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**UNDERSTANDING ALUMNI RESPONSES TO AN ORGANIZATIONAL SCANDAL**

A Dissertation in

Higher Education

by

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## ABSTRACT

In this qualitative study, I adopted a grounded theory approach to understand how alumni respond to organizational scandal and how organizational scandal is associated with the expressed affective, cognitive, and behavioral responses and identification statements of alumni. I examined alumni responses to the Jerry Sandusky child sexual abuse scandal at Penn State; I analyzed a subsample (of approximately 1,500) from more than 25,000 e-mails and summaries of telephone conversations that came from more than 14,000 alumni, directed at various organizational officials, in the year following the scandal (November 2011 – December 2012). I also considered the results from two of the university's alumni opinion surveys and six issues of the university's alumni magazine.

I found that alumni expressed a wide range of emotions and cognitions—positive, negative, and disparate—during the year following the scandal. Alumni targeted their expressions toward inside agents of the institution, outside “enemies,” and the institution. They also expressed unconditional identification (and supportive intentions and actions), selective identification (and supportive and non-supportive intentions and actions expressed in the same communications), conditional identification (and conditional intentions and actions), and disidentification (and non-supportive intentions and actions). I found that alumni tended to express negative emotions and cognitions toward inside agents of the institution and outside “enemies” so that, in general, they could maintain complete, partial, or conditional identification with the institution and its ideals.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Figures .....	vii
List of Tables .....	viii
Acknowledgements .....	ix
Chapter 1: Introduction .....	1
Purpose of the Study .....	3
Problem Statement .....	5
Terms and Definitions .....	5
Justification for the Study .....	6
Chapter 2: Literature Review .....	8
Alumni Identification .....	9
Alumni Identification and Alumni Giving .....	10
Alumni Membership .....	13
Theoretical Background .....	14
Social identity theory and organizational identification .....	14
Self-affirmation theory .....	17
Organizational stigma theory .....	18
Alumni Responses to Organizational Scandal .....	19
Affective responses .....	19
Cognitive responses .....	21
Behavioral responses .....	24
Chapter Summary .....	25
Chapter 3: Methods .....	26
Research Design .....	26
Background on the scandal .....	27
Benefits of examining alumni responses at this organization .....	31
Data Collection .....	31
Researcher position .....	33
Data Analysis .....	34
Initial sampling .....	40
Memo-writing .....	41
Grounded theory coding .....	42
Trustworthiness of the Research .....	44
Credibility .....	44
Transferability (and generalizability) .....	44

Dependability .....	45
Confirmability .....	46
Chapter Summary .....	46
Chapter 4: Answering the Problem of the Study .....	48
Emotional/Cognitive Expression .....	50
Positive expressions .....	51
Negative expressions.....	52
Disparate expressions.....	52
Targets.....	53
Inside agents.....	53
Outside “enemies”.....	53
Institution .....	54
Identification Modes .....	55
Unconditional identification.....	55
Selective identification.....	56
Conditional identification.....	56
Disidentification.....	57
Intentions/Actions .....	57
Supportive intentions/actions .....	58
Non-supportive intentions/actions.....	59
Supportive and non-supportive intentions/actions .....	60
Conditional intentions/actions.....	60
Chapter Summary .....	61
Chapter 5: Answering the Main Research Question.....	63
Emotional/Cognitive Expression and Targets.....	64
Targets.....	67
Emergent Themes .....	68
Exclusively positive expressions and unconditional identification.....	70
Exclusively negative expressions and disidentification .....	72
Disparate expressions and unconditional identification .....	73
Disparate expressions and selective identification.....	75
Disparate expressions and conditional identification .....	77
Exploratory Analysis.....	79
Identification with the institution prior to the scandal .....	79
Taint of the scandal and its fallout .....	81
Trust (or lack thereof) with the institution’s leadership .....	82
Underlying process to the exploratory analysis .....	84
Chapter Summary .....	85
Chapter 6: Conclusion.....	87
Implications for Research .....	87
Theoretical framework for alumni responses to organizational scandal .....	88
Targeting .....	89
Unconditional, selective, and conditional identification.....	90

Hirschman's (1970) framework for exit, voice, and loyalty .....	91
Extant higher education literature .....	93
Implications for Practice .....	94
Leveraging the alumni association .....	95
Listening, learning, and implementing change .....	96
Surveying for alumni interests .....	97
Fundraising during a scandal.....	97
Embracing alumni differences .....	98
Limitations and Directions for Future Research .....	99
Limitations .....	99
Directions for future research.....	100
Closing Remarks .....	102
Appendix A: Permission to use data .....	104
Appendix B: Definitions of 2nd-order themes and aggregate dimensions .....	105
Bibliography.....	108

**LIST OF FIGURES**

Figure 4-1. A grounded model of alumni responses to organizational scandal. ....50

Figure 5-1. Alumni responses: Exclusively positive and exclusively negative expressions, identification modes, and intentions/actions. ....69

Figure 5-2. Alumni responses: Disparate expressions, identification modes, and intentions/actions. ....70

**LIST OF TABLES**

Table 3-1. Timeline of events and initiatives in 2011.....	29
Table 3-2. Timeline of events and initiatives in 2012.....	30
Table 3-3. Data structure: Emotional/cognitive expression.....	36
Table 3-4. Data structure: Targets. ....	37
Table 3-5. Data structure: Identification modes.....	38
Table 3-6. Data structure: Intentions/actions. ....	39
Table 3-7. Data display of 2nd-order themes: Emotional/cognitive expression and targets....	43

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

Organizations of all types and sizes undergo scandals, including ones that dominate the news headlines. Sex abuse scandals have involved priests and bishops of the Catholic Church (*Religion & Ethics Newsweekly*, 2012) and leaders of the U.S. Military (Lerman, 2012). Corporate financial scandals have occurred at J.P. Morgan Chase, Knight Capital, Capital One, and the list goes on and on (Ono, 2012). Admissions and examination scandals have also transpired. The admission of “less qualified but politically connected applicants” to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (Maternowski, 2009, par. 1), “fraudulent ‘test prep’ programs promising to guarantee MBA admissions” to China’s graduate schools (Larson, 2014, par. 4), unauthorized collaboration on a take-home exam at Harvard resulting in what was referred to as “the largest Ivy League cheating scandal in recent times” (Tempera, 2014, par. 4), and cheating on the Air Force nuclear-missile examinations (Barnes, 2014) and Navy nuclear reactor training tests (Associated Press, 2014), are just some examples of these kinds of scandals.

Scandals threaten organizations’ identities, and challenge their values, cultures, and means for conducting business (Elsbach & Kramer, 1996; Scott & Lane, 2000; Sutton & Callahan, 1987). We know that when a scandal occurs, it can rock an organization to its core and stigmatize it for years. But, scandals also affect individuals, both inside and outside of the organization.

The organizational literature has considered organizational members’ responses to identity threats to organizations (c.f., Elsbach & Kramer, 1996; Ravasi & Schultz, 2006) and organizational members’ responses to ethical failures (c.f., Schminke, Caldwell, Ambrose, &

McMahon, 2014). Elsbach and Kramer (1996), for example, found that organizational members' responses depended on the degree of identity conflict that they experienced after the identity threat to the organization. Members employed cognitive tactics "highlighting alternate identity dimensions" (p. 461) and "alternate comparison groups" (p. 462). The responses of another important stakeholder group remain unexplored, however. Former members (hereafter called alumni), who can strongly identify with an organization, are rarely considered in the organizational literature (c.f., Bardon, Josserand, & Villesèche, 2014). Alumni are neither completely a part of the current organization nor completely outside of the organization; rather, they are partially included in the organization (Katz & Kahn, 1966).

The higher education literature has historically only considered alumni in the context of alumni giving (McDearmon, 2013), and more specifically the characteristics that predict alumni giving (c.f. Mosser, 1993; Taylor & Martin, 1995). More recently, though, the higher education literature has considered other ways that alumni support their alma mater (c.f., Weerts & Ronca, 2007). Alumni support colleges and universities through admissions recruiting, job recruiting, mentoring, and serving as board members or club officers. Some alumni also act as 'political advocates,' lobbying in support of their college or university on various matters (Weerts, Cabrera, & Sanford, 2010). The literature has also considered the relationship of alumni role identity and alumni decisions to support the institution (McDearmon, 2013).

Alumni serve important roles in advancing organizations and their interests (c.f., Iyer, Bamber, & Barfield, 1997; Muller, 2004; Weerts, et al., 2010), and they are becoming increasingly more vital to organizations. Interestingly, however, there is a dearth of research on alumni as an important stakeholder group outside of higher education. Veterans of the military represent another example of alumni who continue to serve in important capacities, and often remain strongly connected to their respective organizations. Some veterans pursue a civilian

career after serving in active-duty while others choose to continue their service through the Reserves or the National Guard (Today's Military, 2012). Others also assist with recruiting affairs and some volunteer with or attend events for the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), a non-profit organization committed to serving the veterans and the military (VFW, 2012).

