

3.6   Reliability measures

To test the reliability of the measures, a Cronbach's alpha and an exploratory factor analysis using Varimax rotation, were conducted. As shown in this table, the measures' internal consistency varied from moderate (.68) to very high (.94). Moreover, the scales were reasonably normally distributed (see the skewness and kurtosis presented in Table 3.1 on page 37), except for fear, anger, and lasting resentment (one of the three factors of willingness to forgive). For this three cases the rule for equal variances for normal distributions was violated. However, the study sample (n = 197) was large. Therefore, it was tolerable to use the parametric tests used for the analyses. In Table 3.1 on page 37, descriptive statistics for the measures are summarized.

Regarding the exploratory factor analysis, the 32 items analyzed were yielded in six factors (see Table 3.2 on page 38). These six factors were explaining a total of 63.78% of the variance for the entire set of variables. All factors were loaded above .40, as a result of which it was not necessary to delete any item.

Based on the outcomes, it was decided to analyze the six different emotions separately, and not to group them in just two constructs: Positive versus negative emotions. The same decision was made for the analysis of willingness to forgive. The three sub-factors factors measured, were clearly grouped as three factors.

An exception was, however, made for organizational trustworthiness. The results of the exploratory factor analysis are presented in Table 3.2 on page 38. Although, the exploratory factor analysis did not make a clear distinction between the three dimensions, in the context of the study it was decided to analyze them besides the main construct. A Cronbach's alpha analysis showed high internal consistency for the three dimensions.

Table 3.1

Summary descriptive statistics and internal consistency for measures (N = 197)

Measures	No. of items	M	(SD)	Skewness	Kurtosis	Alpha
Organizational trustworthiness	6	2.53	(.93)	.12	-.64	.92
Ability	2	2.50	(1.00)	.29	-.23	.83
Benevolence	2	2.58	(1.09)	.32	-.67	.94
Integrity	2	2.52	(1.10)	.18	-.93	.92
Positive emotions						
Empathy	2	2.68	(1.23)	.52	-.13	.66
Assurance	2	2.10	(.95)	.85	.18	.73
Optimism	2	2.27	(1.09)	.96	.75	.68
Negative emotions						
Anger	2	2.32	(1.23)	1.03	.37	.71
Fear	2	2.30	(1.14)	1.06	.99	.78
Sadness	2	2.89	(1.30)	.59	-.25	.85
Willingness to forgive	14	3.87	(.81)	.15	-.47	.86
Lasting resentment	5	3.00	(.90)	-1.16	1.83	.87
Sensitivity to circumstances	5	3.66	(1.07)	.24	-.74	.80
Unconditional forgiveness	4	3.00	(1.26)	.33	-.57	.86

Note. Alpha = the internal reliability rate, Cronbach's alpha; SD = standard deviation.

Table 3.2

Factor loadings for Exploratory Factor Analysis of measures (N = 197)

Items	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6
Anger1			.51			
Anger2			.51			
Empathy1	.52					.49
Empathy2						.47
Fear1			.81			
Fear2			.70			
Assurance1						.75
Assurance2						.62
Sadness1			.79			
Sadness2			.78			
Optimism1						.76
Optimism2						.76
WillingnessToForgive 1		.65				
WillingnessToForgive2		.77				
WillingnessToForgive3		.77				
WillingnessToForgive4		.82				
WillingnessToForgive 5		.78				
WillingnessToForgive6				.65		
WillingnessToForgive7				.82		
WillingnessToForgive8				.79		
WillingnessToForgive9				.80		
WillingnessToForgive10				.54		
WillingnessToForgive11					.74	
WillingnessToForgive12					.80	
WillingnessToForgive13					.82	
WillingnessToForgive 14					.78	
OrgaTrustworthiness1	.55					
OrgaTrustworthiness2	.75					
OrgaTrustworthiness3	.91					
OrgaTrustworthiness4	.91					
OrgaTrustworthiness5	.89					
OrgaTrustworthiness6	.87					

Note. Factors loadings > .4. Factor1 = trustworthiness; factor2 = lasting resentment; factor3 = negative emotions; factor4 = sensitivity to circumstances; factor5 = unconditional forgiveness; factor6 = pos.emotions.

4 Results

4.1   Participants

Two hundred and eighty-five respondents completed the online questionnaire, as shown in Table 4.1 on page 38. Eighty-eight (30.9%) were excluded from analysis, because the forms were not completely filled in. Eventually, 197 (69.1%) responses were valid. Of this number, 98 (49.7%) had the Dutch nationality, and 99 (50.3%) were Surinamese.

Regarding their sex, 37.1% of the respondents were males and 61.9% were females. They ranged in age from 19 to 73 (M = 40.51, SD = 11.57). All were employed, of whom the majority (72%) had a full-time appointment. Overall, the respondents had work experience between 1 and 50 years (M = 16.60, SD = 10.96). The majority (52%) had more than 15 years of work experience. Besides, a large number 134 (68%) were familiar with the transport sector (the scope of the fictive company used for the scenarios). With regard to their educational background, almost 80% had received a higher education, of whom 46% were university graduates. See Table 4.1 on the next page (page 40) for a summary of the sample size, response rate, and demographics.

4.2   Hypothesis testing

Before testing the hypotheses, all questions which were negatively formulated, were recoded. This recoding regarded questions 5, 7 and 9, and the first 10 sub-questions of question 11. Then, the means of the measures were computed to determine respondents' rating behavior. The scores were very low (below the median) for the scales on organizational trustworthiness, and emotions. A possible explanation is that participants might have tried to avoid extreme response categories (central tendency response bias), and thus chose for neutral responses. Second, a six-point Likert's scale was used for emotions, and willingness to forgive, instead of a five-point Likert's scale. This was to prevent respondents easily going for "neutral" answers, since well-thought choices were relevant for the study. Third, the low scores could also be attributed to the fact that respondents were not familiar with the stimulus organization. However, the results seemed to be quite normally distributed. Another observation concerned the missing values. In order to determine whether or not they were at random in the data, a missing value analysis was performed. It turned out that the missing

values were not at random, χ^2 (829, $N = 196$) = 959.57, p = .001. Hereafter, the missing values were replaced with the option '*Expectation Maximization*' under the *Analyze* button.

Characteristics	Stealing thunder		Cultural background		Total
	No	Yes	Suriname	The Netherlands	
Response rate					
Total respondents	140 (49.1)	145 (50.9)	146 (51.2)	139 (48.8)	285
Invalid responses	41 (46.6)	47 (53.4)	47 (53.4)	41 (46.6)	88 (30.9)
Valid responses	99 (50.3)	98 (49.7)	99 (50.3)	98 (49.7)	197 (69.1)
Sex**					
Male	38 (52.1)	35 (47.9)	32 (43.8)	41 (56.2)	73 (37.1)
Female	60 (49.2)	62 (50.8)	66 (54.1)	56 (45.9)	122 (61.9)
Age (Mode)a	26-40	26-40	26 – 40	26-40	
Work*					
Full-time	67 (47.2)	75 (52.8)	89 (62.7)	53 (37.3)	142 (72.1)
Part-time	32 (59.3)	22 (40.7)	10 (18.5)	44 (81.5)	54 (27.9)
Work experience (Mode)a	6-10	6-10	6-10	6-10	
Level of education***					
Elementary	3 (100)	-	1 (33.3)	2 (66.7)	3 (1.5)
Secondary	3 (42.9)	4 (57.1)	4 (57.1)	3 (42.9)	7 (3.6)
High school	14 (46.7)	16 (53.3)	21 (70)	9 (30)	30 (15.4)
College/University	77 (49.7)	78 (50.3)	71 (45.8)	84 (54.2)	155 (79.1)

Note. n = total number of participants. Numbers in parentheses are percentages.

aThese numbers represent years in age or work experience.

