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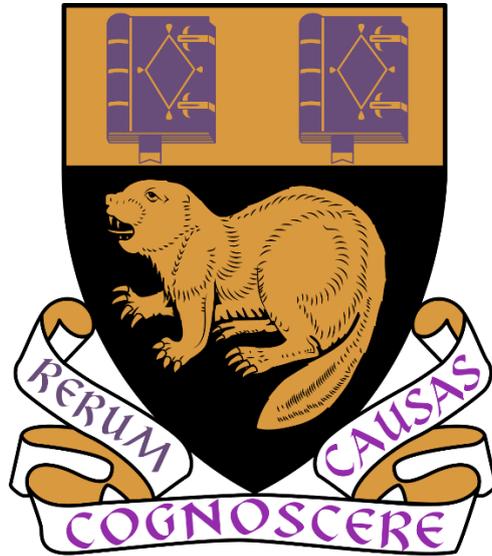
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THE LONDON SCHOOL
OF ECONOMICS AND
POLITICAL SCIENCE ■

**‘Skewed Priorities and Serious Mismanagement’:
An Examination of the Crisis Communications Practices
of Oxfam GB in the Wake of the 2011 Oxfam-Haiti Scandal**

Candidate Number: 45281

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*Dissertation (MC499) submitted to the Department of Media and Communications,
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in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
MSc in Politics and Communication.*

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1.0 Acknowledgements

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2.0 Abstract

The 2011 Oxfam-Haiti scandal relating to sexual misconduct by Oxfam GB staff while responding to the 2010 earthquake was the largest public relations crisis for the charity of its decade. This dissertation takes this case study as a means to examine the relationship between humanitarian aid organisations and crisis communications, with relation to strategic communications planning models. Through a critical discourse analysis of Oxfam GB's output over the course of this scandal, examining written and verbal communications, this research seeks to examine why the crisis continued to worsen for Oxfam GB. This research argues that a failure of strategic communications modelling, stakeholder evaluation, and environmental scanning allowed for the persistent failings of their communications policy in relation to the scandal.

3.0 Introduction

In January 2010, a 7.0 magnitude earthquake struck the Caribbean nation of Haiti, devastating the developing nation's infrastructure and was responsible for over 230,000 deaths (*Haiti Devastated by Massive Earthquake*, 2010; *Haiti Quake Death Toll Rises to 230,000*, 2010). International aid groups quickly sought to provide relief to the hundreds of thousands who were injured or affected in any way, and one of the largest groups to do so from the United Kingdom was flagship charity Oxfam GB.

The research here closely examines the crisis communications practices of Oxfam GB, focusing primarily on the scandal that emerged in 2011, where seven Oxfam GB staff members operating in Haiti, in the wake of the 2010 earthquake which caused widespread destruction, were found to have committed numerous counts of sexual misconduct while working on relief projects in the country. It will also crucially examine why the scandal continued to worsen for Oxfam GB, despite their attempts to quash the story in the media. These staff, including Haiti country director for Oxfam Roland van Haumerweiren who came under particular media attention for paying young women for sex in his Oxfam villa, were found in an investigation in February 2018 by British newspaper *The Times of London* to have been either allowed to resign or be sacked, and subsequently Oxfam GB came under significant press, public, and governmental scrutiny for their handling of the crisis at the time and in its wake (O'Neill & Haddou, 2018). The crisis was compounded by poor management, and further revelations that van Haumerweiren had been accused of sexual misconduct before his posting in Haiti, when he was working in Chad in 2006 (O'Neill, 2018). Furthermore, van Haumerweiren was accused of using prostitutes while working for UK health charity Merlin in Liberia between 2002 and 2004 – an incident which saw him fired from the charity before being hired as Oxfam's country director in Chad (*Oxfam Scandal: Ex-Haiti Director Denies*

Paying for Sex, 2018). This incident for Oxfam GB became national and international news and formed their most significant public relations crisis of the 2010s.

The scandal, while the events it related to took place largely in 2011 with regular reference to sexual misconduct by Oxfam staff under van Haumerweiren's leadership in Chad in 2006 where the charity was accused of failing survivors, became mainstream headline news throughout February 2018, and Oxfam's communications practitioners had to react rapidly day-to-day to new revelations emerging in the press (*Oxfam Scandal: Ex-Haiti Director Denies Paying for Sex*, 2018). Press coverage and public and governmental outrage was hugely damaging for Oxfam GB, with reports of 100 jobs being cut and a £16 million drop in funding as a result of the crisis (*Oxfam Faces £16m of Cuts after Haiti Sex Scandal*, 2018). The handling of this crisis by Oxfam GB's communications team was poor, and fanned the flames of the scandal, by inadvertently presenting Oxfam and its executives as untrustworthy, angering Oxfam's hundreds of thousands of regular donors and the public alike.

This dissertation will draw on three topics of communications academic literature – that of humanitarian communications, crisis communications, and strategic communications. While humanitarian communication practices have been explored as an metamorphosing medium, where the organisations relation to the public is changing slowly over decades, little has been written on how humanitarianism and crisis communications intersect, and this paper seeks to make inroads into this crossover (Chouliaraki, 2013). This will be researched through critical discourse analysis, using a post-structuralist lens on the method to derive implied and subconscious meaning, allowing this research to explore how their crisis communications manifested in the press, statements, and interviews (Eagleton, 1983; van Dijk, 1997).

On 10 February 2018, *The Times of London* ran a leading article entitled ‘Opaque Transparency’. In this article the paper stated that “full transparency is nothing less than a survival strategy now”, as for Oxfam the previously-irreproachable humanitarian aid group had to fight for its existence, with crisis communications employed daily, and fury continued to erupt over staff conduct and a suspected cover-up (*Opaque Transparency*, 2018).

4.0 Theoretical Chapter Introduction

In the following chapter I will explore three main bodies of literature, namely by first examining writing closely assessing how communications scholars have perceived communications practices from humanitarian aid groups thus far, and the manner in which they operate through a postcolonial and orientalist lens. Similarly, crisis communications have often been theorised within strategic communications, with academics and writers formulating various models for how to effectively handle crises with minimal damage to the organisation. Strategic communications theory and paradigms must be considered when evaluating the manner in which humanitarian aid groups respond to crises in their organisations, alongside a conceptual framework that examines the communicative space in which these organisations operate, with close attention to the *public sphere* theory. These theoretical considerations will inform this evaluation of the past research of humanitarian communications, crisis communications and strategic communications.

5.0 Literature Review

5.1 Humanitarian Communications

The media and communications practices of humanitarian aid groups has been explored in recent years largely in relation to their advertising to the public in order to solicit donations (Boltanski, 1999; Chouliaraki, 2010b, 2013). Chouliaraki (2013) notes that aid groups have experienced a paradigmatic shift from a politics of pity, towards an instrumentalization of aid and development, whereby there is a move by aid groups towards a self-oriented framework of profitable performance. This is a move away from a previously typical model of communicating to the potential donor that their contribution could alleviate the suffering of the group or individual depicted. Chouliaraki (2013) draws a distinction between two different humanitarian models – modern humanitarianism and post-humanitarianism, with this concept, the politics of pity, central to the distinction between the two . Modern humanitarianism relies upon the maintenance of the divide between economic utilitarianism and the logic of a sentimental obligation towards the sufferer – a universality drawn between people in order to evoke an emotive response which results in a donation or support for the organisation. Modern humanitarianism diverges with post-humanitarianism in that post-humanitarianism sees the line between this economic utilitarianism and sentimental obligation blurred – this hybridity leading to the paradigmatic shift in communications which has followed, and the social awareness that these organisations have come to appropriate.

This is supported by Alcott in her examination of humanitarian aid groups' communication methods as she highlights the problematics of western organisations appropriating the voice of the 'sufferer' – this clear shift away from a politics of pity towards a quantifiable, market oriented model for aid groups has been identified in literature (Alcott, 1991). In this theoretical context humanitarian aid groups are presented as being too reliant

on market forces when it comes to their strategic communications, and as a result invite criticism of their practices. Orientalist thought highlights the manner in which the West allows itself to perceive the East, the ‘other’, through locating the extent to which a culture is similar to our own and thus it’s relation to the idea of ‘civilisation’ (Said, 1978: 2019). Humanitarian communications have long fallen into this model, with stark images of destitute sufferers being reproduced in promotional materials over decades, with a recent trend away from the traditionally exploitative imagery of suffering. Merely replicating through photographs and film images of the hegemonic world order does little to address the root of the issue, and perpetuates the exploitation of the sufferer in marketing materials (Shome & Hegde, 2002).