In other types of work organizations, former employees also actively support and participate in various organizational initiatives (Mael & Ashforth, 1992). Such activities range from referring possible business opportunities or employees to the organization or becoming potential clients (Iyer, et al., 1997) to fostering important business relationships (Carnahan & Somaya, 2013). Some former employees, after changing jobs, also return to their previous company for employment (Tugend, 2014). Organizations such as auditing and consulting firms even refer to former employees as alumni.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to examine alumni and their identification with an organization, as well as their affective, cognitive, and behavioral responses to an identity threat that involves an organizational scandal implicating ethical concerns. Scandals that involve “severely unethical or morally illegitimate actions” can harm organizations’ reputations (Elsbach, 2006, p. 64) and inflict stigma on the organization and its members (Mishina & Devers, 2012). Organizational stigma, defined “as a label that evokes a collective stakeholder group-specific perception that an organization possesses a fundamental, deep-seated flaw that deindividuates and discredits the organization,” (Devers, Dewett, Mishina, & Belsito, 2009, p. 155) is often a result of members’ conduct. Hudson (2008) defines two types of stigma: event-stigma and core-stigma. Event-stigma “results from discrete, anomalous, episodic events” and core-stigma results from

“an organization’s core attributes—who it is, what it does, and whom it serves...” (p. 253). In this study I focus on an event-stigma.

Extant literature provides a limited theoretical basis for understanding alumni identification as well as the extent of their affective, cognitive, and behavioral responses to an identity threat such as a stigmatizing event. As “boundary dwellers” (Gioia, 1976), the relationship alumni have with the organization is far more volitional than that of organizational members. Because of the volitional nature of their relationship with the organization, alumni have the option to simply let go of their identification with that organization whenever it is threatened or stigmatized. Therefore, it may be relatively easy for alumni to respond with anger or other negative emotions such as sadness or even shame, and distance themselves from the organization once a scandal occurs. Further exploration is needed, however, to understand alumni identification and their affective, cognitive, and behavioral responses to a scandal.

I adopted a grounded theory approach to examine alumni responses, both during and after the heavily publicized Jerry Sandusky child sexual abuse scandal at Penn State, a multi-campus university located in the northeastern region of the United States. I analyzed a subsample (of approximately 1,500) from more than 25,000 e-mails and summaries of phone conversations, recorded with the university, that came from more than 14,000 alumni in just over one year in the wake of the revelation of the scandal. This period covered the scandal and its unfolding fallout from November 2011 to December 2012.

In addition to the e-mails and summaries of phone conversations, I considered the results from the university’s alumni opinion surveys from May 2012 and November/December 2012, as well as six issues of the university’s alumni magazine from January/February 2012 to November/December 2012. I read the section titled “Your Letters”—letters from alumni submitted to the editor—in each of these issues, with the exception of the March/April 2012 issue

which was devoted entirely to the deceased, legendary head football coach, Joe Paterno. Each of these issues also contained one or more stories related to the scandal and its fallout. Although my primary emphasis was on the e-mails and summaries of telephone conversations, these other sources allowed for the use of triangulation; the employment of multiple methods added an “in-depth understanding” to the overall study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 7).

### **Problem Statement**

The problem of this study is to understand how alumni respond to organizational scandal. To address this problem, I examined a main research question: How is organizational scandal associated with the expressed affective, cognitive, and behavioral responses and identification statements of alumni?

### **Terms and Definitions**

Several key terms—defined below—are important to consider in addressing the proposed problem. These terms are further examined in the literature review.

- *Alumni*: Alumni refers to individuals who graduated from an organization, or who are former members or employees (Merriam-Webster, 2012). In this study, the alumni are graduates of Penn State.
- *Scandal*: A scandal is an “ubiquitous social phenomena with unique salience and singular dramatic intensity” (Adut, 2005, p. 213) that offends recognized moral principles and shames those with some affiliation to the event (Merriam-Webster, 2013). In this study, the scandal is a heavily publicized child sexual abuse scandal.

- *Affective response*: Affect is an “umbrella term encompassing a broad range of feelings that individuals experience, including feeling states, such as moods and discrete emotions, and traits, such as trait positive and negative affectivity” (Barsade & Gibson, 2007, p. 38). In this study, emotional expressions of alumni are considered.
- *Cognitive response*: Cognition refers to individuals’ “opinions and beliefs” (Eiser, 1986, p. 53). In this study, cognitive expressions of alumni are considered.
- *Behavioral response*: Behavior refers to individuals’ “overt actions and statements of intent” (Eiser, 1986, p. 53). In this study, the expressed intentions and actions of alumni are considered.
- *Organizational identification*: Organizational identification is “a perceived oneness with an organization and the experience of the organization’s successes and failures as one’s own” (Mael & Ashforth, 1992, p. 103). In this study, alumni identification with Penn State is considered.

### **Justification for the Study**

In this study, I examined alumni responses to a stigmatizing event in the context of a heavily publicized scandal in higher education. The context for this study, and especially the rich dataset over a one-year time period, provides a means to consider the role of affect, cognition, behavior, and organizational identification in the alumni responses. This study expands our knowledge of alumni relationships with organizations in a way that is given limited attention in the literature.

This study offers three primary benefits. The first benefit is that the study provides a greater understanding for an increasingly important stakeholder group, and more specifically how

alumni identify with an organization after they leave, in this case, after they graduate. The second benefit is that the study explains the complexity of alumni responses to organizational scandal, with consideration for affect, cognition, behavior, and organizational identification. The third benefit is that the study offers insights to organizations about how alumni identification may influence their responses to the scandal or be influenced by their responses to the scandal. In practical terms, the study will inform organizations about how alumni intend to identify or disidentify with the organization moving forward, resulting in for example, supportive or non-supportive behaviors (e.g., alumni giving more or less to the institution). This information may inform organizations' alumni engagement strategies in a post-scandal environment. In fact, in the higher education context, Spaeth and Greeley (1970) argue that the number of alumni who give financially to an institution is more important than the size of the gifts. The reason is colleges and universities use the rate of alumni giving as a predictor for alumni loyalty, and therefore, the likelihood that the institution will receive further support (Spaeth & Greeley, 1970). Thus, the implications of this study will inform future alumni engagement, namely their intentions to give financially to the institution.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

According to Ashforth, Harrison, and Corley (2008b), identity is the source of who we are and why we do what we do. They argue that “it is at the core of why people join organizations and why they voluntarily leave” (p. 334). Furthermore, they argue that identification “is the process by which people come to define themselves, communicate that definition to others, and use that definition to navigate their lives” (p. 334).

College graduates—the group most commonly referred to as alumni—not only come from different backgrounds, but they maintain a wide range of values and attitudes toward their alma mater(s) (Spaeth & Greeley, 1970). Some “alumni will form ever-lasting relationships with their alma maters which will bring about a lifetime of post-graduation involvement,” and other alumni “will take the diploma, leave the institution and never look back” (McDearmon, 2013, p. 284). For these alumni, organizational membership only indicates graduation from a particular institution; it does not suggest or require any specific or formal responsibilities (McDearmon, 2013).

Although a positive relationship exists for alumni role identity and supportive behavior towards one’s alma mater, the supportive behaviors are ‘voluntary’ and they are “not required to maintain someone’s status as being an alumnus(a)” (McDearmon, 2013, p. 298). In most cases, “someone who uses the role of alumnus(a) more steadily in their own identity are more likely to engage in the behaviors that are deemed socially appropriate to increase their own status amongst the college or university” (pp. 298-299). Individuals, who define themselves as an alumnus of a particular institution, and act out that identity, are more likely to be actively engaged in efforts to support that institution (McDearmon, 2013).

## **Alumni Identification**

In a study conducted by Muller (2004), she examined some of the factors that may positively enhance alumni identification with the organization and strengthen the relationship between the institution and its alumni, adding “to a general understanding of why alumni choose to support their alma mater” (pp. 12-13). She found that alumni identification with the institution begins when the individuals are students in college and members of the community. McDearmon (2013) also argued that alumni involvement actually begins with the institution itself. Muller (2004) further argued that involvement in college and engagement with both classmates and faculty enhances alumni identification. The experiences that the individuals have as students tend to yield not only “more satisfied alumni who identify more strongly with their alma mater, but who would also promote it to others and donate in greater amounts” (Muller, 2004, pp. 320-321). Muller (2004) further posited that colleges and universities also influence a number of alumni perceptions such as their views of the institution and its leadership, their views on how similar the institution’s goals align with their own goals, and their identification with the institution as well as their contentment with the institution as college students.

In a recent study, involving corporate alumni networks, Bardon, et al., (2014) interviewed more than 20 alumni to learn how they construct their alumni identity and in turn their identification with the organization. They found that the alumni sustain their identification with the firm through nostalgia by reliving memories of the past; reproduction by acting the way they did at the firm “in their current environment and/or by trying to make others adopt it” (p. 9); validation by “emphasiz[ing] the impact they have in their current environment when performing tasks just as they did” at the firm (p. 11); and combination by “find[ing] elements of their current business environment that lead them to reconsider their past experience” at the firm (p. 12).