*= 1 missing value, **= 4 missing values, ***= 5 missing values*

4.2.1　Main effects stealing thunder on organizational trustworthiness

An independent samples t-test was conducted in order to test hypothesis 1 that predicted that participants in the stealing thunder condition would rate organizational trustworthiness higher, than participants in the thunder condition.

A large significant main effect of stealing thunder on organizational trustworthiness was observed, $t(195) = 3.72$, $p < .000$. This means that participants in the stealing thunder condition had clearly perceived the trustworthiness of the organization as higher (M = 2.77, SD = .96), than participants in the thunder condition (M = 2.30, SD = .85). Hypothesis 1 was, based on the outcome, confirmed. See Table 4.2 on page 46, for the 99% confidence interval, mean difference, and standard error difference.

Because, in this study the three dimensions of organizational trustworthiness (ability, benevolence, and integrity) were examined, it was necessary to explore whether or not stealing thunder had a significant main effect on all. The expectation was that the scores for stealing thunder would be higher in all dimensions.

An independent sample t-test was executed. The results showed that the main effect of thunder stealing on benevolence was highly significant, $t(195) = 3.64$, p < .000. Participants in the stealing thunder condition had higher scores on benevolence (M = 2.86, SD = 1.15), than participants in the thunder condition (M = 2.31, SD = .96).

The main effect of stealing thunder on integrity was also largely significant, $t(195) = 4.12$, p < .000. Considering the scores, the organization was found more integer in the stealing thunder condition (M = 2.88, SD = 1.15), than in the thunder condition (M = 2.21, SD = .96).

By contrast, stealing thunder had no significant main effect on ability, $t(195) = 1.89$, p < .03). This means that there was no significant difference between both groups regarding their evaluation of the organization's ability. Nonetheless, participants' scores in the stealing thunder condition (M = 2.63, SD = 1.01) compared to those in the thunder condition (M = 2.37, SD = .97) were actually higher. The scores were moving in the expected direction, but they failed to reach significance. As mentioned earlier all t-tests were one-sided (right-tailed) and on a 99% confidence level. See Table 4.2 on page 46, for more statistics on these analyses.

4.2.1.1 Main effects stealing thunder on emotions

The assumption was that stealing thunder would lead to higher positive emotions and to less negative emotions. First, an independent samples t-test was run for the three positive emotions (empathy, assurance, and optimism). The results led to the partly acceptance of hypothesis 2a, because a largly significant main effect was found for stealing thunder on empathy, $t(195) = 3.70$, p < .000, but not on assurance, $t(195) = .73$, p < .23, and optimism, $t(195) = -.74$, p < .77. This means that participants in the stealing thunder condition (M = 2.99, SD = 1.33) had emerged more empathy for the organization, compared to those in the thunder condition (M = 2.36, SD = 1.04).

Regarding the feelings of assurance and optimism, participants in the stealing thunder condition were not found more assured or optimistic, than those in the thunder condition. However, the scores for stealing thunder on assurance (M = 2.15, SD = .93) were in the expected direction, at the expense of thunder (M = 2.05, SD = .98), but failed to reach significance. Conversely, participants in the thunder condition (M = 2.32, SD = 1.09) scored higher on optimism, than those in the stealing thunder (M = 2.21, SD = 1.09). Nevertheless, the differences between both groups were not substantial. In Table 4.2 on page 46, additional numbers concerned confidence interval, mean differences, and standard error differences, are summarized.

After this analysis, the three negative emotions (anger, fear, and sadness) were analyzed together by using an independent sample t-test. It was assumed that when an organization in crisis stole thunder, participants would exhibit less negative emotions. Hypothesis 2b on the main effect of stealing thunder on less negative emotions was totally rejected. The main effects of stealing thunder on anger, $t(195) = -.21$, p < .42, was not statistically significant. The same went for fear, $t(186.69) = 1.30$, p < .90, and sadness, $t(195) = 1.11$, p < .87. Considering the scores, stealing thunder had a negligible lower score for anger (M = 2.30, SD = 1.16), than thunder (M = 2.34, SD = 1.31). Different from what was expected, participant in the stealing thunder had higher scores for fear (M = 2.40, SD = 1.25), than those in the thunder condition (M = 2.19, SD = 1.02). The scores for participants in the stealing thunder for sadness were also unexpectedly higher (M = 3.00, SD = 3.72), than those in the thunder condition (M = 2.79, SD = 1.23). Nevertheless, the overall conclusion is that participants in the stealing

thunder condition did not exhibit less fear, anger , and sadness compared to those in the thunder condition. Additional results are shown in Table 4.2 on page 46.

4.2.1.2 Main effects stealing thunder on willingness to forgive

Hypothesis 3 predicted that participants in the stealing thunder condition would be more willing to forgive the organization, than in the thunder condition. An independent sample t-test was conducted to test this assumption. The results showed that there was no main effect of stealing thunder on willingness to forgive, $t(195) = -.98$, p $< .84$. Hypothesis 3 was thus rejected.

This means that there was no significant difference between both groups' willingness to forgive the organization. On the contrary, participants in the thunder condition (M= 3.93, SD = .83) scored higher on willingness to forgive, than participants in the stealing thunder condition (M= 3.82, SD= .78).

After this insight, an independent sample t-test was conducted to explore how the scores were distributed among the three dimensions of willingness to forgive (lasting resentment, sensitivity to circumstances, and unconditional forgiveness), as discussed earlier in the method section. It seemed that stealing thunder had no significant main effect on the three sub-scales: Lasting resentment, $t(195) = -1.21$, p $< .89$,   sensitivity to circumstances, $t(195) = .26$, p $< .20$, and unconditional forgiveness, $t(195) = -1.23$, p $< .89$.

Moreover, except for the scores in the sub-scale sensitivity to circumstances (stealing thunder: M= 3.68, SD = 1.07 vs. thunder: M= 3.64, SD= 1.08), the mean scores in the other two sub-constructs were higher in the thunder condition, than in the stealing thunder condition.

The results are as follows: Lasting resentment ($M_{\text{Stealing Thunder}} = 4.88$, $SD_{\text{Stealing Thunder}} = .95$; $M_{\text{Thunder}} = 5.03$, $SD_{\text{Thunder}} = .86$, and unconditional forgiveness ($M_{\text{Stealing Thunder}} = 2.89$, $SD_{\text{Stealing Thunder}} = 1.19$; $M_{\text{Thunder}} = 3.11$, $SD_{\text{Thunder}} = 1.32$).

Information about the confidence interval, mean differences, and standard error difference are presented in Table 4.2 on page 46.

4.2.2　Main effects culture on organizational trustworthiness

Hypothesis 4 that predicted that participants from Suriname would rate the trustworthiness of the organization higher, than participants from the Netherlands, was supported, $t(195) = -2.64$, p < .005. Therefore, the main effect of culture on organizational trustworthiness was significant.