Chouliaraki refers to the ‘Theatricality of Humanitarian Communication’, which is perceived as the site where the persecutor, benefactor and sufferer meet in the media (Chouliaraki, 2013). Humanitarian groups have used this axis between the three figures in their communication model to highlight the role particularly of the benefactor in their communications to the public. The divide between sufferer and benefactor is bridged simply by ‘a deliberate act of imagination’ – the public, who are an active participant in this three-pronged model for humanitarian communication, are making a conscious choice to engage and try to find unity with the sufferer, whose lifestyle is so far removed from their own (Boltanski, 1999: 38). The desire to find solidarity across borders is a bio-politics which transcends traditional media to social media platforms too, with online solidarity becoming an increasing feature of the direct relationship between the public and the humanitarian organisation. The role of clicktivism on social media has been widely discussed in political communications discourse (Büchel et al., 2018; Mazzoleni & Bracciale, 2018; Williams & Gulati, 2013), with the technologization of humanitarian communications being a central concept in how these groups adapt to twenty-first century communications. Chouliaraki

(2013: 15-17) describes this idea as the invitation to self-expression without a normative morality, brought about by a rise in public apathy to the traditional iconographies of suffering which had been their primary exposure to humanitarian organisations in the decades prior. This technologization has led to a more cosmopolitan relationship with the public, who are now able to get selectively involved with humanitarian causes from their own home or phone, through brief interactions online which are fleeting, and once again see the sufferer removed from their own narrative, as the spectator has engaged in a humanitarian act as both participant and spectator – the sufferer is not present.

What becomes clear from literature about the communications practices of humanitarian aid groups is the tension that arises from the paradox of their being – the conditions which they wish to alleviate, the inequalities and subjugation in which their organisations are established in order to combat – are the very circumstances which allow these groups to legitimately operate (Chouliaraki, 2013). While humanitarian aid groups receive large grants from the government in the UK for international projects amounting to approximately 30% of their total funding, the value of donations from private donors, known as *voluntary contributors*, makes up the final 70% of this budget (Atkinson et al., 2012: 172). Groups have actively moved away from traditional imagery designed to shock for this very reason – the public had grown tired of this repetitive imagery and communicators had to find new ways to solicit donations (Chouliaraki, 2013: 17). This disparity highlights the importance of communications between the public and humanitarian aid organisations – it is a necessary condition of their existence that the public actively support their work and projects, as removing voluntary contributions from the humanitarian aid budget would see groups financially crippled. This reliance on donorship leaves humanitarian aid organisations vulnerable to stakeholder pressure due to issues of social responsibility more than

commercial organisations, and any communications from humanitarian organisations cannot be considered to have been devised without this factor being a key context.

A further theoretical consideration in humanitarian communications as described by Chouliaraki are the two models of *suffering as salvation* and *suffering as revolution* (Chouliaraki, 2013: 10-11). These two forms of solidarity share similar motivations – namely the benevolence of the donor and the supporter – yet they differ in their manifestation, while both are not entirely effective. *Suffering as salvation* is a conventional conception of humanitarian suffering – altruism born of the atrocities of war, famine, or disease, with humanitarian actors seeking to save lives and comfort humanity, the style of which has been compared by Chouliaraki to the Red Cross organisation. *Suffering as salvation* fails as political aims of organisations and aid groups result in inappropriate compromises with corrupt regimes in order to remain operational, which compromises the integrity of the aid work, and also institutional inertia, where failure is not perceived due to a failure of or lack of external monitoring (Chouliaraki, 2013). Conversely *suffering as revolution* is predicated on a Marxist reading of national and global socio-economics and this mode of communications thinking was largely responsible for the rise of Marxist parties in eastern Europe (Chouliaraki, 2013). Critical analysis of the *suffering as revolution* paradigm has found that this method of solidarity results in a perpetuation of the structures it wishes to destroy (Chouliaraki, 2013).

5.2. Strategic Communications in Practice

Strategic communications literature largely examines proactive choices by organisations in their communications practices in direct relation to the public, with the organisation seeking to influence as many target audience members as possible. The latter half of the twentieth century saw significant and rapid evolution in commonly accepted strategic communications

methods (Steyn, 2003). This evolution is shown by Steyn to be one where organisations incrementally look outward from purely profit centred communications policies towards more socially aware models, which also consider the importance of non-financially committed stakeholders. This began with ‘the shareholder approach’ of the first half of the twentieth century and industrial age where profit was central to all decision-making in order to ensure maximum wealth growth for shareholders, and progressed through approaches of greater social and stakeholder awareness in the 1980s and 1990s, resting on the ‘corporate community’ approach – a model which found prevalence during the emergence of the information age and functioned as a ‘socioeconomic system with stakeholders recognised as partners who create value through collaborative problem solving’ (Steyn, 2003: 169-70).

The rise of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) dominated the second half of the twentieth century to the extent where CSR is now a key consideration for strategic communicators. This awareness emerged in the early 1980s as corporations became aware of what social-responsibility actually entailed, and how they could respond to business related social issues, and its legacy of CSR is still prevalent in strategic communications literature and practice today (Steyn, 2003). A CSR policy inside an organisation, usually orchestrated by senior management level operatives who are decision-makers for the company and are known as the ‘dominant coalition’ (Bowen, 2009), is inherently performative, and must be careful how it executes this policy, as corporate activism has the potential to weaken the role and effect of protests (Aronczyk, 2013). The action taken by these groups must be deemed to be legitimate and helpful by the public, and one such way corporate communicators achieve this legitimacy is by partnering initiatives with well-known Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), Non-Profit Organisations (NPOs) and activist groups. Aronczyk (2013) notes this forms an effective CSR strategy with Lush cosmetics, in her examination of their attempts to associate their brand with environmental and humanitarian causes in the twenty first century.

Such values, in Aronczyk's example being environmentalism and a commitment to humanitarian aid, ought to be defined in an organisation's mission statement, and set the beliefs that determine the standard of practice for the organisation (Steyn & Puth, 2000).

Environmental scanning has been explored as a key component of modern strategic communications models (Steyn & Puth, 2000; Wiggill, 2011), and represents the first step in establishing an effective strategic communications plan. The role of environmental scanning is vital in order to formulate an effective corporate communications strategy, as this process allows strategic communicators to appropriately understand their operating context. To fully evaluate the context, strategists must consider the range of relevant stakeholder groups – their relationship with the organisation and the social issues which it seeks to align itself with – events which could affect the strategy, and social issues which the strategy impacts (Steyn, 2003). Wiggill (2011) notes the importance of this feature of the strategic process with particular relation to stakeholders, as stakeholder needs must be known by the organisation in order to achieve mutual understanding and cultivate long-term relationships.

One central issue to the study of strategic communications is the role and influence of stakeholder groups, which at any one time can be of diverse number, constitution, and values. For activist publics, academic writing finds that issues and causes drive their engagement, not the organisation itself (Sommerfeldt, 2012). While all stakeholder groups and publics should be considered, they do not all hold similar power. The power-interest matrix is a model for strategic communicators to evaluate how to communicate with different groups along depending on their place on each of the axes for both power over the organisation and interest in it (Olander & Landin, 2005). It is for this reason that strategic communicators for humanitarian aid and activist groups weight the role of the stakeholder who donates to their organisation as of such heightened significance – this notion is dependent on the lack of loyalty to humanitarian organisation in comparison to commercial organisations who rely

primarily on brand-loyalty and customer retention to sustain their model. Stakeholders become publics when an issue has been recognised and the stakeholders resolve to do something about the issue, in contrast to activist groups who are already focused on an issue or problem (Sommerfeldt, 2012). This leaves humanitarian communicators balancing the need for communications which satisfy the moral requirements of activist publics who want to support the organisation, and ensuring the organisations success in key-projects is effectively communicated to the public, legitimising the group and seeking to secure further voluntary contributions. Donor retention is the most important challenge for NPOs (Wiggill, 2011), and this can only be achieved through an effective strategic communications plan. However while this is a crucial stakeholder group for humanitarian aid groups to factor in, they must also consider the full range of stakeholders and have strategic communications plans in place for each of these groups (Steyn, 2003).

5.3 Crisis Communications

Crisis communications have been scrutinised in literature as an essential, and unavoidable, aspect of strategic communications. While seeming self-evident, crisis communicators stress that the best way to protect stakeholder relationships and perception of the organisation by the public is to prevent crises, but when they do emerge the focus should be on preventing wasted time, effort and money (Coombs, 2015). This focus on damage limitation is central to crisis communications, as crisis communicators are rarely granted the luxury of foresight when tackling crises. There are three management functions in crisis communications (Coombs, 2015). The first is issues management which involves tackling trends which could significantly impact how the organisation operates, with communications focus on the issue's resolution. Second is reputation management, which places attention on stakeholder opinion, and is dealt with through direct and indirect interactions with stakeholders to ensure issues are addressed, to ensure stakeholder opinion of the organisation is maintained and

organisational reputation is unharmed. Finally, Coombs (2015) examines risk management as an introspective process, whereby communicators train corporate actors to minimise risk and vulnerabilities, proactively trying to prevent internal crises. These three modes cover the main issues which crisis communicators attempt to deal with in practice and in academic literature.