### **Alumni Identification and Alumni Giving**

In many ways, colleges and universities may function “as identification anchors for alumni” (Tom & Elmer, 1994, p. 58). Tom and Elmer (1994), for example, conducted a study examining the influence of “ownership of university insignia goods and related alumni contribution behavior” (p. 58). They found that the greater the alums’ identification with the institution, the more likely alumni will demonstrate their identification through the ownership of institution-marked goods (e.g., apparel), as well as express their willingness to or actually give to the institution. For some alumni, the institution may remind them of an important, life-changing event (Tom & Elmer, 1994), such as being the first in their family to graduate from college or being the place where they met their spouse or partner. This also suggests that “[t]here are cognitive and affective dimensions to the experience of nostalgia” (Ford & Merchant, 2010, p. 452). Tom and Elmer’s (1994) study illustrated the notion that alumni identification with the institution is positively related to alumni contribution behavior. Similarly, Mael and Ashforth (1992) also found a positive relationship between alumni identification with their institution and their financial and non-financial contributions to the institution.

The literature further indicates that multiple factors contribute to the likelihood for alumni support and specifically, what describes a donor and what describes a nondonor. These factors—demographics, collegiate experiences, and alumni experiences—are widely acknowledged in the higher education literature (Mosser, 1993). These three factors are described below.

First, the demographic factors include “age, sex, marital status, number and age of children, income level, and location of residence” (Mosser, 1993, p. 17). In a study considering the characteristics that describe donors who give to education in comparison to other charity organizations, James (2008) found that those who have “greater wealth, income, education, and

are more likely to be of majority racial status, have children and be married” (p. 11) are more likely to donate to education. Furthermore, in another study examining a liberal arts college, Holmes (2009) found that alumni who are “female, married graduates, who live in wealthy neighborhoods, preferably close to the institution” (p. 27) demonstrate targets for potential giving. In another study also examining a liberal arts college, Wunnava and Lauze (2001) found that among several characteristics, alumni who reside in a state with an alumni chapter are likely to donate, and in a study examining a large Midwestern university, McDearmon and Shirley (2009) found in-state residency (as a student) to be important to predicting giving behaviors in young donors.

Second, the collegiate experience factors include “extracurricular activities, degrees from other institutions, graduation date, number of degrees earned and years of attendance, family attendance at the same institution, and financial aid,” i.e., whether or not the individual was a financial aid recipient (Mosser, 1993, p. 20). Ikenberry (1999) argued on the basis of past research that “extracurricular involvement is positively and strongly correlated with donor status” (p. 19). More specifically, Ikenberry (1999) studied alumni commitment to an institution post-graduation and the extent to which present commitment to the institution is influenced by experiences as students and alumni. He found that student social involvement enhances individuals’ institutional commitment, and therefore their connection to and commitment to the institution as an alumnus (Ikenberry, 1999).

Nelson (1984) found that alumni likely to donate to their institution shared some type of undergraduate experience. According to the study, “these individuals had strong social and extra-curricular orientations as undergraduates” and “placed considerable emphasis on the vocational or career preparation aspects of the collegiate experience” (pp. 108-109). Some of the social and extra-curricular activities included joining fraternities or sororities as well as holding leadership

responsibilities (Nelson, 1984). In a later study, Wunnava and Lauze (2001) found that alumni who participated in a varsity sport were likely to give on a consistent basis, and alumni who participated in a Greek fraternity were likely to give on an occasional basis. Holmes (2009) also posited that alumni “who were active during their undergraduate years (particularly those who participated in a fundraising campaign in college)” (p. 27) demonstrate a likelihood to donate. Furthermore, Taylor and Martin (1995), who conducted a study examining donors and nondonors at a public, research university, posited that by coordinating activities that reflect their student experiences, as well as their present interests, “the level of alumni involvement with the university will increase” (p. 299).

In addition to social and extra-curricular activities, Nelson (1984) also found that alumni who were likely to donate “attached considerable importance to academic achievement and derived their greatest personal satisfaction as undergraduates from academic coursework” (p. 109). Gaier (2005) examined “the relationship between alumni satisfaction with their undergraduate academic experiences and their subsequent involvement as alumni” (p. 283). He found that the more satisfied an alumnus is with their academic experience, the more likely the alumnus would financially support and/or take part in the institution’s activities and initiatives (Gaier, 2005). Drew-Branch (2011) also found that the more satisfied alumni were with the “advising received in the major, career placement, amount of contact with faculty and career advising” (p. 44), the more willing they were to give financially. Furthermore, McDearmon and Shirley (2009) found that for young alumni, having a positive experience in college, suggested that they would donate to the university.

Third, the alumni experience factors include “alumni/ae activities, emotional attachment to alma mater, positive feeling about alma mater, and satisfaction with preparation for career” (Mosser, 1993, p. 25). In fact, on the basis of past research, Ikenberry (1999) argued that “alumni

who feel stronger commitment to their institution are more likely to donate and donate at high levels” (p. 20). Although Ikenberry (1999) found that a strong relationship exists between individuals’ college experiences and their degree of commitment as alumni, other studies also address the rationale for alumni involvement and commitment.

A study conducted by Weerts and Ronca (2007), for example, examining the characteristics that contribute to supportive and non-supportive alumni giving and volunteering, found that alumni supporters “are distinguished by their attitudes and expectations about university needs, and their personal responsibility to give and volunteer at the university” (p. 32). They also posited that alumni attitudes may be related to the notion that alumni supporters “were more likely to have initiated a life long relationship with the university” (p. 32) by attending on-campus events, for example. In fact, Holmes (2009) posited that alumni who take part in even just one alumni reunion are strong candidates for future giving. Weerts and Ronca (2007) argued that “alumni who give and volunteer have formed deeper connections to their alma mater and this may impact their understanding about institutional needs and their role in meeting these needs” (p. 32). In addition, Lindahl and Winship (1992) created two predictive models for annual and major gift fundraising. They found previous giving behavior to be the strongest predictor for future giving behavior (Lindahl & Winship, 1992). Therefore, once alumni engage with the institution, namely from a giving perspective, alumni may be more likely to give again in the future.

### **Alumni Membership**

In addition to donating, some alumni also join the institution’s alumni association. Newman and Petrosko (2011) argued that “alumni giving and alumni membership are behavioral

outcomes that assume a level of commitment and positive regard for the alma mater” (p. 739). Similar to the factors that predict alumni giving, Newman and Petrosko (2011) examined the factors that predict alumni to be alumni association members and alumni to be nonmembers. They conducted a study examining these factors: alumni involvement, student experiences, characteristics of the institution, and characteristics of the alumni. They found alumni association members to be those who were active students and now active alumni; to be familiar with other active members of the alumni association; to have positive alumni experiences and positive feelings and beliefs toward the alumni association; to be older; to be donors; and to have contact information on record with the institution, namely a phone number. Whereas, they found nonmembers to be those who earned a higher degree; to be employees of the institution; and to have both positive feelings and beliefs about their college experience, as well as the current institution (Newman & Petrosko, 2011).

### **Theoretical Background**

Social identity theory and organizational identification, as well as self-affirmation theory, provide a theoretical backdrop to investigate how alumni identification with an organization might influence alumni responses to organizational scandal. Furthermore, I draw on the literature on organizational stigma to understand the consequences of a scandal (Devers, et al., 2009) that threaten the social identities of internal and external stakeholders.

#### **Social identity theory and organizational identification**

Social identity is “that part of an individual’s self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional

significance attached to that membership” (Tajfel, 1978, p. 63). An individual’s social identity includes self-classifications into salient groups; by classifying themselves into social groups, individuals make sense of their social environment and where they fit. Social identity theory proposes that members’ identification with an organization is embedded in their hierarchies of social identity. Identification (with an organization or former organization) will be stronger to the extent that identifying with the organization is higher in one’s social identity hierarchy (Mael & Ashforth, 1992; Tajfel & Turner, 1985; Turner, 1985). Cole and Bruch (2006) also argued that “individuals may come to perceive their level within the organization’s hierarchy as a salient social category that is shared with other members of an ingroup and not shared with members of an outgroup” (p. 586).

Social (or group) identification “is the perception of belongingness to a group classification” (Mael & Ashforth, 1992, p. 104). Ashforth and Mael (1989) argued for several factors that likely enhance individuals’ propensity to identify with specific groups; these factors include the distinctiveness of the group (regarding values and practices), the prestige of the group, the awareness of outgroups, and the factors typically related to how groups form. By way of social identification, individuals perceive their identity to be at one with the group. The individual perceives the group’s purpose, successes, and failures, to be their own. The individuals’ identification with the group is strengthened by members of the group possessing common characteristics (e.g., a common language or history), carrying on distinctive rituals (e.g., a flag or song), rallying around a common goal that enhances the mission of the group, the structure of the group, and the sharing of common enemies (Tolman, 1943). This definition certainly applies to alumni of a large university with a strong culture, especially a culture that emphasizes athletics with its common goal (to win), its common language (e.g., chants, slogans such as “We Are Penn State!”), rituals (e.g., tailgating, songs), and common enemies (e.g., opposing teams). Ashforth

and Mael (1989) also argued that individuals tend to engage in events and activities that align with the salient characteristics of their identities, as well as support the organizations that symbolize those identities.

Social identification theory posits “that in the absence of a strong organizational identity, the desire for favorable intergroup comparisons generates much conflict between differentiated and clearly bounded subunits” (Ashforth & Mael, 1989, p. 33). Individuals seek to understand who they are and how good they are, by examining the ingroup and the outgroups (Tajfel & Turner, 1985).

