

The Dual Axis Contingency Continuum: Website

Erin Eckert

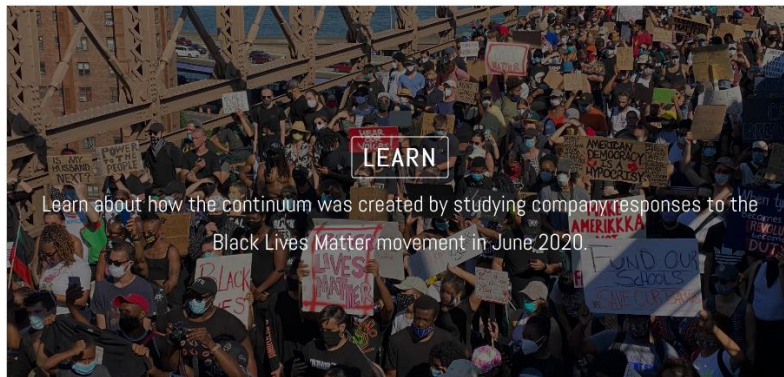
Department of Communication, Trinity University

Honors Thesis

<https://trinitytransmedia.com/dacc/>

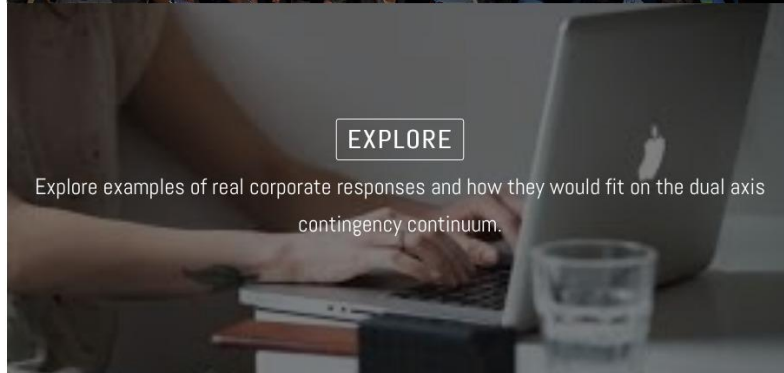
Home

The pressure for companies to speak up on current events is fueled by the unfettered access the internet provides consumers to these businesses. Old public relations strategies on the correct way to respond in a crisis don't account for the immediacy and frequency of responses facilitated by social media. The dual-axis contingency continuum was built to help public relations professionals reframe their response strategies in the face of changing social culture.



LEARN

Learn about how the continuum was created by studying company responses to the Black Lives Matter movement in June 2020.



EXPLORE

Explore examples of real corporate responses and how they would fit on the dual axis contingency continuum.



TRAIN

Train your employees to integrate the continuum into your crisis communication plan.

"File:BLM protest in New York City on June 9, 2020.jpg" by Stan Wiechers is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0

Learn

Part One – Background

The goal is to understand the new and unique role social media has played in the relationship between public relations and social justice, and how that presented itself in the Black Lives Matter Movement of June 2020.

Initially, social media sites, such as Instagram and Facebook, were built with the intention of connecting individuals with one another

As with many things in the United States, the service was quickly commodified.

Direct access to consumers is seen as a blessing to many professionals, but it also means that they can be easily criticized, called out, or called upon to voice their opinion on a tough subject matter.

According to a study published on June 10, 2020, "on May 28, nearly **8.8 million tweets contained the #BlackLivesMatter hashtag**" which was "the highest number of uses for this hashtag in a single day since the Center started tracking its use." There was also a **massive push for companies to release a statement about their viewpoints on the subject of Black Lives Matter.**

Part Two – Data Analysis

The purpose of the study was to see if the contingency continuum was still the best model for analyzing companies' crisis communication plans, or if strategies had changed in such a dramatic way after the murder of George Floyd that a new model was needed.

The Contingency Continuum

Contingency Continuum

The contingency theory of accommodation was proposed by Glen T. Cameron in 1997. The contingency theory puts advocacy for one's own interest and accommodation to another parties interests on a spectrum or 'continuum' between pure advocacy and pure accommodation. This model represents how PR professionals should structure their crisis communications responses.