Social media in modern crisis communications is a central method for addressing crises and communicating directly with stakeholders (Eriksson & Olsson, 2016; Sellnow & Seeger, 2013; Veil et al., 2012). It has become an essential tool for organisations seeking quick, decentralised communication on an issue (Eriksson & Olsson, 2016). An important factor for online crisis communicators to consider is the notion of virality (Veil et al., 2012). This emerged from the old two-step flow model of communicators to group members, and is now a disorganised, interconnected web of networks and understandings. Veil et al. (2012) highlight the importance of user sharing on sites for crisis communicators for two main reasons: virality likely indicates that talk on the topic of crisis is also going viral alongside the initial messaging, and that sharing is the main method for getting in to as broad a range of timelines as possible online. This can assist crisis communicators in the early stages of a crisis as it means they can easily scan online to better understand public attitudes towards a crisis, and what issues must therefore be addressed as a matter of urgency. The two most popular social media sites in the UK – Facebook and Twitter (*The Most Popular Social Networks in the UK*, n.d.) – require different styles of communication. Facebook supports symmetrical two-way communications practices, whereas Twitter’s main draw for crisis communicators is the hashtag system, and the site relies on asymmetrical one-sided communications (Eriksson & Olsson, 2016).

A central concern for crisis communicators is the issue of trust – in a crisis, communicators seek to minimise the loss of trust or regain it through their materials. There

are differing ways in which this could be achieved, be it a public information campaign, a blame-shifting strategy, or through an apology and explanation (Sellnow & Seeger, 2013). The importance of stakeholders' own networks cannot be understated – the public is reliant on each of their own intricate web of social links in order to establish who they should trust, as we formulate our conception of the truth through this shared social understanding (Falkheimer & Heide, 2015). People are more likely to believe each other if they are in the same or similar networks, and so crisis communicators seek to speak to a large range of the target public in order to have stakeholders follow-up on their communication and validate information to the rest of that public. Ultimately, the public's desire to know and understand the myriad facts of the crisis situation are paramount, alongside a transparent communications strategy, and research shows that crisis communicators are able to most effectively minimise any damage to the brand value and public perception if they keep the public well informed and are perceived to be transparent (Sellnow & Seeger, 2013; Vaughan & Tinker, 2009).

Humanitarian crisis communications have been specifically theorised in literature as worthy of particular attention due to ethical considerations which are indivisible from charities and humanitarian organisations (Sellnow & Seeger, 2013). Crisis communications in this arena are especially sensitive for this reason and issues of responsibility, blame, victimhood, and equality are prevalent in how crisis communicators for humanitarian aid organisations seek to position their output.

5.4 Conceptual Framework

The notion of *The Public Sphere* (Habermas, 1964) is central to understanding the role of crisis and strategic communications from organisations who rely on the general public as a key stakeholder in their organisational conduct. The vision for a functioning deliberative

democracy stretches from the political realm to corporate, with the role of one-way communication between organisations and stakeholders as the former seeks to inform the latter to their practices through media such as press releases and statements, social media posts and direct communication, such as email newsletters and correspondence.

While there are widely-renowned theoretical flaws with Habermas' normative vision of communication, such as exclusionary issues which go unaddressed in the normative theory of an inclusive space for public debate (Dahlberg, 2014), and further as Dean highlights the empirical failings of this theory in practice when describing her model of communicative capitalism (2005). Dean highlights the failure of the public to perceive the shortcomings of social media in two notable areas – the fantasy of abundance and the fantasy of contribution. These are essential theoretical understandings as to the manner in which crisis communications manifests in modern digital and online communications. These misunderstandings must be factored into our comprehension of the public sphere in relation to social media, with the fantasy of contribution essential to this thinking – when users mistakenly believe their posting online is furthering a conversation or debate, when in fact their contribution primarily serves to circulate the primary content. This finding by Dean is vital to fully understanding how crisis communications operate online, and the actuality that the power dynamic in the online public sphere is weighted strongly towards corporations who set the communicative agenda. The reality of this failure of social media platforms, highlighted by Dean, is that corporate communicators have the upper hand initially when handling crises, in that they continually reset the conversation topic, and general users comments or replies are secondary to their message, which is more widely shared and viewed as a result. Strategic communicators set the agenda and note that on social media platforms they are best able to control the narrative in this way, as the suggestion that social media is conducive to enhancing and developing an effective Habermasian *public sphere* is

ontologically falling short when applied to political and corporate communications in the present day.

Strategic corporate communicators understand the importance of social media and online communications practices in the twenty-first century, with much written over the early twenty-first century as to the impact this new mode of communication has made for both public users and professional corporate-or-political communicators (Couldry, 2012; Dahlgren, 2005; de Waal et al., 2018). Social media now operates as a primary communications environment between political actors, corporations, and the public, whereby messages circulate on several different operating levels and levels of importance. Where previously strategic communicators needed to primarily consider the traditional media landscape, comprising primarily large broadcasters and publications, to mediate their messaging, corporate communications professionals now know that their primary audience has shifted to that of one of their key stakeholders – donors and supporters who will receive direct communication from the organisation online.

5.5 Research Objectives

The research carried out in this paper will use this literature as a framework and grounding to deepen understanding in academic literature as to how UK humanitarian aid groups have handled crisis communications in the last decade in discourse, what strategies they use to achieve reputational change, and the considerations which they have made in their work in order to limit the damage to the brand. This research will take Oxfam GB's response to media reports of sexual misconduct and an institutional cover-up as a case study to explore the relationship between humanitarian aid organisations and crisis and strategic communications, and develop understanding of the ways humanitarian organisations use, effectively or ineffectively, crisis communications techniques to preserve a positive public reputation. It

seeks to examine why, despite regular communications output from Oxfam GB, the crisis continued to worsen in the media, and what steps caused this deepening of the scandal for the charity. This dissertation will examine if and how it was a failure on the part of Oxfam GB's communications team to control the media scrutiny, and how this intention manifested in public statements and interviews. As previously stated, little has been written on the intersection between humanitarian organisations and crisis communications, so this research will form part of a burgeoning section of literature which examines this relationship.

6.0 Research Design and Methodology

6.1 Introduction to Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has been theorised extensively since the latter half of the twentieth century, with this research mode developing further into the twenty first century with the emergence of digital communication technologies forming a paradigmatic shift for the method, and researchers have sought to better understand social structures and meaning on online platforms (Halavais, 2000). Digital technology has provided users the opportunity to produce more multimodal texts, often utilising writing, visuals and sound simultaneously, in a space which uses digital practices in the production of digital texts, which are deemed to achieve specific social goals (Jones et al., 2015). This new form of mediation has made intertextuality and semantic referencing easier, with embedding and tagging key functions of discourse online (Jones et al., 2015).

CDA is a versatile tool for understanding any form of talk or text, and is often seen as a means by which to understand the subtext, or someone's genuine attitudes to an action or event (Gill, 1996). Discourse is 'the capacity of language to produce representations of the world', a definition which acknowledges the inherent contention over meaning in CDA (Chouliaraki, 2010: 96). This broad conception of discourse allows for an intricate understanding of potential meaning of any form of text or speech, with focus on subtext and contested meaning. Discourse analysis has an intimate relationship with social practices, and operates as the formal process for developing an understanding of the link which exists between the micro-level of a text, which here is the manner in which a text has been put together, and the macro-level, which is the ways in which texts perpetuate pre-existing social order (Jones et al., 2015).

Post-structuralism is a key literary concept which is intricately linked to CDA. Post-structuralists reject Saussure's view that there is perfect symmetry between the signifier and signified, in favour of a less-stable comprehension of the relationship between language and meaning (Eagleton, 1983). Post-structuralist analysts examine language as a gossamer web linking the semantics of a phrase and the signified meaning, which can be a "regular interchange and circulation of elements", whereby nothing is completely definable and all elements are influenced by each other (Eagleton, 1983: 129). Nothing is ever totally present in symbols and meaning derived from linguistic choices, yet the logocentric focus which comes from linguistic scrutiny has developed a mode of analysis which believes that in a text there can be found a complete truth which is represented, with transcendental meaning a necessary consequence of post-structuralism (Eagleton, 1983).

Foucault and Barthes' renowned work on the understanding of discourse has opened up understanding of post-structuralism and the comprehension of discourse in the field (Barthes, 1977b, 1977a; Foucault, 1987). Foucault focused on the balance between power and knowledge in his work, with his three criteria of *formation*, *transformation* and *correlation* seeking to better understand the meaning embedded in discourse (Chouliaraki, 2010; Foucault, 1987: 9-10). Foucault's discourse analysis has been criticised for being unsystematic, and always defining discourse against a research question, inadvertently limiting the researcher's study of a text or talk, whereas recent developments in CDA focus on the practice as a matter of specific and concrete actions which achieve a social goal (Andersen, 2003). Despite these limitations, the focus on context which he theorised is essential to a modern conception of CDA, and this attention sustains Foucault's importance on the form. Barthes' contribution, too, was significant, as he led a paradigmatic shift for literary analysts who previously saw text and talk as having fixed, definite meanings, to a

model whereby language was open to interpretation, an understanding upon which post-structuralism and CDA depend (Eagleton, 1983).

6.2 Critical Discourse Analysis in Practice

CDA has been examined for the myriad means by which to interrogate talk or text, and the recurring themes which define this methodology. Researchers into CDA have described a range of factors influencing talk and text which are of interest to analysts in the social sciences, with close attention paid not just to what is said or written, but the context of what was said or written (Gill, 1996; van Dijk, 1997). There are three key principles to analyse when conducting CDA: action, context, and ideology, and this section will also examine how these features impact the analysis of discourse in the social sciences.