This means that the Surinamese (M = 2.71, SD = .99) evaluated the organization's credibility higher than the Dutch (M = 2.29, SD = .84). Besides this analysis, an independent samples t-test was conducted in order to determine the main effect of culture on the three dimensions of organizational trustworthiness (ability, benevolence, and integrity).

It seemed that culture had a large significant main effect on ability, $t(195) = -3.01$, p < .000. On the other two dimensions, the scores of participants from Suriname were in the expected direction, but they failed to reach significance at the 99% confidence level.

The results for benevolence are ($M_{Suriname} = 2.73$, $SD_{Suriname} = 1.20$; $M_{The\ Netherlands} = 2,43$, $SD_{The\ Netherlands} = .96$, with $t(195) = -1.95$, p < .27, and for integrity ($M_{Suriname} = 2.68$, $SD_{Thunder} = 1.17$; $M_{The\ Netherlands} = 2.36$, $SD_{The\ Netherlands} = 1$, with $t(195) = -2.03$, p < .02. See Table 4.2 on page 46 for additional results.

4.2.2.1 Main effects culture on emotions

The main effects of culture on emotions were analyzed by using the same three positive (empathy, assurance, and optimism) and three negative emotions (anger, fear, and sadness). Since it regarded two groups, these assumptions were also tested with an independent samples t-test. First, hypothesis 5a was partly supported. Regarding positive emotions, a significant main effect of culture was found on empathy, $t(195) = -3.31$, p < .005, and on optimism, $t(182.38) = -2.67$, p < .004.

This means that the Surinamese (M = 2.96, SD = 1.32) exhibited more feelings of empathy towards the organization, than the Dutch (M = 2.39, SD = 1.07). The participants from Suriname (M = 2.47, SD = 1.21) were also more optimistic than the Dutch (M = 2.06, SD = .91).

There was no statistically significant main effect of culture found on assurance, $t(195) =$ 1.78, p < .96. The results also showed that the participants from the Netherlands (M = 2.22, SD = .86) had a higher score on assurance, than the Surinamese (M = 1.98, SD = 1.02).

Regarding the negative emotions, a statistically significant main effect of culture was found on anger, $t(173.66) = -3.11$, p < .001. However, no significant main effect of culture was found for fear, $t(195) = -.20$, p < .58, and for sadness, $t(180.66) = -5.37$, p < .70. This means that participants from Surinamese were less anger, than the Dutch.

With regard to fear, and sadness, there was no significant difference in their exhibition of fear ($M_{Suriname} = 2.32$, $SD_{Suriname} = 1.25$; $M_{The\ Netherlands} = 2,28$, $SD_{The\ Netherlands} = 1.03$) and sadness ($M_{Suriname} = 2.94$, $SD_{Suriname} = 1.48$; $M_{The\ Netherlands} = 2,43$, $SD_{The\ Netherlands} = 1.10$), based on the crisis scenario.

Additional results are presented in Table 4.2 on page 46.

4.2.2.2 Main effects culture on willingness to forgive

Hypothesis 6 predicted that participants from Suriname would be more willing to forgive the organization during times of crisis, than participants from the Netherlands. This assumption was largely supported, $t(195) = -5.98$, p < .000). Therefore, hypothesis 6 was confirmed.

Besides this analysis, an independent sample t-test was run in order to determine the significance of culture on the three dimensions of willingness to forgive used in this study (lasting resentment, sensitivity to circumstances, and unconditional forgiveness). It turned out that culture was moderately to highly significant on all three.

For lasting resentment the results were, $t(195) = -3.40$, p < .005, for sensitivity to circumstances, $t(195) = -5.60$, p < .000, and for unconditional forgiveness, $t(195) = -3.90$, p < .000). This means that participants from Suriname exhibited less lasting resentment, and they were also less sensitive to circumstantial factors. Moreover, they were more unconditional forgiving.

All additional results on the main effects of culture on organizational trustworthiness, emotions, and the willingness to forgive, are summarized in Table 4.2 on page 46.

Table 4.2

Summary results independent sample t-tests of statistical significance of stealing thunder and culture on organizational trustworthiness, emotions, and willingness to forgive (n = 197)

Dependent variables	Crisis communication style				Cultur		
	M_{diff}	SE_{diff}	99% CI		M_{diff}	SE_{diff}	99% CI
Org. Trustworthiness	.48	.13	[.14, .82]*		-.35	.13	[.69, -.00]
Ability	.27	.14	[-.10, .82]		-.42	.14	[-.78, -.06]*
Benevolence	.55	.15	[.16, .94]*		-.30	.16	[-.70, .10]
Integrity	.62	.15	[.23, 1.01]*		-.32	.16	[-.72, .09]
Negative emotions							
Anger	-.04	.18	[-.50, .42]		-.03	.16	[-.98, -.09]**
Fear	.21	.16	[.21, .63]		-.53	.17	[-.46, .39]
Sadness	.21	.19	[.28, .69]		-.10	.19	[-.58, .38]
Positive emotions							
Empathy	.63	.17	[.19, 1.07]*		-.57	.17	[-1.01, -.12]††
Assurance	.10	.14	[-.26, .45]		.24	.14	[-.11, .59]
Optimism	-.12	.16	[-.52, .29]		-.41	.15	[-.80, -.01]†
Willingness to forgive	-.11	.12	[-.41, .19]		-.63	.11	[-.91, -.36]*
Lasting resentment	-.16	.13	[-.49, .18]		-.43	.13	[.75, -.10]††
Sensitivity to circumstances	.04	.15	[-.36, .44]		-.68	.17	[-1.13, -23]*
Unconditional forgiveness	-.22	.18	[-.69, .25]		-.79	.14	[-1.16, -43]*

Note. N = total number of participants; Mdiff = Mean difference; SEdiff = Standard error difference; CI = confidence interval.

*p < .000; **p < .001; †p < .004; ††p < .005

4.2.3 Effects culture and stealing thunder on organizational trustworthiness, emotions, and willingness to forgiveness

To answer research questions 1 (See page 27), three multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to figure out if there were interaction effects between stealing thunder and cultural background on organizational trustworthiness, emotions, and willingness to forgive.

It was obvious that there was no significant difference to the extent in which individuals from collectivistic and individualistic cultures differ in their perception of organizational trustworthiness, when stealing thunder is used, $F(1, 193) = .17$, p< .68. This means that cultural background did not affect the effectiveness of stealing thunder on the evaluation of organizational trustworthiness. There was also no interaction effect observed for the three dimensions of organizational trustworthiness: Ability, $F(1, 193) = .29$, p .59; benevolence, $F(1, 193) = 2.37$, p .13, and integrity, $F(1, 193) = .00$, p . 1.

With regard to emotions (both positive and negative), the effect of stealing thunder was also not significantly higher or lower when scored by participants from a collectivistic culture, compared to individuals from an individualistic culture. Empathy, $F(1, 193) = 3.25$, p .07; assurance, $F(1, 193) = .08$, p . 77; optimism, $F(1, 193) = 1.64$, p . .20. The results for the negative emotions were as follows: Anger, $F(1, 193) = 2.64$, p . 11, fear, $F(1, 193) = .45$, p . 51, and sadness, $F(1, 193) = 1.94$, p .17.