Aside from simple identification (or not), Kreiner and Ashforth (2004) proposed an expanded model of identification that identifies four ways for an individual’s identity to stem from an organization: identification, disidentification, ambivalent identification, and neutral identification. Disidentification involves a separation between the individual and organizational identities (Elsbach & Bhattacharya, 2001; Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004), a distinct possibility for alumni responding to a scandal who are in a completely volitional relationship with the organization. Ambivalent identification occurs when an individual both identifies and disidentifies with the organization (Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004). For example, alumni may identify with the organization’s response to a scandal that involves removing the leader from his/her role. But, alumni may disidentify with the organization’s approach for removing the leader (e.g., firing the leader face-to-face vs. firing the leader over the phone). Finally, neutral identification occurs when an individual neither identifies nor disidentifies with the organization (Elsbach, 1999; Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004) which may also be possible for alumni who decide to suspend their organizational identification while waiting for more information or resolution of the scandal.

## **Self-affirmation theory**

Self-affirmation theory is centered on “rationalization and self-justification” (Steele, Spencer, & Lynch, 1993, p. 885). It “assumes that the self-affirming, image-maintaining process is begun by anything that threatens this image,” including anything that contradicts one’s values, “and that it is carried out, through constant interpretations and reinterpretations of one’s experience and the world, until that image is restored” (p. 885). A threatening event, especially one that threatens an individual’s identity, can lead to a number of rationalizations and defense mechanisms (Sherman, 2013). Sherman (2013) examined a number of studies that discuss affirmation processes including “enhanced resources, broader perspective, and decoupling of self and threat” (p. 840). Based on experiments conducted by Shnabel, Purdie-Vaughns, Cook, Garcia, and Cohen (2013)—in the lab and in the field—to safeguard against identity threats, they posit “that the processes set in motion through self-affirmation interventions may be facilitated when these interventions involve a specific theme, that is, social belonging” (p. 672).

Therefore, self-affirmation theory implies that when individuals’ perceive their self-image to be threatened, they may choose to or not to rationalize the threatening event by affirming something that demonstrates his or her overall self-adequacy (Steele, et al., 1993). For example, one might expect that the more alumni identify with the organization, the more they would rationalize the identity threat to maintain their self-image. Alumni may choose to distance themselves from the organization for the time being, choosing not to volunteer or donate to the organization. Or, alumni may choose to volunteer or donate to other parts of the organization that they do not perceive to be threatening their self-image.

## **Organizational stigma theory**

Stigmatization theory describes a stigmatized entity as being “devalued, spoiled, or flawed in the eyes of others” (Crocker, Major, & Steele, 1998, p. 504), with the assumption that stigma is “created subjectively in the minds of individual stakeholders” (Reuber & Fischer, 2010, p. 41). The basic notion underlying the theory of organizational stigma is that it denotes “a negative social evaluation” (Devers, et al., 2009, p. 157). An organization that is stigmatized “is perceived as emblematic of the negatively evaluated category to which it is linked and, thus, caricatured as an embodiment of values that explicitly conflict with those of the stakeholder group” (p. 157). This conceptualization of organizational stigma stems in large part from what is known about individual-level stigma (Devers, et al., 2009). In fact, the literature has focused largely on individual-level stigma (Link & Phelan, 2001). Devers, et al. (2009) posited that different conditions exist for individual-level stigma and organizational stigma, however. Whereas individual-level stigma considers the types of stigmatizing conditions including disfigurements of the body (e.g., physical deformities), tribal stigma (e.g., race), and conduct stigma (e.g., dishonesty), organizational stigma mainly considers conduct stigma grounded in actions such as bankruptcies, scandals, corruption (Ashforth, Gioia, Robinson, & Treviño, 2008a), and firm failures (Devers, et al., 2009). Stigma, however, “is relationship- and context-specific; it does not reside in the person but in a social context” (Major & O’Brien, 2005, p. 295). Organizational members may therefore experience stigma when an organization to which they identify undergoes a scandal.

One of the challenges for organizations is that stigma is often assumed to stem “from the actions taken by organizational participants, even if the outcomes are not always those that are intended or desired” (Devers, et al., 2009, p. 158). In fact, “[s]tigmata that originate outside the organization (e.g., stigmas attached to the actions of corporate leaders in their personal lives)

intrude upon and influence what happens inside the organization” (Paetzold, Dipboye, & Elsbach, 2008, p. 186). Another challenge for organizations is that many stakeholders express negative affective responses to a stigmatizing event (Devers, et al., 2009). Despite corrective changes that an organization might undergo, there is the tendency for the organization to continue to be viewed negatively by internal and external stakeholders (e.g., the media). This is because “changing surface structures or behavior” alone are often not enough to change stakeholders’ beliefs about the organization (Mishina & Devers, 2012, p. 208). If this is so, one might expect even alumni to respond with negative affective responses to a stigmatizing scandal, and that these responses would be associated with negative evaluations of the organization, and perhaps distancing cognitions.

### **Alumni Responses to Organizational Scandal**

The extant literature recognizes that three kinds of responses— affective, cognitive, and behavioral— contribute to the formation of attitudes (Eiser, 1986). I consider each of these as a means for understanding alumni responses to organizational scandal.

#### **Affective responses**

Traumatic events often trigger affective responses (Hartel, McColl-Kennedy, & McDonald, 1998), and situations involving identity threat, in particular, can be expected to evoke strong emotional responses (Ashforth, et al., 2008b; Kooor-Misra, 2009). The extent to which affect is involved, however, “depends on the situation and the identity and often varies with the vicissitudes of organizational life” (Ashforth, et al., 2008b, p. 329).

The wide-range of potential affective experiences, including moods and dispositional affect, tend to be observed by several dimensions and illustrated on what is called an ‘affective circumplex’ (Barsade & Gibson, 2007). Adapted from Barrett and Russell (1998) and Larsen and Diener (1992), Barsade and Gibson (2007) presented the circumplex model of affect, where the x axis represents ‘pleasantness’ and the y axis represents ‘activation/energy.’ The x axis ranges from high pleasantness such as happy and contented to low pleasantness such as upset and sad. The y axis ranges from high energy such as tense and alert to low energy such as fatigued and calm (Barsade & Gibson, 2007).

Hartel, et al., (1998) suggested that emotional expression involves a two-part process. First, individuals assess whether the event aligns with a “personal desire or concern” (p. 430). The intensity of the response, however, is contingent upon the relevancy of the event to a goal, the importance of the goal, and the consistency of the event and goal. In instances, for example, where the event is negative, individuals will express stronger responses (Seeger & Ulmer, 2002). In fact, severe threats tend to evoke “high emotional arousal, including shock, stress, and fear” (p. 138). This first part of the process creates the emotional intensity and serves as the basis for the creation of specific emotions, whereas the second part of the process considers the context as well as the actor (Hartel, et al., 1998). Similarly, issues—any internal or external event that individuals perceive to have implications for the organization—can be hot or cold. ‘Hot’ issues arouse strong emotions and “represent different types of stimuli and activate different responses from individuals and organizations than cooler, less affectively charged issues” (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991, p. 519).

In some instances, individuals express emotions that are positive such as pride or joy; in other situations, individuals may express emotions that are negative such as shame or sadness (Ashforth, et al., 2008b). When an organization’s actions are not consistent with the

organization's identity, an organizational member is likely to express negative emotions. When an organization's actions are consistent with the organization's identity, then an organizational member is likely to express positive emotions (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Stets, 2005). Likewise, when an individual's "identity is verified by his/her organization, he/she is likely to experience positive emotions toward the organization," whereas "[w]hen his/her identity is nonverified, such as when the organization promotes values and practices that are in opposition to his/her identity beliefs, frustration and other types of negative emotions toward the organization are more likely to ensue" (Wang & Pratt, 2008, p. 592).

Furthermore, Kessler and Hollbach (2005) found that ingroup identification depends on the type of emotion(s) expressed (happiness or anger) and to whom the emotion(s) are expressed (at the ingroup members or the outgroup members). More specifically, they found that when individuals expressed happiness (as well as pleasure, pride, and other types of positive emotions) toward the ingroup and they expressed anger (as well as disgust, contempt, and other types of negative emotions) toward the outgroup, they increased their identification with the ingroup. Relatedly, when individuals expressed negative emotions toward the ingroup and positive emotions toward the outgroup, they decreased their identification with the ingroup (Kessler & Hollbach, 2005). Therefore, when an organization undergoes a stigmatizing event such as a scandal, one might expect alumni to respond with negative emotions expressed at the organization, and in turn, decrease their identification with the organization.

### **Cognitive responses**

A stigmatizing event such as a scandal is one type of identity threat. When individuals, or more specifically, the organization with which they identify, undergoes an identity threat—an

experience that may potentially harm the values, meanings, or sense of who they are—a number of responses is possible (Petriglieri, 2011). She proposed a theoretical model of identity threat processes and responses, and specifically, how individuals respond to threats to their own identities. She posited that if individuals define themselves in a way that is at least to some extent related to the organization's identity, and the organization undergoes an identity threat, then the individuals' identity may also be threatened. She also suggested that if “[o]rganizational members who feel a direct threat as a result of the threat to their organization's identity may respond in various ways, such as altering the meanings they associate with their professional identity” (Petriglieri, 2011, p. 657).