Two primary types of broad discourse in the social sciences have been theorised, the first being *Discourse as Communicative Power* and the second *Discourse as Popular Empowerment* (Chouliaraki, 2010a). *Discourse as Communicative Power* draws on a Habermasian model of deliberative democracy, whereby the textualities of the public realm are replicated in all text and talk, and language is manipulated to become a vehicle of domination. Conversely, *Discourse as Popular Empowerment* finds textuality in the mediation of popular culture and how audiences re-appropriate such texts, with heightened focus on polysemy and competing meanings of texts. This research will focus primarily on the notion *Discourse as Communicative Power* as it seeks to understand the manner in which humanitarian aid groups seek to use discourse to maintain a positive public perception and continue to solicit donations.

Action in CDA is considered, due to the desire of the researcher to understand the intent of an interlocutor or actor in performing a particular speech or text action, as impacting the form by developing *discourse as action* (Jones et al., 2015; van Dijk, 1997). When

considering the intentionality of actions, researchers must only consider them legitimate if they are deliberate or intentional, with unintentional acts providing little relevance for a researcher seeking to understand subtext and attitudes through text (van Dijk, 1997). It is important to note that analysis of an action is dependent largely on the analyst's perspective, with personal biases and prejudices influencing interpretation based on the participant and researcher's own social backgrounds, impacting discursive choices and readings (Gill, 1996; van Dijk, 1997). Action leads to consequence, and so CDA seeks in part to ascertain the consequences of discourse for participants, in tandem with the implications the discourse has produced for society as a whole – micro and macro level analysis must operate together in order to fully understand the impact of a particular discourse (van Dijk, 1997).

The influence of *context* on discourse is an area of particular focus for discourse analysts, with special importance placed on understanding the social dynamics under which a particular discourse emerged. Van Dijk (1997) notes that discourse is always *situated*, and researchers must take care to understand contextual influences as they examine a text. Such influences include examining the participants and their personal biases and social background, as these factors invariably influence the inferences drawn from text and talk. Setting must be considered, as institutional settings, such as courtrooms or classrooms, exert different influence over discourse to informal settings, and the impact of a text or talk being intended for the public or private domain is a key consideration due to the norms which locations produce (van Dijk, 1997). Analysts often fail to appropriately locate and fit a text into the real world, thus when examining online discourse the researcher must seek to understand the manner in which virtual and real spaces interact in the discourse in relation to their utility, and how meanings translate across this boundary (Jones et al., 2015). Contexts must be constructed and fixed around texts, and text and context continually influence each

other, and the varying norms and rules around communication in differing contexts must be considered when conducting CDA (van Dijk, 1997).

CDA deals with the influence of *power* and *ideology* in discourse, and how these forces impact discursive behaviours. While *power* is, in discourse, residing closer to the surface of a text and can be detected often in more opaque ways, *ideology* is often harder to detect, and situates itself in implication and agenda (Jones et al., 2015). *Power* manifests itself in the relationship between people and groups, with *ideology* being the softer, broader world-views which are represented in discourse (Jones et al., 2015). The ways in which *power* is explored in discourse are wide-ranging – central types to this research being *corporate power*, *persuasive power*, and *hegemonic power* (van Dijk, 1997). These modes of power are straightforward in their intention; *corporate power* exerts itself on a text by the dominant discourses set and defined by a business company, and the narrative is largely defined by professional corporate communicators. *Persuasive power* is the ability of the communicator to influence an audience and change perceptions, with *hegemonic power* being the presence of a power structure within the discourse that makes the audience act as if there were consensus, and no commands are necessary to solicit the desired outcome for the communicator. Finally, the researcher must consider the *division of power* in a discourse (van Dijk, 1997). This term refers to the ways in which power is shared and distributed, and how power operates on and with socially constructed identities. This can also reference power and counter-power between competing organisations, for example NGOs and charities pressuring governments who break human rights conventions (van Dijk, 1997: 23).

6.3 Research Design

The research for this project is based on three tenets of CDA – how the data will be interpreted, have its ideology analysed, and how these findings develop an interpretation of the tactics used by humanitarian aid groups using crisis and strategic communications.

All raw data will be analysed by hand for recurring themes, key phrases, and incidences of power, action, and context such as those listed above and then input into a computer. This information will be collated into a Word document and be examined for conscious, unconscious, and contextual semantic meaning. Close attention will be paid to lexical choices and their implications throughout this research.

The data analysed in this paper was sampled and selected using three criteria. The first was that texts or talks selected for CDA must pertain specifically to the 2011 Haiti crisis and demonstrate Oxfam GB seeking to manage their reputation in relation to this scandal. Secondly, text or talk selected must be public – in order to best understand how Oxfam GB sought to manage the crisis through communications only material they wished the public to see can be analysed, due to a need for intention in the discourse. Finally, the context must be evaluated to ensure that there was forethought going into key aspects of the communication in Oxfam's defence. Therefore, two written press releases have been selected as discourse appropriate for analysis, one from the beginning of the media scandal in February 2018, one from the end. Similarly, two verbal pieces of discourse will be analysed – a high-profile interview between Dame Barbara Stocking, former Chief Executive of Oxfam GB, and Emily Maitlis of BBC Newsnight, and a verbal statement given by then-Chief Executive of Oxfam GB Mark Goldring. These four pieces of discourse will be closely analysed for explicit and implicit meaning, seeking to examine how Oxfam GB attempted to fend off criticism and bring about the end of the media scrutiny which had fallen upon them in February 2018.

Van Dijk (1997) explored some of the methods for ideological analysis which will be used in this research. These tools all relate back to the *intention* of the communicator or corporation in their discourse, and the version of the world they seek to communicate. Such techniques include examining *schematic organisation*, *lexicalisation*, and *rhetorical devices*. These devices illustrate a relationship that will be explored in this research – forming the link between ideological power and persuasive power, and the maintenance of the status quo.

For the two pieces of text, they were drawn verbatim from Oxfam GB's website as press releases and used in this form for this project. The interview with Stocking and the verbal statement from Goldring were both sourced from online video sources, YouTube and the BBC Two website, and transcribed initially through an online artificial-intelligence transcription site before a manual check, with grammar added in, by the researcher.

Ultimately, this discourse must be interpreted not by computers, but manually, and the inferences drawn are subject to the ethics and biases of the researcher. These conclusions will be qualitative, and subject to the limitation of researcher positionality.

6.4 Limitations and Ethics

A primary concern for a researcher using CDA is that of paying close attention to how language uses unbalanced power relationships, and how hegemonies are reflected in discourse to propagate domination (Graham, 2018). Within a post-structuralist framework, Barthes' *The Death of the Author* (1977b) lays out a model for interrogating each and every linguistic choice on its semiotic merit, rather than exploring whether or not there is an intrinsic bias stemming from both the background of the researcher and that of the communicator. When conducting CDA on strategic communications, context is an essential facet of this analysis, so this research will not be limited by literary post-structuralist theory but will draw on these notions to give a further interpretation of the text or talk.

Close attention must be paid to the positionality of the researcher, and the semiotic connections which their socio-economic background impacts their understanding and interpretation of a text or talk. The researcher in CDA must consider how language is being manipulated by both the researcher and communicator which impact the interpretation of a text, and as a result researchers must reflexively question their own values and relation to the action which is being performed through the discourse (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2013). To divide an analysis of semantic meaning from issues of personal morality is to ignore an essential facet of language, that it is personal and inherently biased based on the background of the researcher (Graham, 2018).

In order to address these ethical concerns this research was reviewed by an academic peer, ensuring that initial semiotic findings were reasonable, and to lessen the impact of researcher positionality on the analysis drawn. Primary findings were discussed until consensus was found in relation to specific meanings and contentions. Due to the texts receiving analysis being public domain there was no need to anonymise findings drawn from the primary research, and so while this means to combat personal researcher bias is flawed, it accounts for moderating some personal researcher bias.

7.0 Analysis

7.1 Introduction to Analysis Chapter

Following on from the literary and conceptual framework of Chapter 5 and the methodological concerns of Chapter 6, this chapter will form the data analysis and discussion chapter for this research paper. For full, annotated transcriptions of the discourse analysed in this section please consult the appendix of this paper. The critical discourse analysis of the following chapter will be based on two written press releases, one verbal statement, and one two-sided interview to fully understand the tactics and intentions of Oxfam GB in this period, and references for each of these statements and interviews can be found in the bibliography of this dissertation.

7.2 Press Releases

Over the course of February 2018, Oxfam GB's primary crisis communications strategy was to release direct, fact-based press releases in response to allegations in the British media about a cover-up of sexual misconduct seven years prior, and hope that these statements would address any allegations of impropriety by the charity. The secondary aim was to demonstrate and regularly reiterate that this incident happened seven years ago, and due to the investigation and an update of safeguarding practices the organisation was fundamentally different in 2018 and should be considered trustworthy going forward. This strategy was largely unsuccessful, as the scandal continued to develop for the weeks following the story breaking on 9 February 2018. Press releases and pre-prepared statements are highly appropriate for critical discourse analysis and allow for different semantic conclusions to be drawn rather than interviews, as they are carefully crafted and always seek to perform an action for the organisation.