For willingness to forgive the interaction effect of stealing thunder and cultural background was not significant as well ($F(1, 193) = .37$, p < . 55). This was the same for the three sub factors of willingness to forgive: Lasting resentment, $F(1, 193) = 1.46$, p . 23; sensitivity to circumstances, $F(1, 193) = 1.66$, p . 20, and unconditional forgiveness, $F(1, 193) = .67$, p . 41.

5.   Discussion

This part discusses the conclusions, based on the results and previous studies, as well as the theoretical and practical implications. At the end recommendations are made for further research.

5.1 Conclusion

5.1.1 Main effects stealing thunder

In the first part of the data analysis, three hypotheses were tested on the main effects of stealing thunder on organizational trustworthiness, emotions, and willingness to forgive. First, it seemed that stealing thunder had a strong effect on employees' perception of organizational trustworthiness in a positive way. The use of this crisis communication strategy in the manipulation compared to the thunder condition, demonstrated that organizational trustworthiness was perceived as higher. This outcome indicated that stealing thunder had definitely influenced respondents' view of organizational credibility. In line with this, it was interesting to discover that stealing thunder had a strong effect on only two dimensions (i.e., benevolence and integrity) of organizational trustworthiness, which refer among other things to 'the organization's concerns for the well-being of its stakeholders, and its concerns for dealing with ethical principles in a proper way'. By contrast, stealing thunder had no effect on the ability-dimension (i.e., which means, in the context of this study, the organization's ability to tackle the crisis or the competence to walk its talk). Although, stealing thunder had no effect on the ability-dimension, it mean scores was slightly higher than thunder, which was in the expected direction. A logical explanation why stealing thunder failed to reach a statistically significant effect on this dimension, was that respondents might not have been confident enough that the organization would survive the crisis. The organization's ability to overcome the crisis was moreover not expressly stressed in the scenario.

Nevertheless, the conclusion can be drawn that stealing thunder is an effective strategy as a means to enhance organizational trustworthiness. This conclusion is backed by current results and previous studies as well. For example, previous research assumed that when organizations steal thunder, their credibility will enhanced as they might be perceived as having a high sense of responsibility (Arpan & Pompper, 2003; Arpan & Roskos-Ewoldsen,

2005; Wigley, 2011; Williams et al., 1993). These researchers contributed to a better understanding of the strength of stealing thunder by considering that when stakeholders are warned about negative occurrences, their judgment might be less hard, and as a consequence of which organizational trustworthiness might be improved.

The second outcome of the present study is related to the effect of stealing thunder on employees' emotions, compared to that of thunder. It seemed that participants in the stealing thunder condition slightly exhibited more positive or less negative emotions, than those in the thunder condition. Nevertheless, stealing thunders' effect on emotions failed to reach significance on all the emotions chosen. Remarkable, and as was expected, the results showed clearly that stealing thunder had an enormous effect on the positive emotion, empathy. This emotion refers to some kind of understanding when someone does you wrong. The significant effect of stealing thunder on this emotion has proved that when organizations steal thunder employees might be more likely to emerge in understanding their management's feelings and problems. This outcome is very important for the trust repair process. Trust repair start with understanding from the site of the one whose trust had been violated (Enright, 2013). Regarding the other positive emotions (assurance and optimism), stealing thunder failed to reach significance for assurance, but the scores were in the expected direction. This result means that participants in the stealing thunder condition exhibited more feelings of assurance, but not statistically significant more than participants in the thunder condition. Assurance refers to the feeling of confidence one get about their own or others' abilities to overcome difficulties and/or do something right. It is not strange that stealing thunder failed to reach significance on this emotion. As with the evaluation of organizational trustworthiness, stealing thunder had also failed on the ability-dimension. An explanation could be that participants did not get enough confident from the scenario that their interest were in good hands. Again, it should be stressed that the scenario did not explicitly emphasized assurance. The same counted for optimism, by which participants in the stealing thunder condition were not more optimistic than those in the thunder condition. Optimism refers to the belief that good things will happen. Based on this definition, it can be assumed that optimism was to the same effect of assurance, namely the assurance that the crisis would be brought to a happy conclusion. Regarding the negative emotions (anger, fear, and sadness), stealing thunder also failed to reach significance. This means that participants in the stealing thunder condition did not

significantly exhibit less anger, fear and sadness. However, the mean of stealing thunder on anger was in the expected direction. Subsequently, the scores for fear and sadness were in the opposite direction. A logical explanation is that participants confronted with the scenario in the thunder condition might have been less sure if the information was correct, since a reaction of their own organization was missing. While those in the stealing thunder condition might have been 100% confident that the information they got was correct. This consideration might have influenced their fear, and sadness (disappointment).

This is clearly an issue that requires further research in order to gain a better understanding of the effect of stealing thunder on employees' emotions and what underlying variables might influence this process. However, although the overall outcome did not establish the expectations that stealing thunder would have a significant effect on all the different emotions chosen, its means were in general absolutely higher/lower than in the thunder condition. In conclusion, based on the effect on empathy, and the higher/lower means of stealing thunder on the different emotions, it can carefully be assumed that stealing thunder indeed had a positive impact on the intensity of positive emotions, or the decrease of negative emotions. This assumption is in line with the thoughts of a few scholars (e.g., Seon-Kyoung, 2011), who claim that stealing thunder is effective in managing work-emotions during crises. For instance, some studies (Seon-Kyoung et al., 2011; Gower, & Cho, 2011) even persist that the use of stealing thunder may help lower employees' anger and blame, as well as their disappointment and dissatisfaction.

A third result of the study is that the effect of stealing thunder on willingness to forgive was not significant. This outcome, which was in contrast with the expectations, showed that participants in the stealing thunder condition were not more willing to forgive the organization compared to participants in the thunder condition. In fact, the scores were in the opposite direction. The same explanation as given above for the expression of fear and sadness, also counts that stealing thunder failed to reach significance for this construct. Participants who got the news from the media might have doubted if the information was correct, and therefore, could have exercised restraint about their willingness to forgive the organization. While those who were confronted with the information in the thunder condition, had certainty about the correctness of the information, and therefore, might have been more hard in their judgment toward the organization. Another explanation is that stealing thunder was just for that moment.

To enhance employees' willingness to forgive the organization, probably organizations might have to communicate their sincere intentions in the period to come.

To conclude, the observed main effects of stealing thunder on organizational trustworthiness, as well as its higher/lower means on respondents' emotions, were important findings with regard to trust repair in employees. As discussed in the literature, perceived organizational trustworthiness (Gillepsie & Dietz, 2009; Klein-Woolthuis et al, 2010; Xie and Peng, 2009), and emotions (Seon-Kyoung, 2011) are the main prerequisites to rebuild trust. When employees think of their organization as credible, responsible and trustworthy, they will be more open to trust the organization again.