Consequently, individuals tend to rationalize the perception of the organization when they perceive threat (Steele, et al., 1993), so that “[w]hen our image is threatened, we feel compelled to offer explanations, defenses, justifications, rationalizations, apologies, or excuses for our behavior” (Benoit, 1995, p. 2). The positive and negative comparisons with peer organizations also influence individuals' identification with the organization (Kovoor-Misra, 2009). It is also the case that shared threatening experiences among organizational members can actually unite members, bringing them closer as a group (Downing, 2007; Seeger & Ulmer, 2002). Cheney (1983) referred to this process as “identification through antithesis,” whereby members of the organization identify with each other ““against a common ‘enemy’” (p. 148). This process cannot only assist the members in coping with the situation, but could also increase members' identification with the organization (Downing, 2007). The question is whether alumni would respond to an identity threat in this way or choose to distance themselves from the organization instead.

Elsbach and Kramer (1996) examined how members from top business schools responded to the *Business Week* rankings, threatening the members' views of the organization's

identity. This study demonstrates that organizational members experience cognitive distress when they perceive their organization's identity to be threatened and engage in making "excuses and justifications" (p. 466) as well as "affirming alternate dimensions of their organization's identity or highlighting their organization's membership in alternate comparison groups" (p. 468). These findings support the idea that an interdependent relationship exists between organizational members' identities and their view of the organization's identity, largely because organizational members are concerned with the organization's perception (Elsbach & Kramer, 1996). Similarly, Dutton, Dukerich, and Harquail (1994) argued that individuals' identification with the organization is related to "the images that they have of what the organization means to them and what they think it means to others" (p. 260). If the individual's identification with the organization is strong, then one incorporates "what he or she believes is distinctive, central, and enduring about the organization into what he or she believes is distinctive, central, and enduring about him- or herself" (p. 242). They further suggest that individuals strengthen their identification with the organization if the images are positive (Dutton, et al., 1994). And, similar to the findings presented by Elsbach and Kramer (1996), if individuals perceive "inconsistencies between expected and actual organizational actions" (Dutton, et al., 1994, p. 259), they may downplay these differences or modify their views of the organization's identity (Dutton, et al., 1994). If alumni identification with the organization is also strong, then perhaps, they too would change their perceptions of the organization's identity, especially when the organization undergoes a stigmatizing event such as a scandal.

In another study, Gendron and Spira (2010) interviewed former employees of Arthur Andersen, approximately two years after the collapse of that organization. They specifically examined how the former employees reconstructed their professional and organizational identities after the failure of the firm. The study revealed a wide range of patterns that describe the former

employees' identity work. The patterns included disillusion, resentment, rationalization, and hopefulness (Gendron & Spira, 2010).

### **Behavioral responses**

Individuals are likely to support an organization, if they identify with it (Mael & Ashforth, 1992). Drawing on a model conceptualizing organizational identification, proposed by Mael and Ashforth (1992), they suggested that alumni identification with their organization will predict such alumni behaviors as donating, recruiting, and participating in events and activities. Muller (2004) also found that organizational identification is related to "induced reciprocity and to alumni promotion of the institution" (p. 321). Furthermore, Newbold, Mehta, and Forbus (2010) found that organization identification tends to foster positive behavior and increased intentions to support the organization. One might expect that alumni who identify with an organization would continue to support it, even when an organization undergoes a stigmatizing event, whereas alumni who did not identify with an organization would continue to not support it.

In a study conducted by Sutton and Callahan (1987), however, they posited that when an organization and its leaders are stigmatized, some stakeholders "change both enacted relationships with a firm and espoused evaluations of the firm and its leaders" (p. 407). The changes to the enacted relationships include disengagement, reduction in the extent of the participation, and negotiating for more promising relationships, and the changes to the espoused evaluations include denigration via rumor and confrontation (Sutton & Callahan, 1987). In addition, some stakeholders' responses tend to result in minimizing the extent of the interaction with the organization, or even severing ties with the organization (Devers, et al., 2009). The

question is whether alumni would respond to the stigma in this way, or choose to maintain their support of it despite the stigma.

### **Chapter Summary**

Although alumni may not have formal duties and responsibilities to organizations, they are important and valuable stakeholders. In this study, I examined how alumni respond to organizational scandal and how organizational scandal is associated with the expressed affective, cognitive, and behavioral responses and identification statements of alumni. I used the theories of social identity and organizational identification, self-affirmation, and organizational stigma to think about alumni identification and alumni responses to organizational scandal. Each of these theories could potentially contribute to informing how alumni may respond to a scandal. Social identity theory and organization identification may inform the degree of identification alumni have with an organization and the extent that degree of identification increases or decreases when a scandal occurs. Self-affirmation theory may inform how alumni seek to rationalize their self-image—from a behavioral perspective—when a scandal occurs. The application of this theory could be particularly related to understanding the relationship between alumni identification with the organization and the perceived potential threat to alumni self-image. The organizational stigma theory may inform the extent that alumni also perceive the organization or entities within the organization to be stigmatized as a consequence of the scandal and its fallout, and the extent that alumni also feel personally stigmatized. Again, the application of this theory could aid in further understanding alumni identification.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Methods**

The problem of this study is to understand how alumni respond to organizational scandal. To address this problem, I examined a main research question: How is organizational scandal associated with the expressed affective, cognitive, and behavioral responses and identification statements of alumni?

### **Research Design**

Despite familiarizing myself with relevant literature, I adopted a grounded theory approach to examine alumni responses to the Jerry Sandusky child sexual abuse scandal at Penn State. The Sandusky scandal at Penn State provided a means for understanding a phenomenon in a different way, and the scandal was contextualized within the unique circumstances of the organization. The grounded theory approach allowed for the feelings and beliefs of alumni to emerge from the data and inform new theory about alumni responses to scandal.

Grounded theory, defined as “a method of conducting qualitative research that focuses on creating conceptual frameworks or theories through building inductive analysis from the data” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 187), is important for creating a context for discovery. The grounded theory approach “is open-ended and relies on emergent processes, and the researcher’s emerging constructions of concepts shape both process and product” (p. 178). Through the grounded theory approach, I remained open to the analysis process; it was interactive and iterative (Charmaz, 2006). This analysis contributed to “the conceptual content and direction of the study” (p. 178).

## **Background on the scandal**

A major scandal (that was a top media story for days) broke in November 2011 at Penn State. Jerry Sandusky, the university's former defensive coordinator for the football team, was accused and (about seven months later) convicted of multiple child sexual abuse charges and sentenced to prison (essentially for life). Within a week of the former employee's arrest, the board of trustees removed the president of 16 years, Graham Spanier; the legendary head football coach, Joe Paterno; the athletic director, Tim Curley; and the senior vice president for finance and business, Gary Schultz (Penn State, 2012a). Rodney Erickson, the then university provost, was named the interim president shortly after the scandal broke (Penn State website, 2013) and continued to serve as the president during the fallout of the scandal until May 2014.

Spanier, Paterno, Curley, and Schultz were thought to have failed either legally or morally to protect children after an allegation surfaced in 2002. The football coach, renowned for his ethics (and his commitment to the athletic department's mantra, "Success with Honor"), reported the allegation that was brought to him by a graduate assistant (Mike McQueary) to his superiors (the legally correct action), but not directly to the legal authorities (what many thought would have been the morally correct action). Although Paterno later died in January 2012, the others were accused of perjury, failure to report, and other charges (Penn State, 2012a; Penn State website, 2013). All of this contributed to perceptions created in the media of a corrupt institutional environment that would cover up the crime and implicitly condone child sexual abuse.

The university's board of trustees soon employed a high-profile law firm (Louis Freeh and his firm, Freeh Sporkin & Sullivan, LLP) to examine the facts as well as the circumstances of the organization relating to the former employees' actions (Penn State website, n.d.a). In July 2012, the findings from the internal investigation were released (Penn State website, 2013). The

findings outlined in the Freeh Report were critical and accused the four men of conspiring to cover up the sexual abuse; a cover-up that was allegedly motivated by a desire to protect the university's football program and its culture. The findings within the report were met with wide-ranging responses from various stakeholder groups including faculty, staff, students, alumni, community members, and the media. Many stakeholders who were close to the university tended to reject the report's conclusions as faulty and based upon thin or incomplete evidence. The general public, and more importantly, the NCAA, however, tended to accept the report's findings. Based upon the findings, the NCAA imposed a series of sanctions against the university including a \$60 million fine, reduced football scholarships, and a four-year ban on post-season play for the football team (Penn State, 2012b). Tables 3-1 and 3-2 include an overview of key events and initiatives, starting with news of the scandal in November 2011 through much of the fallout up to December 2012. The lists of events and initiatives—compiled largely by reviewing all of the press releases housed on the university's "Progress" website from November 2011 to December 2012—are not comprehensive (Penn State, 2012a; Penn State website, 2013). Rather, the lists primarily include the events and initiatives that occurred in 2011 and 2012 at the university's largest campus (also where the football program is housed).

Table 3-1. Timeline of events and initiatives in 2011.