One regular tactic used by Oxfam GB's crisis communications team in press releases was their manipulation of context to distance the present-day organisation from that which made mistakes seven years before. In their first press release on 9 February the opening line establishes the context that Oxfam does not condone the actions of these men, and also that they are seven years hence – “The behaviour of some members of Oxfam staff uncovered in Haiti in 2011 was totally unacceptable, contrary to our values and the high standards we expect of our staff.” This is a deliberate effort, at the first opportunity, to highlight to the audience that the incidences reported in the media are distant and not reflective of Oxfam's current conduct, as they later state that none of the staff involved worked for Oxfam at the time of this statement's publication. A key phrase to pick out from this statement is “contrary to our values,” given that this specific lexical choice recurs in Oxfam's crisis communications. Oxfam GB Chief Executive Mark Goldring repeated this phrase a day later, an interpretation of which would suggest that this phrase has been circulated through the organisation as one to repeat to clearly demonstrate that the instances of sexual misconduct are unrepresentative of Oxfam GB. It highlights an awareness from Oxfam GB of CSR, and their moral obligations to the wider community as an organisation in the twenty first century, and ensures listeners that Oxfam holds these values closely in all their present-day operations. In neither the press release nor Goldring's statement are these values described, and so they are defined solely against the misconduct allegations Oxfam sought to distance itself from. Oxfam, in their more succinct earlier press releases, gave less information in statements so as to limit damage, but the power dynamic was not with them at this early stage, despite the story being in its infancy. A fuller, detailed initial statement outlining Oxfam's values and work would have been more effective than merely setting themselves against the conduct of former staff, some of whom were not dismissed by Oxfam GB, but instead were permitted to resign before the conclusion of the internal investigation.

Oxfam persistently referred to its internal investigation in press releases as a means to prove that they were proactive in their attempts to root out this behaviour from their organisation. “[Oxfam GB] immediately launched an internal investigation,” their 9 February press release claims. Correspondingly on 11 February they expand upon the influence of this investigation, listing the creation of a “dedicated safeguarding team” and “a confidential whistleblowing line” amongst myriad and nameless “more comprehensive policies”. These policy changes are again referenced in Oxfam’s final press release on Haiti that month on 22 February, noting their procedures were “inadequate at the time and are still in need of strengthening today”. Through these references it is possible to chart Oxfam GB’s changing crisis communications policy as they found it to be failing – donations were being cancelled, they faced governmental criticism, and new stories continued to emerge in the British media for weeks after the initial story broke. This discursive shift can be categorised as one towards humility – the early press releases were confident in their assurances that Oxfam GB’s investigation and its outcome were robust and thorough. However, public opinion, demonstrated by thousands of donors cancelling regular donations to the charity, was clear that Oxfam had not done enough and continued to not do enough to protect vulnerable groups, and had failed to punish those who committed acts of sexual misconduct. This shifted the power balance from being dominant by Oxfam, who could set the agenda and key discursive points in their one-sided press release communications, towards changing their description of their policy to one of listening and still learning. It was important for Oxfam GB to acknowledge this in their discourse; the public was especially angry for reasons including the notoriety of Oxfam as a charity, the nature of the misconduct, the fact Oxfam receives millions of pounds in public funding from the government, and this obfuscation as to the response from the group, causing the tonal shift seen in the press releases (Aitkenhead & Beaumont, 2018). In terms of strategic communications practice, this is a failure of

environmental scanning (Wiggill, 2011). If Oxfam GB had successfully evaluated the stakeholder groups involved in their public relations policy, they would have better understood the initial anger. Instead they treated all stakeholder groups with the same communications tactics, which was inherently flawed and led to these missteps in their communications output which deepened the crisis for Oxfam GB.

A central issue for Oxfam GB was the allegation that they had been covering up the severity of the misconduct, investigation, and dismissals process for each of the seven men found to have been involved. The importance of presenting themselves as a transparent organisation in these press releases was paramount, as they sought to calm public and governmental concerns about their conduct and handling of the crisis. For this reason, transparency was a central theme in the two press releases sent out by Oxfam on 9 February 2018. From the press release entitled, *Oxfam response to The Times story* on that date their second paragraph deals with this directly, “Our primary aim was always to root out and take action against those involved and we publicly announced, including to the media, both the investigation and the action we took as a result.” In the statement *Oxfam’s reaction to sexual misconduct story in Haiti*, they explicitly refer to their new safeguarding system as “open and transparent”. Insistence on transparency only proved to backfire on Oxfam GB’s crisis communications strategy, as revelations continued to come out about mismanagement of the crisis. In highlighting specifically that this information was given to the media some time ago, a sub-textual interpretation of this suggests that this press release seeks to undermine public confidence in the media – it alludes to the notion that the media is the group not giving the public the full story – failing in its Habermasian duty to enrich debate by giving the public the full facts and information (Dahlberg, 2014; Habermas, 1964). The action attempted here by Oxfam GB’s crisis communications output is to cast doubt on media reporting so as to undermine criticism which was levied at them throughout February. Attempts to

undermine the media and present itself as transparent continued throughout the February press releases, as late as 22 February 2018 stating that they were willing to be open and cooperate with the Haitian government as much as possible in a bid to “[re-establish] trust and partnership, given [Oxfam’s] 40-year history with Haiti and its citizens.” Insisting that they are being open with authorities and the people in a bid to cultivate trust is heavy-handed, given the forcing of the inclusion of Oxfam’s 40-years of work in Haiti directly after. This does mark a tonal shift however, moving from an assertion that Oxfam has been sufficiently open in the past, to undermine criticism of them, to one of acceptance that there is more they need to do to justify public confidence in them, their staff, and their work, and they must visibly open up in the present and future, rather than obstinately claiming they had been fully transparent in the past.

7.3 Dame Barbara Stocking on BBC Newsnight

An essential line of defence for Oxfam GB was Dame Barbara Stocking, who had been Oxfam GB Chief Executive from 2001 to 2013 and was, crucially, responsible for Oxfam GB’s policy in dealing with the allegations in February 2011 and its aftermath. Stocking was, on 10 February 2018, interviewed for high-profile BBC news and current affairs programme *Newsnight* and attempted to mount a defence of hers and Oxfam GB’s decision-making at the time. This high-profile, and crucially high-risk, interview was one of the most significant crisis communication strategies employed by Oxfam GB in relation to the 2011 Haiti scandal, and by introducing into the public sphere the opinion of a former Oxfam boss, Oxfam GB sought to assuage any concerns about its current conduct, and clear up issues that arose in 2010 and 2011.

It is important to note the context of this piece when utilising CDA to interrogate it, due to the impact of context on the understanding of discourse. Stocking was being

interviewed in the immediate days following the story breaking regarding a cover-up at Oxfam GB in relation to these incidents of sexual exploitation by staff. Similarly at all points Stocking would have felt significant pressure, stemming from the unnatural environment of a television interview setting, rigorous interviewer questioning from Emily Maitlis, and her understanding that it is specifically her conduct that is under scrutiny here, given her leading role at Oxfam GB during the crisis. She conducted this television interview without notes and did not have the support of a team to help her develop answers, as a communications team would likely have done for press releases and statements. The fact that this interview took place on this day is essential context too, with high-profile articles in *The Times of London* that day accusing Oxfam GB of opacity and misconduct, putting Stocking in front of a national news programme was intended to assure viewers that Oxfam GB was not shying from scrutiny, but taking questions as they came with measured answers. In providing the former Chief Executive to the public to defend the actions taken by the charity in 2011, Oxfam's crisis communications achieve two things. Firstly, they highlight the temporal difference between the Oxfam of 2018 and 2011 – it signals a cultural shift within the organisation that they have new leadership and direction for the charity. Secondly, it shows Oxfam is willing to put itself up to scrutiny; without the mainstream press speaking directly to those in charge, wider discourse on the topic of the scandal is narrow and suggests a lack of transparency. This was a primary concern for Oxfam's crisis communications, and they sought to prevent such criticism by the symbolism of a figure talking on a headline BBC news show.

The primary action Stocking wished to achieve with her discourse in this interview is changing viewer perception – she would have well understood the role this interview must perform and she makes key semantic choices which are intended to address viewer concerns about Oxfam GB and its transparency. Stocking showed this in her thematic repetition of

transparency in her first response to Maitlis about the Charity Commission having not seen the full Oxfam report, “we told them – we informed them about it, reported to them about it – and they say that there were no regulatory concerns about it.” Stocking used three different phrasings to convey the same point, highlighting her crisis communications preparation for this interview where she will have drilled insistence on transparency, given the criticism over this issue. The lexical choice taken by Stocking does not help her bid to appear transparent with “no regulatory concerns” being overly specific and irrelevant to the issue of misconduct or the opacity of Oxfam GB. It gives the impression that Oxfam GB was found to have acted properly and without contention in response to the Haiti crisis, yet the specificity of her claim highlights that she is avoiding talking about the ethical concerns raised by the press and government in February 2018.