Problem One

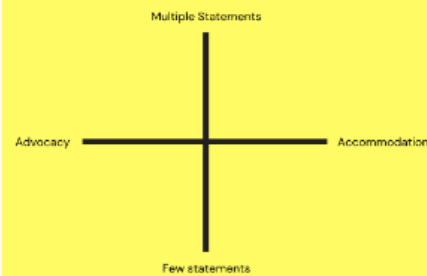
The first issue is the vagueness of the terms in Cameron's model. As listed earlier, the terms are not detailed, and often repeat (i.e., competition v competing, compromising v compromise). The terms seemed frivolous, and poorly described the trends in the data.

Problem Two

The second issue was how the scale failed to provide enough distinction to accurately describe the behaviors of the companies. Often, two companies would be placed on the same point of the spectrum even though their responses seemed very different. This suggested that the existing spectrum wasn't detailed enough in some attributes.

The Dual Axis Continuum

The Dual Axis Contingency Continuum



The new dual-axis contingency continuum both mitigates the problems with the continuum and better represents the communication environment and strategies present in and around the height of the 2020 Black Lives Matter movement.

The new model is still a continuum, or gradual scale, as the first model was. This ensures that the original problems with normative theory are still solved, and the suggestions of binary or simple solutions are still dismissed.

The new y-axis, represents the frequency of messaging with the furthest point down on the axis represents no messaging from the company, and the highest point represents frequent and consistent messaging over time.

To learn more, download the full report below.

[Eckert-Dual-Axis-Contingency-Continuum-Literature-Review](#)

Download

Dual Axis Contingency Continuum

A new model for crisis communication

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Explore

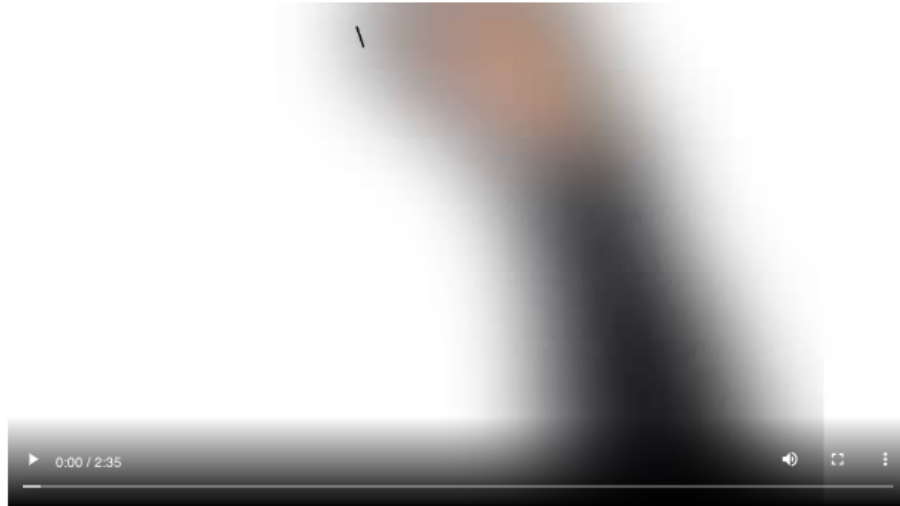
Click on a company logo to see where it falls on the dual axis continuum.



Train

Training #1 – What is the Dual Axis Contingency Continuum? (2.5 min)

This short video provides an introduction to the dual-axis contingency continuum, which is a framework for understanding crisis communication in context with digital social justice advocacy. By the end of this training, you should be able to understand why the theory was developed, what the model consists of, and how your company can use this model in your own strategic communications.



Training #2 – Variables to Consider When Using the Dual Axis Contingency Continuum (4 min)

This video overviews different variables to consider when handling crisis communication, and how those variables relate to the dual-axis contingency continuum. By the end of this training, you will be able to understand how to dual-axis contingency continuum works within existing crisis communication plans, and how it makes those plans stronger.



About



About the Author

Erin Eckert is a senior in the Department of Communication at Trinity University in San Antonio, TX. (Class of 2021). This website is in partial fulfillment of the requirements for undergraduate graduation with departmental honors. The project in full represents a year's worth of research and effort dedicated to the study of crisis communication in context with digital social justice advocacy.

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns about this content, please reach out at erine2017@gmail.com.