<b>2011</b>	<b>Event Description</b>
Nov. 5	Jerry Sandusky was arrested
Nov. 9	University president and legendary head football coach were removed; Provost was named interim president and defensive coordinator was named interim head coach; Students rioted
Nov. 11	University was placed on Moody's Investors Service's 'Watchlist for Possible Downgrade;' Students held candlelight vigil for the sexual abuse victims
Nov. 12	Students started campaign to 'blue out' the football stadium in support of the prevention of child sexual abuse
Nov. 15	Acting executive vice president and provost was named
Nov. 16	Acting athletic director was named
Nov. 18	NCAA announced plans to launch inquiry of university's athletic programs
Nov. 26	U.S. Department of Education announced plans to launch a review of campus security program and university's compliance with the Clery Act
Nov. 28	Victim resource hotline was activated
Nov. 30	Administrators held a town hall forum for students
Dec. 1	University partnered with nonprofit organizations in support of the prevention of sexual violence
Dec. 2	Board of Trustees convened to reaffirm and ratify personnel decisions from the week of Nov. 6
Dec. 8	University announced plans to launch research center for the protection of children

Table 3-2. Timeline of events and initiatives in 2012.

<b>2012</b>	<b>Event Description</b>
Jan. 7	New head football coach was hired
Jan. 10	Interim president signed employment contract through Jun. 30, 2014
Jan. 11-13	President held alumni town hall meetings in various cities
Jan. 20	New chair of the Board of Trustees gave remarks
Jan. 22	Legendary head football coach passed away
Feb. 13	New university website for information about recent events was launched
Feb. 15	Lawsuit was filed against university's primary general liability insurer
Feb. 17	University was removed from Moody's Investors Service's 'Watchlist for Possible Downgrade'
Feb. 24	U.S. attorney issued subpoena requesting information from 1998 to present
Mar. 21	University offered counseling services to child abuse victims
Apr. 2-4	University celebrated Sexual Assault Awareness Month
Apr. 9	Clery compliance coordinator was hired
Apr. 10	Students launched campaign to raise awareness and funds to prevent child sexual abuse
Apr. 25	Firms were hired to assist with corporate communications, media relations, and stakeholder engagement
May 16	New Board of Trustees website was launched
Jun. 4	University website for information about recent events was relaunched
Jun. 7	Results of first alumni opinion survey were released (the survey was conducted, May 8-20, 2012); New policy for reporting suspected abuse was announced
Jun. 11	Employee and volunteer training program for reporting suspected child abuse was underway; Sandusky trial convened
Jun. 14	University safety and security employee training program on Clery Act compliance convened
Jun. 19	President added alumni, faculty, and student leaders to Board of Trustee meetings
Jun. 22	Sandusky was found guilty
Jul. 5	New background check policy was implemented
Jul. 11	New policy to limit use of recreational facilities to those with valid university identification was announced
Jul. 12	Findings from the university's internal investigation were released (the investigation was conducted during the past eight months)
Jul. 22	Statue of the deceased, legendary head football coach was removed
Jul. 23	NCAA sanctions were announced
Jul. 31	Pep rally event was held for the football team
Aug. 1	Athletic integrity monitor was appointed to oversee compliance with Athletics' Integrity Agreement
Aug. 7	Changes to 2012 football uniform were announced
Aug. 8	University placed on warning list by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education
Sep. 1	First home football game with the new head coach was played
Sep. 6	University-wide public relations campaign was launched
Oct. 9	Sandusky was sentenced
Oct. 19	Advisory group to oversee implementation of the recommendations from the internal report was named
Oct. 29-30	National conference on child sexual abuse convened on campus
Nov. 1	Former president, former athletic director, and another former university administrator were charged
Nov. 16	University's accreditation was reaffirmed; Board of Trustees approved athletics code of conduct; Members of the university's Vision Council tasked with identifying key challenges and opportunities were announced; Presidential Selection Council was appointed
Nov. 24	Final home football game with seniors was played

### **Benefits of examining alumni responses at this organization**

I selected this university as the organization of study for a number of reasons. First, the organization is a large, complex university, well-known for its high-quality academic and athletic programs. The university, which includes multiple campuses, is home to more than 631,000 alumni and the world's largest dues-paying alumni association with 174,379 members (Penn State Alumni Association, n.d.a.). Second, this organization underwent a highly publicized child sexual abuse scandal involving a former employee that shocked the university community, the local community, and beyond (Penn State, 2012a). In fact, in the weeks following the scandal, colleges and universities all over the country found themselves reviewing their own child sexual abuse policies and procedures (Associated Press, 2013). Third, fallout from the scandal remains today and continues to be important to internal and external stakeholder groups. This event provides an ideal opportunity to examine a unique and important stakeholder group associated with a large and complex organization. It also offers a meaningful forum for understanding alumni responses to an organizational scandal, and how identification is associated with these responses over an extended period of time post-scandal.

### **Data Collection**

I acquired access to 25,335 communications from 14,309 alumni sent to various university offices such as the president's office, the board of trustees, the alumni association, the alumni magazine, and development and alumni relations offices from November 2011 to December 2012 (see Appendix A for permission to use data). All these communications were preserved and forwarded to a central office for record-keeping. More specifically, the communications were copies of alumni e-mails and summaries of phone conversations recorded

with the university. Some of the alumni e-mails were elicited by an initial message sent from a university representative or department, whereas others were self-initiated e-mails by the alumni. In the instances when an alumnus responded to a university representative's or department's e-mail, that initial message was also typically archived with the response, which provided the opportunity to read and further understand the context for the response (although all personal identifying information had been removed). In addition, some of the telephone conversations were elicited by a phone call from a student caller on behalf of the university's telefund organization or another university representative, while others (although, on rare occasions) were self-initiated telephone calls by the alumni. Thus, the data represent both self-initiated contacts from alumni to the university as well as responses elicited when the university contacted the alumni. The fact that the communications extend over a long period of time enabled any changes in views to be revealed, if they existed (Charmaz, 2006). In some cases the communications from an individual alumnus was included in the dataset more than one time because the individual may have multiple degrees from the university or attended more than one campus; a copy of the communications was recorded for each of these demographic data points. Thus, there are more than 25,000 communications that came from more than 14,000 alumni.

In addition to the communications, I also considered two more data sources that exist publically. The first source included the results from the university's alumni opinion surveys from May 8-20, 2012 and November 28-December 11, 2012. For the first survey (May 2012), the alumni association "provided a sample of 10,000 records [to the research firm administering the survey], selected at random from among all alumni for whom a telephone number and/or email address was available" (Penn State Alumni Association, 2012, par. 1). The survey yielded 1,282 respondents; 779 completed it online and 503 completed it on the phone (Penn State Alumni Association, 2012). For the second survey (November/December 2012), the alumni association

“provided a sample of 10,000 records [to the research firm administering the survey], selected at random from among all alumni for whom a telephone number and/or e-mail address was available” (Penn State Alumni Association, 2013, par. 5). The survey yielded 1,172 respondents; 672 completed it online and 500 completed it on the phone (Penn State Alumni Association, 2013).

The second source included copies of the university’s alumni magazine—*The Penn Stater*—and specifically the following issues: January/February 2012, March/April 2012, May/June 2012, July/August 2012, September/October 2012, and November/December 2012. The first five issues addressed the scandal or its fallout on the front cover. The six issues also contained one or more stories related to the scandal and its fallout, such as the hiring of the new president (May/June 2012) and the new head football coach (July/August 2012). Furthermore, these issues also included references to the scandal and its fallout in the section titled, “Your Letters” (i.e., letters to the editor). The March/April 2012 issue, however, did not contain this section as it was devoted entirely to the deceased, legendary head football coach, Joe Paterno. In most, if not all instances, the submissions to the magazine should have been included in the more than 25,000 communications, as part of the university’s records. However, by combining various data collection methods, Eisenhardt (1989) suggests that it “[s]trengthens grounding of theory by triangulation of evidence” (p. 533).

### **Researcher position**

I am an insider with first-hand experience of how the scandal and its fallout affected institutional constituencies. My direct experiences with the events surrounding the scandal serve as a complementary data source—I am a graduate student, a two-degree alumna, a university

employee, and a resident of the local community. Most relevant is the fact that I previously managed the alumni relations office for one of the largest colleges at the university during the scandal. The college had more than 74,000 alumni, as well as a number of alumni advisory boards. I had first-hand knowledge of the highs and lows experienced by a segment of the alumni community, as well as the wide range of feelings and opinions expressed by the alumni at the time of the scandal and thereafter. So, I had a solid understanding of the study's context (Charmaz, 2006).