5.1.2 Main effects Culture

With ease, based on the results, employees' cultural background had a positive impact on the three dependent variables (organizational trustworthiness, emotions, and willingness to forgive). In the first place, the outcomes showed that employees from Suriname were more mild in their offense to the organizational crisis. In broad outline, this means that Surinamese employees were more likely to forgive, and they exhibited more positive or less negative emotions during an organizational crisis. Besides, they were also more positive in the evaluation of organizational trustworthiness. Simultaneously, the results imply that Dutch employees, regardless of crisis response, were harder in their evaluation of organizational trustworthiness and that they exhibited less positive emotions or more negative emotions. To be more specific, the results showed that Surinameses exhibited more empathy, and optimism, and less anger. Moreover, although, the scores of participants from Surinamese for assurance, fear, and sadness were not significant. However, the scores (except from assurance) were in the expected direction.

Besides, the results have also proven that employees from Suriname were more willing to forgive the organization, based on the scenario presented. The study's results were exactly as was expected and in line with previous research which claimed that employees from collectivistic cultures would differ largely in their reactions (emotions, and willingness to forgive) to internal communication strategies during organizational crises. These assumptions were based on the differences in worldviews between collectivistic and individualistic cultures. Moreover, one's cultural background might affect its values, attitudes and behaviors

related to work (Hofstede, 2013). In addition, the results of this study also supported findings of Triandis (1995; in Sandage et al., 2003). People from collectivistic culture prioritized groups' goals over their own and as a consequence would react differently to threats and/or disappointment. Furthermore, they value social connectedness and commitment even when it is drawback to individuals. For example, Dutch employees (or employees from individualistic cultures) might be more rigid to the effectiveness of trust repair strategies, than employees from Suriname (or employees from collectivistic cultures). According to Seon-Kyoung (2011) when employees are able to exhibit more positive emotions, they will be more willing to trust again.

In short, it can be assumed that organizations in crisis may want to put more efforts in convincing Dutch (read: employees from an individualistic culture) of their good intentions to overcome the crisis and minimize adverse effects on employees' welfare. Supported by these findings, it was not strange that the hypotheses on the effect of culture on organizational trustworthiness, emotions, and willingness to forgive, were (to some extent regarding the emotions) accepted. The general conclusion is that employees' cultural background was indeed influential on their thoughts, behaviors, views and responses, even in times of crisis.

5.1.3   Effects culture and stealing thunder

Regarding the interaction effect of cultural background on stealing thunder, the results were not significant. On the one hand, this led to the conclusion that the effects of stealing thunder found on organizational trustworthiness and empathy, were not interacted with respondents' cultural background. On the other hand, stealing thunder did also not have a significant interaction effect on the main effects of cultural background on organizational trustworthiness, emotions, and willingness to forgive. Overall, it can be concluded that both stealing thunder and culture might affect the variables mentioned earlier, but with no regard to each other. There are no previous studies to support these results, since there were no studies done earlier on this issue. However, what the results indicated is that culture and stealing did have interaction effects on organizational trustworthiness, emotions and willingness to forgive.

5.2   Recommendation

5.2.1 Theoretical implications

     The present research contributed to prior studies in several ways. The main target was to explore the effectiveness of stealing thunder, as crisis communication strategy, on employees' emotions, willingness to forgive and evaluation of organizational trustworthiness during an organizational crisis. An important component was to probe into the culture-resistance of stealing thunder as well. It is the integration of the three topics (stealing thunder, culture, and internal stakeholders) in one study that makes the contribution of this research to the scientific crisis communication field, important and unique. In the first place, this study provided insight into the effectiveness of stealing thunder as a means to repair trust. With that, employees' evaluation of organizational trustworthiness when organizations are in crisis, and specifically, when the crisis is attributed to the management, is examined. The results of the experiment showed clearly that stealing thunder had an effect on organizational trustworthiness, compared to thunder, and consequently, affect employees' openness to trust repair strategies. The study has also proved that stealing thunder had an effect on empathy in times of crisis.

     Secondly, most studies in the crisis communication field have been done on external stakeholders and their responses to stealing thunder. Employees, as one of the most relevant internal stakeholders' group, have been neglected in this context so far. Thus, regarding crisis communication and internal stakeholders (in the scope if this research) there is still a large gap. It is again within this framework that the contribution of this study to the corporate and organizational communication field is significant.

     Thirdly, this present study also highlighted the effects of stealing thunder on employees' emotions, and willingness to forgive. Studies on these two constructs, related to employees, are scarce. Therefore, the outcomes of this study are a welcome contribution to the scientific field. In the last few years, crisis communication researchers have become more interested in the reciprocity between employees' emotions and how these may influence their propensity to forgive during or after organizational crises. Apropos this increasing interest, this research contributed to an exploratory insight on which future studies might embroider. It seems that stealing thunder may have a positive influence on the exhibition of more positive and less negative emotions. With regard to willingness to forgive, although the results were not as

expected, this study made a first step towards highlighting this topic in relation to stealing thunder, and trust repair.

Fourthly, never before were employees' cultural backgrounds investigated in relation to stealing thunder. It seemed that employees from collectivistic cultures were favorable toward positive emotions, organizational trustworthiness, and willingness to forgive. In short, this study provided largely to a better understanding of the effects of employees' cultural background on work-related emotions, evaluation of organization's credibility and forgiveness. This insight was relevant, as organizational workforce is getting more and more diverse.

Finally, the present study did not only look for the main effects of stealing thunder and culture on emotions, organizational trustworthiness, and willingness to forgive. The interaction effects between culture and stealing thunder were also explored. Nevertheless, these results were not significant, a first attempt is made and future research may want to examine the interaction effects between both (stealing thunder, and culture).

To summarize, this study contributed to the growing body of literature on the influence of stealing thunder on trust repair, and a better understanding of culture within this process.

5.2.2 Practical implications

Organizations are facing two major challenges nowadays: Crises are unpredictable and numerous due to a globalization-driven complicated business/nonprofit environment and increasing pressure on organizations to stand out in this competitive corporate landscape. Simultaneously, organizations have to deal with a culturally diverse workforce. Within this framework, many practical implications can be derived from the present research.

First, stealing thunder is very promising for organizations in crisis, and definitely, organizations should steal thunder when they encounter a crisis. As shown by the results of the present and previous studies, stealing thunder had significant effects on, among other things, organizational trustworthiness. The mechanism of this crisis communication strategy, is that organizations should be prepared in order to be the first to reveal the negative news, when encounter a crisis. Besides, the results also indicated that it is relevant to reveal to employees how the crisis was caused and to whom it is attributed. Throughout the whole crisis

communication philosophy, it is repeatedly stressed that organizations should be the first to inform their workforce about insurmountable problems, even if it seems on first thoughts devastating for managerial credibility.

The second practical implication, is that being the first is not all that matter. Although, being the first might have major advantages for organizational trustworthiness, when organizations steal thunder they should want to ensure oneself that the information they provide is accurate, consistent and complete. If not, stealing thunder might lead to an adverse effect on organizational trustworthiness, which may lead to more damage to the credibility of the organization. Organizational managers should also be aware that being honest, consistent, and open from the very beginning and at all times (as discussed in the theoretical framework), will enhance organizational trustworthiness and effectively make the implementation of trust repair strategies successful. Trust repair is a process. To be able to repair what have been broken, organizations should have to re-gain trust in their employees. This can simply be done by 'walking their talk'. The good intentions of organizations are not only judged by what and how they communicate, but also by how they act, and keep words.