Stocking’s discourse utilises a subtle blame-shifting strategy throughout the interview. Stocking is keen to highlight the lack of legal wrongdoing by Oxfam GB, staff, or herself, in the interview and puts the responsibility for the lacking Oxfam GB response on lawyers. “We took legal advice in Haiti, and it was made quite clear that the police would not be interested in this,” she claims in her final interview answer – yet this crisis communications strategy is not as robust as intended. The intended action for this discourse is to justify a lack of action from Oxfam GB as being compliant with UK and Haitian law, and that advice was followed and criticism of this aspect of the response is unjustified. It fails as the legalities of the crisis was not an area of primary interest for viewers, and is a weak attempt to move the conversation over to an area Stocking is more comfortable with. She enforces a blame-shifting strategy earlier in the interview too, when questioned about previous sexual misconduct at Oxfam GB that she was aware of. Semantic choices once again highlight Stocking’s intention for damage limitation from this interview, she distantly refers to those who committed acts of sexual exploitation in Haiti as “those people” – immediately casting a

moral divide between herself and Oxfam GB, and the perpetrators of this misconduct. In stating in the same answer that, “these sorts of things are around in all sorts of parts of the world,” she not only distances herself from any specific sexual misconduct committed by her staff while she was chief executive, but passes blame onto other humanitarian aid groups, NPOs, and NGOs. This is not an effective strategy for Oxfam GB as it highlights that the organisation has known about incidents of misconduct and abuse for many years and, while it may not have been perpetrated by members of their own staff, they are still failing to report it, compounding public suspicion that Oxfam GB is covering up stories such as this. Oxfam GB and Stocking spoke several times of how this incident does not reflect Oxfam’s values, with CSR operating key facet of humanitarian aid groups in order to justify and receive public funding

In her interview Stocking slips, and states that Oxfam’s main concern was making the scandal go away, rather than seek justice for those who were exploited. Her aim was to “get the whole lot of them dealt with and out of the way” – this is contextually highlighted as a mistake given that she says this under sustained pressure from Maitlis approximately one-third of the way through her interview, this was not her initial statement on Oxfam’s policy. Her semantic choices are interesting here as she lexically distances herself from the concept of the abusers by referring to them as “the lot of them”. There are no names given at any point in the interview by Stocking, with only van Haumerweiren referenced once by Maitlis in her first question. This likely subconscious omission from Stocking highlights the veracity of her statement about getting the situation out of the way, as she does not bring specifics of misconduct or names of perpetrators up at any stage of the interview.

7.4 Pre-Empting Donorship and Funding Concerns

Across all crisis communications Oxfam GB produced over February 2018 in response to the Haiti crisis, one essential stakeholder group that all humanitarian aid groups must consider with particular care is that of donors. As stated in Chapter 5 of this dissertation, there is a 70:30 split between *voluntary contributors* and governmental contributions, and so at all times communication professionals should be aware of the differing impact these stakeholder groups can cause, and seek to retain them as donors to the organisation (Atkinson et al., 2012: 172). Oxfam GB reported to the House of Commons International Development Committee that 7094 voluntary donors cancelled regular donations to the charity in the 11 days after the story broke, representing a loss of 3.5% of direct debit contributions in under a fortnight – stressing the urgency of this matter for Oxfam (*Oxfam Haiti Scandal: Thousands Cancel Donations to Charity*, 2018). The manner in which Oxfam GB continually referred to donor groups in their crisis communications was consistent throughout – and demonstrates a foreknowledge of the risks of losing donor groups.

In her Newsnight interview, Dame Barbara Stocking references both the Department for International Development (DFID) and public donors in her first answer to Emily Maitlis, which invites an ideological interpretation of her *topic selection* (van Dijk, 1997). The immediate referencing of these groups intends to send a direct message to these groups and the public at large that they are respected and considered important by Oxfam GB, and doubles up to show to the wider public that Oxfam GB was being transparent with authorities and internal groups throughout this crisis and acted properly.

DFID is essential to much of the work that Oxfam GB performs globally, with this singular governmental ministry being responsible for UK humanitarian aid and development overseas, through direct UK Government projects and also through supporting development

groups such as Oxfam. Oxfam GB understood plainly that DFID's concerns over their handling of the scandal must be addressed, and they sought to do this early, but found resistance from Secretary of State for International Development Penny Mordaunt when, on 17 February 2018, she announced that Oxfam GB would receive no further public funds until her department was satisfied Oxfam could meet higher standards, indicating widespread disapproval in government for Oxfam's response (O'Neill, 2018).

Signalling to DFID throughout that there has been no corporate misconduct, Stocking refers to the Charity Commission and Oxfam's own investigative structure. Her intentions in drawing viewers' attention to the fact that there were "no regulatory concerns" from the Charity Commission were explored in Chapter 7.2 of this dissertation, but Stocking continues her defence of Oxfam's conduct to governmental bodies throughout by highlighting active steps Oxfam has taken since the crisis emerged in 2011. Stocking states that Oxfam should be considered to meet Mordaunt's "high standards" in advance, given her repetition of proactive steps that Oxfam took in the wake of the crisis, however Mordaunt was clearly unsatisfied with Stocking's insistence given her response chastising the charity. She references Oxfam's internal investigation into misconduct in Haiti by staff six times in her seven-minute interview, labouring the point to ensure the audience retains the key information – that Oxfam launched an investigation immediately into sexual misconduct in Haiti so that they could remove this behaviour permanently from the charity. She introduces these factors into the public sphere so that it continually circulates through debate as a defence of the organisation online or in person, and third-party supporters have a talking point to latch on to in their defence of Oxfam GB.

Oxfam GB's crisis communications continually portray the public and *voluntary contributors* as victims in this scandal. In his press statement on 10 February 2018, Oxfam Chief Executive Mark Goldring apologises to "the hundreds of thousands of people who

support Oxfam every month [and have been] compromised by this”. This highlights two interesting interpretative understandings of how Oxfam views *voluntary contributors*. Firstly, it shows that Oxfam wants to establish an intrinsic and indivisible link between Oxfam supporters and Oxfam. This serves two purposes – initially this is intended to prevent donors from cutting ties to the charity by highlighting the vast number of supporters Oxfam has due to the renowned work they do overseas, which will remind donors why they contributed to the Oxfam budget initially, and make them reconsider splitting from the charity. Secondly, this apology heads off criticism directed at Goldring by donor stakeholders who feel let down by ignominious conduct and headlines about Oxfam circulating daily in the newspapers, and who feel their money has been spent poorly. Goldring, who at the time of his statement was Oxfam Chief Executive, was not responsible for the Haiti scandal in 2011, but communications professionals at Oxfam GB understood the need to have an apology on record from Oxfam GB’s boss to pre-empt an exodus of donors, public or private, which would threaten the very existence of Oxfam.

7.5 Conclusion to Analysis Chapter

In examining these press statements, press releases, and the interview with Dame Barbara Stocking, what emerges from this research is that Oxfam GB failed in the environmental scanning aspect of strategic and crisis communications. Their misreading of the public, press and governmental mood, which was one of anger and disbelief that such a renowned group as Oxfam could betray their values in this way, achieved a deepening of the scale of the crisis – and individual and governmental donorship diminished significantly as a result. Their reliance on reminding the public of their positive international impact and temporal distance between the crisis emerging in the media and the incidents of misconduct themselves aggravated key stakeholders, and read as heavy-handed – portraying Oxfam GB as exclusively desiring to see the end of media pressure, rather than see staff who committed

acts of sexual misconduct fully investigated and disciplined for their actions. This mismanagement by Oxfam GB's crisis communications team is notable through critical discourse analysis, and this method has allowed for these analytical interpretations.

8.0 Conclusion

The research carried out in this dissertation set out to understand how humanitarian aid groups handle crisis communications given their unique blend of essential stakeholders, notably both government bodies and their *voluntary contributors*, the importance of which cannot be overstated to charities like Oxfam GB. In the case of the Oxfam-Haiti scandal the analysis in this paper found that initial failures in the environmental scanning aspect of crisis and strategic communications led to an unpopular communications strategy, deepening the crisis for Oxfam GB in February 2018. While Dame Barbara Stocking, Oxfam GB Chief Executive at the time of the sexual misconduct, had already stood down, Mark Goldring, her successor, also offered his resignation in May 2018 as the scandal continued to cripple Oxfam's donation capabilities and overshadow Oxfam's decades-long reputation. It prompted Goldring's successor and current Oxfam GB Chief Executive Danny Sriskandarajah to say that Oxfam had betrayed its core values in relation to Haiti in his first speech in the role (O'Neill, 2018). Sriskandarajah's appointment needed to demonstrate a clear shift from the opacity of Goldring and Stocking, alongside greater humility in the months and years going forward, and Oxfam GB's strategic communications team clearly demonstrated a stronger application of crisis communications techniques to allow the story to expire in the media. Over two-years on from the crisis, Oxfam GB has continued to seek reputational change, and restore public and governmental confidence throughout 2019 and the beginning of 2020, and continued to face scrutiny as the Department for International Development continued to criticise Oxfam GB's conduct and response in the period that followed (DFID Media Team, 2019).