According to Taylor and Bogdan (1984), however, “[i]t is impossible to avoid one’s own commitments and biases” and they further say that “[a]ll researchers draw on their own theoretical assumptions and cultural knowledge to make sense out of their data” (p. 142). Charmaz (2006) also suggests that “[w]e construct our grounded theories through our past and present involvements and interactions with people, perspectives, and research practices” (p. 10). Therefore, I employed tactics to minimize the potential biases associated with the context; these tactics involved peer debriefings and keeping a reflexive journal. The electronic reflexive journal, in particular, allowed me to capture and record my personal feelings, perspectives, and assumptions as I read the communications (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This self-reflection process played an important role in helping to understand my role as the researcher, as well as how I may have influenced the research or may have been influenced by the research and the scandal and its unfolding fallout (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

### **Data Analysis**

Using NVivo, a software designed to support the analysis of qualitative data (Bazeley, 2007), I employed grounded theory coding outlined by Charmaz (2006), Strauss and Corbin

(1998), and Gioia, Corley, and Hamilton (2013) to analyze the communications. According to Charmaz (2006), grounded theory coding involves two primary phases. The initial phase involved “naming each word, line, or segment of data” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 46), and this phase contributed to the 1st-order concepts (Gioia, et al., 2013). The second phase was the focused phase, which involved using “the most significant or frequent initial codes to sort, synthesize, integrate, and organize large amounts of data” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 46). Third, I began axial coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) to develop 2nd-order themes, which I further distilled into aggregate dimensions (Gioia, et al., 2013). The grounded theory coding and analysis largely reflected the data structure that was proposed by Corley and Gioia (2004) and reproduced in Gioia, et al. (2013). Tables 3-3, 3-4, 3-5, and 3-6 illustrate the data structure with 1st-order concepts, 2nd-order themes, and aggregate dimensions. Relatedly, Appendix B includes definitions of the 2nd-order themes and aggregate dimensions, extracted from my iterative codebook, reflecting the coding process.

Table 3-3. Data structure: Emotional/cognitive expression.

1st-Order Concepts	2nd-Order Themes	Aggregate Dimensions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confidence</li> <li>• Faith</li> <li>• Glad</li> <li>• Hopeful</li> <li>• Inspired</li> <li>• Love</li> <li>• Proud</li> <li>• Respect</li> <li>• Gratitude, appreciation</li> <li>• Trust</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;">Positive expressions (emotions/cognitions)</p>	<p>Emotional/cognitive expression</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Angry, furious, livid, outraged</li> <li>• Ashamed, embarrassed, mortified, disgraced, shame</li> <li>• Betrayed, cheated</li> <li>• Concerned, worried, anxious</li> <li>• Confused</li> <li>• Disagreed</li> <li>• Disgusted, hate, revulsion</li> <li>• Displeased, unhappy</li> <li>• Disturbed, perturbed, troubled, traumatized</li> <li>• Frustrated</li> <li>• Insulted, offended, disrespected</li> <li>• Loss of faith</li> <li>• Loss of trust</li> <li>• Sad, disappointed, disheartened, depressed, grief</li> <li>• Shock and dismay, appalled, horrified, stunned, numb, astonished, devastated</li> <li>• Skeptical</li> <li>• Upset and sick, distraught, distressed, anguished, hurt</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;">Negative expressions (emotions/cognitions)</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encouraged and disappointed</li> <li>• Love and appalled, ashamed, broken heart, distrust, despise, devastated, disappointed, hate, sad, unhappy</li> <li>• Proud and appalled, ashamed, concerned, disappointed, disgusted, endangered, sad</li> <li>• Supportive and upset</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;">Disparate expressions (emotions/cognitions)</p>	

Table 3-4. Data structure: Targets.

1st-Order Concepts	2nd-Order Themes	Aggregate Dimensions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alumni Association</li> <li>• Athletic department (and current athletic director)</li> <li>• Board of Trustees (and chair)</li> <li>• Deceased head football coach</li> <li>• Development office (and chair of the fundraising campaign)</li> <li>• Faculty Senate</li> <li>• Football graduate assistant</li> <li>• Interim head football coach</li> <li>• New head football coach</li> <li>• University leadership (including university presidents)</li> </ul>	Inside agents	Targets
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Freeh Report (and Judge Freeh)</li> <li>• Governor (and government officials)</li> <li>• Media</li> <li>• NCAA sanctions (and the NCAA, NCAA president)</li> <li>• Second Mile</li> </ul>	Outside "enemies"	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• University</li> </ul>	Institution	

Table 3-5. Data structure: Identification modes.

1st-Order Concepts	2nd-Order Themes	Aggregate Dimensions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “While I may not have been the best academic student; I may not have been an athlete; I may not have given millions in donations to the institution; and I may not be the most financially successful graduate that has ever studied within its walls, However, I am Penn State; I along with my alumni brothers and sisters and current students. I live, breathe and bleed Blue and White.” (Time Period 1, November 5 – December 31, 2011)</li> <li>• “My faith in Penn State does not have to be restored.....it never left.” (TP2, January 1 – June 21, 2012)</li> <li>• “Our Penn State roots are way to (sic) deep. To us, Penn State is part of our family...” (TP3, June 22 – December 31, 2012)</li> <li>• “WE ARE PENN STATE and always will be. Success with Honor still exists at Penn State and I will live my entire life under this mantra...” (TP3)</li> </ul>	Unconditional identification	Identification modes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “...I am Penn State... I live, breathe and bleed Blue and White. I am a God-fearing, sensitive and moral person with the deepest regard for those less fortunate than myself...I utilize my skills and talents to work with abused and neglected children every day. I did not learn any of these qualities from any of you. I learned them from Coach Joseph Vincent Paterno. He was the integrity, support, determination, strength, humor, humility, humanity honor at Pennsylvania State University. You are not...” (TP1)</li> <li>• “Shame on you...you are not who I am. He is. Joe Pa is Penn State from the football field to the library to the creamery.” (TP2)</li> <li>• “...remind everyone that while the allegations are despicable, the acts of a former assistant coach and several administrators who failed to act, do not reflect the University as a whole.” (TP2)</li> <li>• “I feel insulted when PSU is identified as its athletic program. My degree was a BS in Biochemistry (1965). I attended the football games as a diversion during the fall but nothing more. Why must the athletic program be the central focus and not the diversion it should be...the primary role academics has and the very secondary role of athletics has in the life of Penn State.” (TP3)</li> </ul>	Selective identification	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “When the Board of Trustees finds the courage to replace cowardice with honor, and publicly apologizes to Coach Paterno, I will resume my Penn State pride.” (TP1)</li> <li>• “The University as a whole is a fine institution, and the things they are trying to do are worthy of praise. But the BOT [Board of Trustees] has a long way to go to restore my faith in this university.” (TP2)</li> <li>• “Until that time I am no longer proud to be associated with Penn State.” (TP2)</li> <li>• “As alumni, something better be done. I still believe, but if psu (sic) doesn’t stand its ground I can’t say its forever.” (TP3)</li> </ul>	Conditional identification	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “...I can no longer be associated with or respect an institution that does not have the fortitude or loyalty that I value.” (TP1)</li> <li>• “I WANT A REFUND ON MY DIPLOMA!” (TP1)</li> <li>• “Simply put, you lost me when you through (sic) Joe under the bus.” (TP3)</li> <li>• “...the university no longer exists to me.” (TP3)</li> </ul>	Disidentification	

Table 3-6. Data structure: Intentions/actions.

1st-Order Concepts	2nd-Order Themes	Aggregate Dimensions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I am a stay at home mom. I would be happy to help Penn State in any way needed (send letters, answer emails, develop marketing strategies..etc).” (TP1)</li> <li>• “I will still be at the game this Saturday to cheer on our terrific kids who have nothing to do with this matter.” (TP1)</li> <li>• “Accordingly, in a time when financial contributions to Athletics could well be adversely impacted...have made the decision to not only maintain, but will attempt to increase the financial commitment to our endowments...” (TP1)</li> <li>• “I stood up publically in support of Penn State during our darkest days.” (TP3)</li> </ul>	Supportive intentions/actions	Intentions/actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Also, please stop mailing/calling me asking for donations to the university. And take me off your list of [College] undergraduate mentors. And don’t bother sending the PSU alumni magazine anymore.” (TP1)</li> <li>• “I have packed my Penn State memorabilia in boxes. My diploma is no longer on my wall.” (TP2)</li> <li>• “...burned all 75 pieces of Penn State clothing I had in my closet and smashed to bits anything that could not be burned...” (TP2)</li> <li>• “I have removed Penn State from my will.” (TP 2)</li> </ul>	Non-supportive intentions/actions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I know we will not be sending any money in the near future to PSU, but together we can do the right thing!” (TP1)</li> <li>• “Our concerns and actions will focus on support for the students of Penn State and the Paterno Family, no longer on your ‘excessive administrative costs’ - a multi-layer structure of people who have shown total disregard for us as PROUD Penn State alumni.” (TP2)</li> <li>• “I will always support my Alma Mater; I will do so in spirit alone; as I will no longer be providing any monetary donation towards Penn State or the Nittany Lion Club; and as such, my season tickets will not be renewed.” (TP2)</li> <li>• You are welcome to continue to send me information about Penn State. But the check book is closed.” (TP3)</li> </ul>	Supportive and non-supportive intentions/actions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “While my emotions may cloud my thoughts, I am certain that I will not continue to financially support this University at my current level, until you the members of the Board stop hiding/covering up your inaction.” (TP1)</li> <li>• Until Mike McQueary [the graduate assistant who allegedly reported Sandusky’s wrong-doing] is fired, not another penny of my income will go to this university. I love my school. I am proud to be from Penn State. (TP1)</li> <li>• “...We are also pledging no support of the university - no support of the athletic programs, no support of educational programs - until Spanier [the university president], Paterno [the head football coach], Curley [the athletic director] and others step down. (TP1)</li> <li>• “I want to clearly state that until you remove the current board and trustees, I will NEVER donate a single penny to PSU.” (TP2)</li> </ul>	Conditional intentions/actions	

### **Initial sampling**

Prior to coding, I sorted the communications by date and separated the communications into three time periods: Part 1, November 5 – December 31, 2011; Part 2, January 1 – June 21, 2012; and Part 3, June 22 – December 31, 2012. I separated the communications into these periods because of the important events that occurred during these timeframes; this process allowed me to sample communications across the year and to see if and how alumni views changed over time (Charmaz, 2006).