Although not investigated explicitly, but referring to the non-significant ineffectiveness of stealing thunder on the ability-component of organizational trustworthiness, and willingness to forgive, the results showed that it might be important that organizations ensured employees of their competence and good intentions to overcome a crisis. It can be assumed, that stealing thunder is a good start in the trust repair process, based on its effects on organizational trustworthiness and empathy. In general, stealing thunder is proven to be an effective strategy that organizations could be used in times of crisis. It also seemed that employees' cultural background is important for how organizations are judged. However, as mentioned earlier, trust repair is a process, and stealing thunder, just a 'strategy to catch the momentum'. Managers and those responsible for the internal communication should be aware of this interplay. To be able to repair trust, organizations must walk their talk: Doing the things they promised, and give certainty to their employees by interactive communication approaches. Employees want to be heard, especially in times of crisis and they want proof that the organization will do its utmost to handle the crisis properly.

Thirdly, when the organization steals thunder, it should also include information which stresses its ability to overcome the crisis. This implication is based on the fact that

organizational trustworthiness will be evaluated on three points: Ability, benevolence and integrity. The study showed that stealing thunder had effects on the latter two dimensions. Thus, to have an overall positive evaluation of its credibility, it is therefore for the best that the organization emphasizes expressly that it has the required competence to tackle the crisis. Explicitly expression of assurance and feelings of optimism and understanding to employees might also lead to the emergence of more positive emotions in employees. For example, the study showed that stealing thunder might affect the extent to which employees exhibit empathy for the organization.

The fourth practical implication regards the cultural diversity of the workforce. The study's results have also made clear that organizations need knowledge on how to deal with employees from different cultural background when hit by a crisis. To start with, managers should know the cultural background of their employees in order to design internal communication plans that might be effective. Knowing whom the organization has at home, is a very good beginning. It is proven, based on the study results, that employees might respond to internal communication strategy based on their cultural background. Supported by previous studies, people from individualistic cultures do not think in terms of groups' benefits, by which personal goals are valued over team's goals. This means that survival as a team in times of crisis might be less important to employees from individualistic cultures than those from collectivistic cultures. By contrast, the latter group might want to save the face of others (i.e., organizational managers), and as a consequence of being more willing to trust the organization in seeking ways to overcome as a group. This finding is important for the effectiveness of trust repair, since it outlined the dual communication strategy which managers and/or communication specialists should have to implement. Important, is that internal crisis communication should also emphasize organizations' concerns for individual welfare in order to cover the values, beliefs and thoughts of employees from individualistic cultures who value personal goals over groups' goals.

Drawing on this, when stealing thunder or communicating with employees during crises, it might not be relevant to put too much stress on common organizational goals. Logically, organizational managers and their communication crisis team should have to put greater efforts in convincing employees from individualistic cultures than those from collectivistic cultures. This recommendation is especially relevant for organizations that operate in a sector

in which knowledge-intensity is an important factor. Binding employees to the organization is then more than logical.

5.3   Future research recommendation

As with all research, this one had limitations as well, which should be seen as recommendations for future research. First, it was a challenge to define respondents' cultural background in the sense of 'Who is Dutch?' and 'Who is Surinamese?'. Due to increasing immigration, countries are getting more and more culturally diverse. Thus, before the data collection it was decided to lay down the criterion of nationality. Nevertheless, this criterion was a pitfall as well, because a Dutch, due to immigration, did not necessarily have to be autochthonous. To prevent having people living in the Netherlands and who are from other countries participating in this study, as much as possible respondents were searched within autochthonous networks. It was assumed that too many immigrants might have probably biased the outcomes, especially if they were not well-integrated in the Dutch society. The possibility that "aliens" took part in the study was as much as possible prevented, however, it cannot be ruled out completely. On the other hand, this cultural factor shed light on topics for future investigation. Future research might want to study the effectiveness of culture within countries' borders, and not between people from different countries, to examine the reciprocity of stealing thunder and national culture within this setting. The point is, culture is not static, as a result of which limitation to only countries' borders when assessing culture could lead to misinterpretation. With each immigration flow, people are exchanging ideas, feelings, views, and values with one another. Subsequently, finding out if these exchanges matter, is a point for further consideration.

Second, this study used an experiment as research method. An experiment has many advantages such as the opportunity to examine settings that would not be able to investigate in real settings. For this experiment, respondents were asked to imagine working for a fictive company and to exhibit their emotions and feelings based on that imagination. The choice of a fictive company was made, because it would be very difficult to investigate real situation, since organizations and their employees in crisis would not want to participate. However, a study done in a realistic setting might lead to different results. Therefore, it is suggested that future studies should try to investigate the effectiveness of stealing thunder in a real

organization and try to capture employees' real emotions. Another suggestion regards the exploration of specific emotions which employees may exhibit during a crisis situation attributed to the management.

Third, the manipulation focused on a company in the transport sector that was encountering a financial crisis. Another sector and or crisis type could have another impact on respondents' emotions and willingness to forgive. Future research might want to focus on other crisis types and another sector. Fourth, in the context of this study, a circular letter was used to manipulate stealing thunder, which was a very lean medium to reveal an organizational crisis. That choice might definitely have affected the responses. In future research, investigators might want to use other types of media and examined whether the media-choice (lean or rich) may have an influence on the effectiveness of stealing thunder. Fifth, the aspect of willingness to forgive is divided in three parts (lasting resentment, sensitivity to circumstances, and unconditional forgiveness). These components were not tested in the present study. However, future research could focus on the meditative effects of these components on willingness to forgive, and how these interact or mediate trust, and if these effects differ across cultures.

Sixth, a logical explanation for the fact that stealing thunder had failed to reach significant main effects on all the emotions chosen for this study, could be affected by the particular emotions chosen. In the pre-test, as reported earlier, respondents had criticized some of the emotions selected. Based on their comments a few adaptations were made. It may be interesting, therefore, to choose other types of emotions in further studies and to find out if the impact of stealing might be significant. Also the moderating effect of emotions on for example the propensity to forgive, and how these emotions affect willingness to forgive, could be a future study interest. These aspects were not examined in this study.

Finally, future research can also focus on the moderating effect of the three dimensions of organizational trustworthiness, on the overall evaluation of this concept.

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Appendix A – Manipulation Stealing Thunder Dutch version

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E-mail: info@distributie.com

Interne Memo

Voor: Alle medewerkers
Van: Drs. Henny Boer, Voorzitter raad van commissarissen
Onderwerp: Bedrijfscrisis
Datum: 20 april 2013

Beste medewerker,

Onze onderneming, één van de grootste distributiebedrijven in Nederland, verkeert in grote financiële problemen. De oorzaak van deze crisis ligt aan financiële transacties die zijn aangegaan door de directie. Wij waren van deze zaken helaas niet op de hoogte. Om meer te weten te komen, is een intern onderzoek ingesteld en het voltallige directieteam is uit zijn functie ontheven. Een interim-leiding is aangesteld onder leiding van mevrouw Marion Doen, een lid van onze raad van commissarissen. Dit team heeft de opdracht om ons bedrijf weer op koers te krijgen. Wij moeten reorganiseren. Een dreigend faillissement hangt ons boven het hoofd, de bank heeft onze kredietfaciliteiten opgeschort en noodzakelijke investeringen zijn uitgesteld. Ook onze betalingsverplichtingen zijn onzeker, waaronder de uitbetaling van de salarissen. Wij zijn nu op zoek naar de beste oplossingen voor ons bedrijf en natuurlijk voor u, onze medewerkers. Echter, door de ontstane situatie zijn gedwongen ontslagen niet uitgesloten. Er zijn fouten gemaakt en wij informeren u graag hierover voordat u het nieuws ergens anders hoort. Vanmiddag omstreeks 14:00 uur wordt u allen verwacht in de Grote Vergaderzaal voor nadere informatie. Tijdens deze meeting kunt u ook vragen stellen.