In terms of research reflexivity, it is essential that the researcher acknowledge their own personal biases and partiality when analysing discourse, as post-structuralist readings suffer inherent potential for misinterpretation due to the influence of the researcher on the

method. Interpretations of semantics have been carefully paired with context in order to give a reliable interpretation of meaning, which has been peer-reviewed, but bias is always prevalent in critical discourse analysis, so these findings should be taken as just one such interpretation of Oxfam GB's crisis communications in February 2018. This case study represents one instance of humanitarian crisis communications, and further study of empirical examples using these methods would expand scholarly understanding of the field further.

Further research on the topic of humanitarian crisis communications could examine similarly the manner in which communicators for these organisations have applied crisis communications techniques and examine their effects. This could be well explored through interviews with high-level figures in the charity and humanitarian aid sector in order to examine intention, as opposed to outcome. A different methodology will provide new insights into humanitarian crisis communications, but empirical findings may differ as a result. This could be well paired with surveys or focus groups to evaluate public perception of their crisis communications, in relation to the Oxfam-Haiti scandal or indeed any other involving humanitarian crisis communications, as an attempt to examine where intention and outcome intersected in these cases.

Overall, what becomes clear from academic literature and the critical discourse analysis is that Oxfam GB misunderstood the severity of the anger directed towards them, as a result their response was inadequate and achieved inflaming matters further, and they subconsciously confirmed several times public assumptions that they were operating a damage limitation policy, rather than one where people faced appropriate justice. As one of the UK's largest and most influential development charities Oxfam felt the full weight of the British media and public ire as they attempted to preserve donors, public funding, and their reputation. The analysis in this paper shows that despite attempts throughout February 2018 by Oxfam GB to shift attention away from an alleged cover-up, they succeeded in agitating

voluntary contributors and government departments alike with obfuscation and revelations continuing to populate newspaper pages almost daily. Oxfam GB demonstrated poor crisis communications practices throughout the scandal, and their critical failure of environmental scanning, through which they underestimated stakeholder moods and demands, largely caused the increasing disquiet from the British public and media in response to discourse provided by Oxfam and the crisis deepened in the media as a result, causing Oxfam GB, so far it would seem, permanent reputational damage.

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10.0 Appendix

Discourse 1:

Oxfam's reaction to sexual misconduct story in Haiti

Published: 9 February 2018

Establishes context and distance between misconduct and now.

Oxfam GB condemns the misconduct and presents them as on same side as the public.

In 2011 some members of Oxfam staff in Haiti acted in a way

'Survivors' semantic choice to empower, makes clear Oxfam will not protect perpetrators.

that was totally unacceptable and is the most appalling mark

Zero-tolerance policy, Oxfam GB seeks distance between their charity and the perpetrators.

against the high values we set ourselves at Oxfam. Oxfam's

priority is to stand fully by the survivors of such reprehensible

behavior - and to ensure that such behavior is absolutely rooted

out of our organization. We stand firmly against the

Excuses and deflection immediately after saying they stand by women and girls. Avoids accusation of blame shifting by saying no cause for complacency but brings this to fore of audience's mind.

exploitation and abuse of women and girls. That the event took

place seven years ago and involved a small number of staff is

no cause for complacency. This is not the first story of sexual

misconduct Oxfam has faced in recent months. We have not

done enough to change our own culture and to create the

strongest possible policies to prevent harassment and protect

people we work with around the world. We are doing that now

with all our effort. Oxfam today has a global and dedicated

Safeguarding approach with a best practice package of

measures to ensure we protect all our staff, prevent sexual

harassment, exploitation and abuse happening in the first place.

First mention of culture at Oxfam GB. Oxfam takes responsibility for culture but not incidents of misconduct.

Temporal comparison with incidents of misconduct given earlier reference to 2011. Suggests they are two vastly different times and Oxfam has substantially changed over this period.

Alludes to a commitment to preventing this happening ever again.

We have a Global Taskforce on Prevention of Sexual

Harassment, Exploitation & Abuse that is co-chaired by our

Executive Director, Winnie Byanyima. We want to use this

Puts responsibility onto others to inform rather than Oxfam to investigate.

opportunity to reiterate that our confidential 'whistleblowing' line is available to all Oxfam staff and all the people we work with. We know the only way to change culture and make the safeguarding system work is to be open and transparent about it. We hope we can rebuild our trust with our supporters who know, as we do, that the actions of a few do not represent all that Oxfam stands for.

Explicitly states 'open and transparent', suggests they are at all time being honest and thus all further comments should be taken at face value.

Highlights awareness of importance of donor relations.

ENDS

Establishes a link between Oxfam and its supporters. Suggests both groups have been equally hurt by what has happened.

Discourse 2:

Statement on the two-month suspension of Oxfam GB in Haiti

Published: 22 February 2018

The government of Haiti announced today that it will suspend Oxfam Great Britain's operations in the country for two months while it investigates how Oxfam GB handled the case of some staff having used sex workers during the agency's humanitarian response in 2011. Oxfam will continue working on important reconstruction and development projects in Haiti helping people from among its other affiliate members (Italy, Spain and Quebec,) but anticipates that Oxfam GB's temporary suspension will have a significant impact on its work. Oxfam helps 750,000 people in Haiti, concentrating more now on their longer-term development needs. Oxfam's annual program budget is 13 million Euros, of which OGB contributes 3.2m Euros. Oxfam International Regional Director Simon Ticehurst and Oxfam Intermon Executive Affiliate Unit head Margalida Massot met government officials today and committed to cooperate with their investigation. This is part of Oxfam's long road ahead to re-establishing trust and partnership, given our 40-year history with Haiti and its citizens. We will stand ready to engage with the people of Haiti and have expressed our openness to collaborate as much as required with the Haiti Government. Oxfam has apologized for abuses by former staff

Temporal/contextual reference which establishes distance between misconduct and now.

Oxfam GB's strategy for Haiti, stressing how many people benefit from their projects and operations.

Explicit goal of re-establishing trust with the wider community, donor relations, can only be achieved with openness and honesty.

Stresses how long Haiti aid has been going on to highlight rarity of misconduct.

Oxfam will not be deterred from mission of improving lives and delivering aid.

Highlights Oxfam is complying with everything that authorities want.

Emphasises that Oxfam is keen to restart its work in Haiti.

A formal apology was issued.

Second reference to 2011. Reminder of distance between abuse and now.

committed in 2011 and apologized to the Haitian government and people, including for procedures that were inadequate at the time and are still in need of strengthening today. Oxfam International has announced a number of sweeping initiatives to

Second apology mention. Reminder to audience Oxfam acknowledged wrongdoing.

Suggests Oxfam has been proactive in taking steps to prevent further abuse. Left late in press release to be last thing audience thinks of. Wants to drive out opportunities for similar abuses.

improve its global safeguarding policies and practices, including the establishment of an independent commission and putting more staff and resources into its safeguarding teams.

Responsibility and desire for the truth and further protections.

ENDS

Discourse 3:

Mark Goldring Press Statement

Date: 10 February 2018

I'm deeply ashamed about Oxfam's behaviour, then everybody, the 25,000 staff and volunteers, are compromised by this. The hundreds of thousands of people who support Oxfam every month are compromised by this and to everybody I do apologise. What I'm apologising for is that nine Oxfam staff behaved in a way that was totally unacceptable and contrary to our values, and that then led much more responsible staff to make decisions which are now seen as being, by some, marginal or inappropriate. But I'm not apologising for the fact that Oxfam tried to continue its work in Haiti. What we did afterwards was set up a safeguarding team that's particularly responsible to improve the quality of reporting investigations, our whistleblowing line too, and also to protect the affected people, because it's to them we also need to apologise.

ENDS

Goldring is personally hurt by what has happened and what Oxfam has done. Seeks to humanise him.

Thousands of good Oxfam staff have been caught up and hurt by this. Oxfam staff and volunteers portrayed as

Direct apology in Goldring's second sentence.

Direct address to donors shows active concerns over funding, seeks to assuage anxieties over Oxfam GB.

Specifics not given over what these men did but suggests to public that whatever they have heard these men are antithetical to Oxfam's values.

Immediate qualification over apology. Apology soundbite is recorded, then scales it back in long form response.

Makes it sound as if this was voluntary, but these recommendations came from the Charity Commission.

He doesn't have to and nobody was calling for him to. Deflects by suggesting criticism is about that rather than the sexual misconduct and subsequent cover-up. Tries to leave audience with memory of good Oxfam work, not sexual misconduct.

Seeking to help the vulnerable. Also suggests apologies to the public are arbitrary – the public has been upset but has not been wronged.

Discourse 4:

Dame Barbara Stocking Interview with Emily Maitlis on BBC

Newsnight

Date of Broadcast: 12 February 2018

Dame Barbara Stocking: The first moment I heard back in 2011, we sent an investigation team. Also, it's not true that it wasn't transparent. We put a press release out when the investigation team was investigating. We put a press release out after that, as well.