Drs. Henny Boer
Voorzitter raad van commissarissen

Appendix B – Manipulation Stealing Thunder Surinamese version

Interne Memo

Voor: Alle medewerkers
Van: Drs. Henny Boer, Voorzitter raad van commissarissen
Onderwerp: Bedrijfscrisis
Datum: 20 april 2013

Beste medewerker,

Onze onderneming, één van de grootste distributiebedrijven in Suriname, verkeert in grote financiële problemen. De oorzaak van deze crisis ligt aan financiële transacties die zijn aangegaan door de directie. Wij waren van deze zaken helaas niet op de hoogte. Om meer te weten te komen, is een intern onderzoek ingesteld en het voltallige directieteam is uit zijn functie ontheven. Een interim-leiding is aangesteld onder leiding van mevrouw Marion Doen, een lid van onze raad van commissarissen. Dit team heeft de opdracht om ons bedrijf weer op koers te krijgen. Wij moeten reorganiseren. Een dreigend faillissement hangt ons boven het hoofd, de bank heeft onze kredietfaciliteiten opgeschort en noodzakelijke investeringen zijn uitgesteld. Ook onze betalingsverplichtingen zijn onzeker, waaronder de uitbetaling van de salarissen. Wij zijn nu op zoek naar de beste oplossingen voor ons bedrijf en natuurlijk voor u, onze medewerkers. Echter, door de ontstane situatie zijn gedwongen ontslagen niet uitgesloten. Er zijn fouten gemaakt en wij informeren u graag hierover voordat u het nieuws ergens anders hoort. Vanmiddag omstreeks 14:00 uur wordt u allen verwacht in de Grote Vergaderzaal voor nadere informatie. Tijdens deze meeting kunt u ook vragen stellen.

Drs. Henny Boer
Voorzitter raad van commissarissen

DAGELIJKS NIEUWS

ZATERDAG 20 APRIL 2013 — LOKAAL NIEUWS — Prijs: € 1, 40

Distributie NV in grote financiële problemen

DEN HAAG - Distributie NV, één van de grootste distributiebedrijven in Nederland, verkeert in grote financiële problemen. Zo verneemt onze redactie van zeer betrouwbare bronnen. De Raad van Commissarissen (RvC) was totaal niet bereikbaar voor commentaar.

DOOR ERIC MAHABIER

De oorzaak van de crisis ligt aan financiële transacties die zijn aangegaan door de directie. De RvC was van deze zaken niet op de hoogte. Om meer te weten te komen, is een intern onderzoek ingesteld en het voltallige directieteam is uit zijn functie ontheven. Een interim-leiding is aangesteld onder leiding van mevrouw Marion Doen, een lid van de raad van commissarissen. Dit team heeft de opdracht om het bedrijf weer op koers te krijgen. Er moet worden gereorganiseerd.

Een dreigend faillissement hangt Distributie NV boven het hoofd, de bank heeft de kredietfaciliteiten opgeschort en noodzakelijke investeringen zijn uitgesteld. Ook de betalingsverplichtingen zijn onzeker, waaronder de uitbetaling van de salarissen. Er wordt nu gezocht naar de beste oplossingen voor het bedrijf. Echter, door de ontstane situatie zijn gedwongen ontslagen niet uitgesloten. De raad geeft toe dat er fouten zijn gemaakt. Vanmiddag om 14:00 uur worden de werknemers in de Grote Vergaderzaal nader geïnformeerd. Tijdens deze meeting kunnen zij ook vragen stellen.

DAGELIJKS NIEUWS

ZATERDAG 20 APRIL 2013 — LOKAAL NIEUWS — Prijs: SRD 1, 40

Distributie NV in grote financiële problemen

PARAMARIBO- Distributie NV, één van de grootste distributiebedrijven in Suriname, verkeert in grote financiële problemen. Zo verneemt onze redactie van zeer betrouwbare bronnen. De Raad van Commissarissen (RvC) was totaal niet bereikbaar voor commentaar.

DOOR ERIC MAHABIER

De oorzaak van de crisis ligt aan financiële transacties die zijn aangegaan door de directie. De RvC was van deze zaken niet op de hoogte. Om meer te weten te komen, is een intern onderzoek ingesteld en het voltallige directieteam is uit zijn functie ontheven. Een interim-leiding is aangesteld onder leiding van mevrouw Marion Doen, een lid van de raad van commissarissen. Dit team heeft de opdracht om het bedrijf weer op koers te krijgen. Er moet worden gereorganiseerd.

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Appendix E - Questionnaire

Vragenlijst Master Thesis

Beste respondent,

Ik doe onderzoek naar de culturele achtergrond van werknemers en crisiscommunicatie. Voor het praktische gedeelte heb ik deze vragenlijst gemaakt. Het zal maximaal 10 minuten duren om alle vragen te beantwoorden. Uw deelname aan dit onderzoek is strikt vertrouwelijk. Dit betekent dat uw identiteit hierna niet opgespoord kan en/of zal worden.

U wordt alvast en oprecht bedankt voor uw medewerking!

Titinbo E. Aviankoi
Master student Communicatiewetenschappen
Universiteit van Twente, Nederland

[Start]

Welkom

Het onderzoek bestaat uit drie korte delen. Lees bij iedere vraag wat er van u gevraagd wordt. Bij iedere vraag kunt u steeds 1 antwoord geven. Er zijn geen goede of foute antwoorden. Het is wel belangrijk voor het onderzoek dat u de vragen beantwoordt volgens uw eigen inzichten. Het gaat om uw eigen mening en niet hoe anderen zouden reageren.
Er volgt zo meteen informatie over Distributie NV. Dit fictieve bedrijf zit in een organisatiecrisis. Bij het doornemen van de informatie is het belangrijk dat u ervan uitgaat dat u een medewerker bent van Distributie NV. De volgende vragen zult u aan de hand hiervan beantwoorden.
Lees deze informatie aandachtig, het is namelijk niet mogelijk terug te keren naar deze informatie en/of vragen.

1.
Heeft u affiniteit met de transportsector? *

  ○ Ja   ○ Neen

2.
Uw geslacht *

  ○ Man   ○ Vrouw

3.
Werkt u voltijds of deeltijd? *

  ○ Voltijds   ○ Deeltijd

4.

Hoeveel jaren werkervaring heeft u? *

> [   ]

Hierna volgt de informatie van Distributie NV. Dit fictieve bedrijf zit in een organisatiecrisis. Bij het doornemen van de informatie is het belangrijk dat u ervan uitgaat dat u een medewerker bent van Distributie NV. De volgende vragen zult u aan de hand hiervan beantwoorden.

> [Ga nu naar de informatie over Distributie NV]

(Insert manipulation)

> [Verder naar de vragen]

5.
Blok 1

Hieronder staat een aantal stellingen dat verschillende gevoelens beschrijft. Stel, u bent een werknemer bij het bedrijf waarover u net hebt gelezen. De beschreven situatie heeft dus betrekking op u. Welke emoties zou u ervaren? Duid bij elke stelling aan in welke mate u zich nu zo voelt. Kies het antwoord dat uw emoties het best aangeeft. Geef antwoord op elke vraag voor een beter beeld van uw gevoelens.

De antwoordkeuzen zijn (van links naar rechts): Helemaal Oneens; Niet eens; Beetje Oneens; Beetje eens; Wel eens; Helemaal eens.

	Helemaal Oneens	Niet eens	Beetje Oneens	Beetje eens	Wel eens	Helemaal eens
De informatie over het bedrijf maakt dat ik mij boos voel	○	○	○	○	○	○
De informatie over het bedrijf maakt dat ik mij geïrriteerd voel	○	○	○	○	○	○

> [Verder]

6.

	Helemaal Oneens	Niet eens	Beetje Oneens	Beetje eens	Wel eens	Helemaal eens
De informatie over het bedrijf maakt dat ik respect voel	○	○	○	○	○	○
De informatie over het bedrijf maakt dat ik	○	○	○	○	○	○

sympathie voel

[Verder]

7.

	Helemaal Oneens	Niet eens	Beetje Oneens	Beetje eens	Wel eens	Helemaal eens
De informatie over het bedrijf maakt dat ik mij angstig voel	○	○	○	○	○	○
De informatie over het bedrijf maakt dat ik mij ongerust voel	○	○	○	○	○	○

[Verder]

8.

	Helemaal Oneens	Niet eens	Beetje Oneens	Beetje eens	Wel eens	Helemaal eens
De informatie over het bedrijf maakt dat ik mij bemoedigd voel	○	○	○	○	○	○
De informatie over het bedrijf maakt dat ik mij (zelf)verzekerd voel	○	○	○	○	○	○

[Verder]

9.

	Helemaal Oneens	Niet eens	Beetje Oneens	Beetje eens	Wel eens	Helemaal eens
De informatie over het bedrijf maakt dat ik mij bedroefd voel	○	○	○	○	○	○
De informatie over het bedrijf maakt dat ik mij ongelukkig voel	○	○	○	○	○	○

[Verder]

10.

	Helemaal Oneens	Niet eens	Beetje Oneens	Beetje eens	Wel eens	Helemaal eens
De informatie over het bedrijf maakt dat ik mij optimistisch voel	○	○	○	○	○	○

De informatie over het bedrijf geeft mij hoop   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○

Verder

11.

Blok 2

De volgende vragen handelen over uw bereidwilligheid om de organisatie te vergeven voor de ontstane crisis en de gevolgen die deze heeft voor u. Relateer uw antwoord aan het scenario dat u eerder las en verbeeldt u zich wederom bij het beantwoorden van de vragen dat u medewerker bent van dat bedrijf. Geef antwoord op elke vraag voor een beter beeld van uw gevoelens.

Er zijn geen juiste of onjuiste antwoorden. Kies het antwoord dat uw gevoel het best aangeeft. De antwoordkeuzen zijn (van links naar rechts): Helemaal Oneens; Niet eens; Beetje Oneens; Beetje Eens; Wel eens; Helemaal eens.

	Helemaal Oneens	Niet eens	Beetje Oneens	Beetje Eens	Wel eens	Helemaal eens.
Voor zover ik weet, mij is bijgebracht om nooit te vergeven	○	○	○	○	○	○
Voor zover ik weet, ik ben niet in staat om te vergeven, zelfs als de bedrijfsleiding zich heeft verontschuldigd	○	○	○	○	○	○
Voor zover ik weet, ik blijf wrok koesteren zelfs als de bedrijfsleiding zich verontschuldigt voor de ontstane situatie	○	○	○	○	○	○
Voor zover ik weet, ik blijf mij niet in staat voelen om te vergeven, zelfs als de gevolgen van de bedrijfscrisis uitblijven	○	○	○	○	○	○
Voor zover ik weet, ik blijf wrok koesteren zelfs als de gevolgen van de bedrijfscrisis minimaal zijn	○	○	○	○	○	○
Voor zover ik weet, ik vergeef eerder als familieleden of vrienden mij daartoe bewegen	○	○	○	○	○	○
Voor zover ik weet, ik vergeef eerder als ik mij goed voel en alles goed gaat	○	○	○	○	○	○
Voor zover ik weet, ik vergeef eerder als de gevolgen van de bedrijfscrisis uitblijven	○	○	○	○	○	○
Voor zover ik weet, ik vergeef minder snel als ik mij slecht voel en alles slecht gaat	○	○	○	○	○	○
Voor zover ik weet, ik kan eerder vergeven als de bedrijfsleiding zich verontschuldigt voor de ontstane situatie	○	○	○	○	○	○

Voor zover ik weet, ik kan absoluut vergeven zelfs als de gevolgen van de bedrijfscrisis niet uitblijven	○	○	○	○	○	○
Voor zover ik weet, ik kan absoluut vergeven zelfs als de gevolgen van de bedrijfscrisis heel ernstig zijn	○	○	○	○	○	○
Voor zover ik weet, ik kan absoluut vergeven zelfs als de bedrijfsleiding zich niet heeft verontschuldigd voor de ontstane situatie	○	○	○	○	○	○
Voor zover ik weet, ik kan absoluut vergeven zelfs als de bedrijfsleiding de crisis bewust heeft veroorzaakt	○	○	○	○	○	○

Verder

12.

Blok 3

Deze vragen betreffen de betrouwbaarheid van het bedrijf. Relateer uw antwoord aan het scenario dat u eerder las en verbeeldt u zich wederom bij het beantwoorden van de vragen dat u een medewerker bent van het bedrijf. Er zijn vijf antwoordmogelijkheden op een 5-puntenschaal die lopen van 1. "In zeer lage mate" tot 5. "In zeer hoge mate". Vink het antwoord aan dat het meest beschrijft wat u voelt.Geef antwoord op elke vraag voor een beter beeld van uw gevoelens.

	In zeer lage mate			In zeer hoge mate	
Dit bedrijf is bekwaam om haar verplichtingen na te komen.	○	○	○	○	○
Dit bedrijf is bekwaam om de crisis goed aan te pakken	○	○	○	○	○
Dit bedrijf houdt rekening met de rechten van medewerkers	○	○	○	○	○
Dit bedrijf houdt rekening met het lot van medewerkers	○	○	○	○	○
Dit bedrijf handelt oprecht	○	○	○	○	○
Dit bedrijf handelt op integere manier	○	○	○	○	○

13.

	In zeer lage mate			In zeer hoge mate	
Overall, ik zou dit bedrijf weer vertrouwen	○	○	○	○	○

U gaat nu naar het laatste deel van de vragen

14.

Uw schoolopleiding *

○ Lagere school

○ MAVO/MULO/LBO

○ HAVO/MBO

○ VWO

○ HBO

○ WO/Universitair

15.

In welk land woont u? *

○ Nederland

○ Suriname

○ Anders

16.

Welke nationaliteit heeft u? *

○ Nederlandse

○ Surinaamse

○ Anders

17.

Wat is uw leeftijd? *

[   ]

Dit is het einde van de vragenlijst.