Emily Maitlis: Hang on a second, the Charity Commission said they're still awaiting the full report. And the man at the centre of this, your country director, Roland van Hauwermeiren was not even fired.

DBS: Let's take one at a time. The Charity Commission said at the time, because we told them - we informed them about it, reported to them about it - and they said that there were no regulatory concerns about it. That's what happened at the time.

We also actually told DfID [Department for International Development], and other donors-

EM: Why do they say then that they're still awaiting the full report? They're still awaiting that report from you.

DBS: Well, I don't know because I'm not still there. But at the time, there was no question that they had said, that they were

Describes action being immediately taken. She and Oxfam were concerned and wanted all information.

Did not hesitate. Repetition of investigation subconscious.

Opacity. Suggests DBS not telling the full truth.

Disparaging and disbelieving. Shows audience Oxfam did not understand the severity.

Very specific. Criticism avoided through no regulations being broken, morality and ethics not considered.

Sets context and temporal difference. She was proactive at the start even if Oxfam was not.

Addresses this criticism immediately. She knows she must address it so brings it up early.

Transparent after investigation.

Personal responsibility and failings of DBS & Oxfam GB.

Says the same thing in three different ways. Shows stress. Rehearsed as she knows transparency is what she is being criticised for.

First mention of donors. Oxfam knew they had to stop donors cancelling payments over this.

Distancing herself from criticism of Oxfam GB.

they were happy, that the trustees were taking this seriously, and dealing with it.

Consider orientalist thought. Presentation of developing world to audience, heightens abuse from Oxfam staff. Highlights supposed power imbalance.

Failure? Third-person pronoun again distances DBS from investigative team and findings.

EM: They will happy that a man hadn't even been fired for having exploitative sex with prostitutes in a disaster-strewn country like Haiti?

DBS: Well, let me talk about that. That's the second point of the question. The reason that – well – when you go into investigate, the first thing they did was talk to the country

Honesty & transparency. Use of "well" shows pressure of interview situation and that she is uncomfortable.

director. At that time, he confessed to, well, his own behaviour at least, we were very concerned if I remember, right, that, that

that we thought there were more people in this and we wanted to make sure that we could investigate and get all of that out.

Sought understanding. Vague about specifics again. Nervous about response to details?

Equivocal. Concern is insufficient.

Which is why, because he's already said, "I'll resign, I'll go," that we said that we would do that. And that took some that took some, well...

Repetition. Keeps issue fresh in viewers minds.

EM: What? So your country director had admitted to exploitative sexual behaviour, predatory behaviour, with, with young women, prostitutes in a country he was meant to be helping you and you just thought fine.

DBS: No, of course not.

EM: You thought, "We'll let him go,"- you paid him an extra month.

DBS: Well, because we wanted him there, because what we were afraid of was that there were more people there, and we

**Nervous.
Opaque.**

didn't immediately want that exposed, and we wanted to make sure we could get in, and also make sure that there wasn't any bullying of the people, now-

Suggests the reason for opacity in the media is to protect people.

EM: So you use somebody who was basically an offender to help you with the investigation?

Specific, and direct. Minimal detail or explanation.

DBS: He was an offender because he had used prostitutes.

EM: He was a 68-year-old man, using an Oxfam Villa, to invite young women to use for sex in a country that had just been through a devastating earthquake. What bit of that was normal or acceptable?

Decries conduct as unacceptable and puts DBS on same side as public. Highlights action taken. Shows Oxfam wanted these people out.

DBS: That's not normal or acceptable That's what we said at the time and I will say it now. That was completely unacceptable, which is why we did the investigation, and why out of nine people that were investigated-

Information she clearly knew well in advance as she responds quickly and with specifics. That it was drawn out by EM furthers DBS looking suspicious and lacking transparency.

EM: You literally carried on paying him.

DBS: For one month.

EM: Yeah, because you cut a deal with him. Why would you cut a deal?

Slip – suggests she wanted the issue to go away, rather than be dealt with fully.

DBS: Because we wanted to make sure that we could get the whole lot of them dealt with and out of the way when it became clear that there was a group of men who were doing this.

Nameless. Connotations of 'a group of men' in this context.

EM: Do you know why works now do you know whether three others who were fired have worked?

Incredulity. Distances herself again from misconduct issues.

DBS: Of course, I wouldn't: I'm not in Oxfam - I haven't been in Oxfam for five years. He was 68. I doubt if he's worked at all, frankly-

EM: But there are three.

DBS: We would never-

EM: Now, we don't know where they are.

DBS: We would, we would never – well, they, they will they have gone and have to make their own lives, we would never give them any reference or...

EM: Hang on a second, we don't even know who those people are. They have not been identified for all, you know, they could be working in another agency, they could be working with young women again or with children.

DBS: What we did, quite a lot, at that time, with all the agencies and being clear, all the agencies, not in Haiti only, but in countries where there are emergencies when there are conflicts. We were all working and working together to try to make sure that actually nobody that we knew was not responsible, who was who had that sort of behaviour would actually come into any other agencies - that had to be done. There are there are actually, there are personnel issues-

EM: I'm confused. Do you actually know where these people are?

Lack of knowledge. Hasn't been briefed. Attempts to let herself off the hook even though RVH worked for Action Against Hunger after misconduct. Makes herself look suspicious again.

Use of "well" shows panic, the qualification after "never" shows she realises this may have happened.

Not just Oxfam GB. Blame shifting.

Use of formal “would not” rather than informal “wouldn’t” shows stress and desire to distance herself from the scandal.

DBS: No, no. I would not know because I've been out of Oxfam for five years, you would have to ask somebody else.

EM: But isn't it extraordinary that you knew about all this for seven years? And yet this has only come to light? The kind of allegations looming?

DBS: No, not at all. Not at all. We knew, as I said, we went in, and we investigated fully out of nine people that were investigated only to-

EM: You don't think there was any improper behaviour on behalf of Oxfam? Just, just to clarify that.

DBS: I don't think so - you may have done something different

in the past, but these are very difficult circumstances.

Incidents of misconduct and abuse are not exclusive to Oxfam. Blame shifting.

Excuses. Asks the audience to consider challenges to the circumstances they are

EM: What do you mean?

DBS: What would I mean is we investigated it, what I would expect an organisation to do is, as you know, these sorts of things are around in all sorts of parts of the world. What you expect the agency to do though, is to investigate fully, and then to actually deal with those people. Umm, and actually, you know, stop them working and get them out and all the rest of it. So, no, yes. And that, you know-

Suggests to audience that Oxfam's conduct was acceptable as a result.

EM: Get them out, quietly, carry on paying them if need be, do a deal, which is what we know about-

Triple denial to show stress because RVH was paid.

DBS: No, no, no, we dismissed four of those as well as you know,-

EM: Do you know what? Your mission statement is championing equal rights for women helping marginalised women claim their rights. So why wouldn't your first instinct be to say, "This is shocking! We are rooting it out. We are telling the world that we've done this."

DBS: We did do. We did do we both we as I said, we put out a press release about when the investigation went in.

Minimal, one-sided communications output. Doesn't hold up to scrutiny but DBS believes this is sufficient.

EM: So you're saying nothing new today, nothing new about the story at all?

DBS: Well only as things that come in at that we have no idea where they've come from.

EM: Do you think that treated your country director in the right way letting him resign before he was fired? paying him off? It's only for a month at still letting him do a deal and go on his own terms?

Reiterates distance between present day and time of sexual misconduct.

DBS: I don't know. I might now, it's now seven years later, and with hindsight, do something different but at the time, that seemed like the right thing to do to make sure that this whole thing got closed down as fast as we could possibly do it.

Shutting the story down was more important than seeing justice.

EM: Was this the first time you ever heard of exploitive sexual behaviour going on at Oxfam?

Quintuple denial shows panic, stress. Vague and hints there are stories she is aware of that are not public. Looks again like Oxfam is willing to cover-up harmful stories.

DBS: No, no, no, no, because that's no, I, I can only think of one or two, you know that that come to mind. But actually, basically, we had already agreed that any sign that anybody was doing this and there'll be an investigation. That investigation was noted and went to our trustee board once a quarter. So, the, but I'm saying no-

Transparency.

EM: From, from 2011.

DBS: But before that.

EM: Before that you knew that there was sexual exploitative behaviour.

DBS: Sexual exploitation is going on and it was going on, or conversations were going on, was going on. We knew in a lot of places-

EM: With Oxfam staff.

DBS: With some Oxfam staff who had been investigated over, over, I was there 12 years. I can think of probably one actually, formally, that that I know of that absolutely was dismissed.

DBS does not go into the specifics of the case or the dismissal of this one confirmed case. Qualification of "formally" suggests other incidents of misconduct have seen staff allowed to leave informally to avoid scandal and criticism.

EM: Wouldn't it have been so simple to send out a really clear signal by getting your country director fired and investigated by police instead of allowing him to do a deal that might allow for more cases to come?

Blame shifting. Their actions were governed by lawyers and legal advice, not an ethical code.

DBS: Well, we took legal advice in Haiti, and it was made quite clear that the police would not be interested in this.

EM: Thank you very much.

DBS: Thank you.

ENDS