After sorting the data, 25,318 of the 25,335 communications fell within these three time periods. The first time period (TP1), made up of 8,891 communications, represents the university's former defensive coordinator's arrest and the leadership changes including the removal of the president, Graham Spanier, and the legendary head football coach, Joe Paterno (Penn State, 2012a). This time period extends until December 31, 2011, as this is the end of the calendar year and it is often a time when alumni make their end-of-calendar year charitable donations to the university. The second time period (TP2), made up of 4,360 communications, is the time between the most acute part of the scandal and the university's former defensive coordinator's trial (up to, but not including the verdict). During this time period, Joe Paterno passed away, the new president (Rodney Erickson) conducted a series of alumni town hall meetings in various cities, and the university hired outside firms to assist with corporate communications, media relations, and stakeholder engagement (Penn State website, 2013). The third time period (TP3), made up of 12,067 communications, represents the trial verdict—Jerry Sandusky was found guilty—and the post-trial period. During this timeframe, the findings from the university's internal investigation were released in the Freeh Report, the university removed the statue of the deceased, legendary head football coach located outside of the football stadium,

and the NCAA imposed a series of harsh sanctions against the university and its football program (Penn State website, 2013).

The initial sampling strategy (Charmaz, 2006) involved randomly selecting and coding 40-60 communications from within each of the three time periods. For example, I randomly selected a starting point within the first time period. Then, I coded the following 40-60 communications. Because an identification number was associated with each communication, I recorded the identification numbers of the first group of coded communications in the reflexive journal so that they would not be coded again. Then, I randomly selected a starting point within the second time period, and the following 40-60 communications were coded and recorded. Then, I repeated this procedure for the third time period. I repeated this procedure as needed, “to develop the properties of [the] category(ies) until no new properties emerge[d]” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 96). As new categories emerged, I continued to update the codebook, seeking theoretical saturation, such that repeating the sampling pattern no longer yielded distinctive codes or new theoretical insights. I achieved theoretical saturation with the subsample of almost 1,000 communications (after repeating the above procedure six times). I repeated this procedure four more times, coding approximately 1,500 communications; further consultation with the data mainly identified additional representative quotations. In total, the sampling strategy yielded 531 nodes (i.e., categories) and 5,053 references (i.e., representative quotations) within NVivo.

### **Memo-writing**

Throughout the study, I wrote “informal analytic notes” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 72), which began with reading more than 700 communications from throughout the November 2011 to December 2012 timeframe, and recording observations, feelings and beliefs, and questions in the reflexive journal (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The reflexive journal contains

more than 70 entries that also include notes from peer debriefings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This note-taking process is referred to as memo-writing by Charmaz (2006) and is particularly important in grounded theory because it provides a means for analyzing the data and the codes early in the research study (Charmaz, 2006). Through memo-writing (and the peer debriefings), I identified a number of categories that became input to the development of the codebook, which changed and evolved throughout the coding process and the data analysis.

### **Grounded theory coding**

In the initial phase of grounded theory coding, I allowed codes and categories to emerge, with little attempt to identify themes (Gioia, et al., 2013). More specifically, I applied word-by-word and line-by-line coding (Charmaz, 2006), as well as Glaser and Strauss' (1967) constant comparative method. While comparing communications throughout the year following the scandal, I sought to recognize changes in the data, such as changes in emotional and cognitive expression or targets. These processes contributed to the development of the 1st-order concepts (Gioia, et al., 2013). Then, in the focused phase, I applied focused coding and used "the most significant and/or frequent earlier codes" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 57). I used axial coding to connect and relate ideas and concepts (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). These processes contributed to the development of the 2nd-order themes, and importantly, provided a means to focus on whether the themes that emerged helped to explain alumni responses to organizational scandal. Table 3-7 illustrates the data display of 2nd-order themes for emotional/cognitive expression and targets. I continued to refine the 2nd-order themes into aggregate dimensions (Gioia, et al., 2013).

Table 3-7. Data display of 2nd-order themes: Emotional/cognitive expression and targets.

<b>Positive expressions (emotions/cognitions)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "...I know his love of the university went way deeper than football. Just so you know, mine does too." (TP1)</li> <li>• "...am hopeful for a fast and positive healing." (TP1)</li> <li>• "Just to let you know, we continue to be Penn State proud!" (TP2)</li> <li>• "We also appreciate all the work you are doing during this transition, and know there are more that feel like us, than those who don't take the time to find out what Penn State is really all about." (TP2)</li> </ul>
<b>Negative expressions (emotions/cognitions)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "I am appalled and embarrassed..." (TP1)</li> <li>• "I am totally outraged..." (TP1)</li> <li>• "I continue to be appalled...(TP2)</li> <li>• "I am ashamed..." (TP3)</li> </ul>
<b>Disparate expressions (emotions/cognitions)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "I have always been extremely proud of my Penn State degree. This morning, I only feel sadness and disgust at the University leadership." (TP1)</li> <li>• "While I have been encouraged by the statements of our new University President...I am disappointed that the current Board of Trustees has not been fired or forced to resign." (TP2)</li> <li>• "I love Penn State. I despise the Board of Trustees." (TP2)</li> <li>• "We are all Penn State Proud. We are all also completely ashamed of what Sandusky did and what he was allowed to do." (TP3)</li> </ul>
<b>Inside agents</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "...I am appalled by the behavior of my alma mater's highest officials." (TP1)</li> <li>• "I am utterly disgusted by your [Board of Trustees] handling of the situation..." (TP2)</li> <li>• "YOU [Board of Trustees] are the embarrassment of Penn State..." (TP3)</li> <li>• "As an Alum I appreciate your [the university president] service during this difficult time for the Penn State family." (TP3)</li> </ul>
<b>Outside "enemies"</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "...disgusted by the way the media is treating Joe." (TP1)</li> <li>• "...I am extremely angry once again at Penn State being inaccurately put down by the media." (TP3)</li> <li>• "The NCAA insulted my education and the education of over half a million alumni. The NCAA insulted our 'culture' without the basis to do so." (TP3)</li> <li>• "And I'm absolutely appalled at the actions of the NCAA." (TP3)</li> </ul>
<b>Institution</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "...we among many thousands of loyal alums who continue to have faith in the University and appreciate all that it has done for us and our families." (TP1)</li> <li>• "I am also beginning to get angry about how the actions of one person are dragging the name of our great university through the mud. As a Penn Stater, I still believe in the virtues, morals, ethics and high standards that I learned while going to school there, and continue to try to live by." (TP1)</li> <li>• "I feel confident that Penn State will continue to be the excellent institution it is and has always been..." (TP1)</li> <li>• "I love Penn State. I'd not be where I am but for Penn State." (TP3)</li> </ul>

## **Trustworthiness of the Research**

I addressed the four criteria of trustworthiness—credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability—throughout this study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

### **Credibility**

I addressed credibility through more than 20 debriefing sessions with at times, up to three faculty members in the management and organization department. Some of the sessions included sharing and discussing memos that had been written along the way and reviewing categories that emerged throughout the coding process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

### **Transferability (and generalizability)**

I addressed transferability through the use of ‘thick description’ thus providing a means for others to assess whether transferability is feasible (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The use of initial sampling (Charmaz, 2006), where I examined communications from throughout the year following the scandal, also allowed for “the variation of the conditions under which a phenomenon is studied as broadly as possible” (Flick, 2009, p. 407). The use of different sources, namely the alumni opinion surveys and the published letters within the university’s alumni magazine, also strengthens the theoretical generalizability of the findings (Flick, 2009). The very nature of grounded theory methodology also allows for the applicability across contexts (Charmaz, 2006). For example, this study involved a scandal at a university; however, other colleges and universities undergo scandals and so do organizations outside of higher education. In addition, I examined university alumni responses to a scandal, and organizations outside of higher education such as accounting firms and consulting firms also use the term ‘alumni’ to refer to

their former members. Other organizations also have alumni, although the individuals are referred to using another term such as ‘veterans’ for the U.S. military. Therefore, the findings of the study may be applicable to alumni in other contexts experiencing an organizational scandal.

### **Dependability**

I addressed dependability through the use of overlap methods (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I reviewed and coded communications from each of the three time periods repeatedly; the sampling strategy allowed me to revisit communications across the year. I also reviewed the results from two of the university’s alumni opinion surveys. Although the surveys included a number of topic areas, they contained several questions related to alumni feelings toward Penn State. I triangulated the similarities and differences between the results of the alumni opinion surveys with what was contained within the alumni communications. I also reviewed six issues of the university’s alumni magazine from the year following the scandal, which illustrated many of the same themes contained within the alumni communications.

Furthermore, after I developed 2nd-order themes, which I further refined into aggregate dimensions (Gioia, et al., 2013), I conducted an inter-rater reliability test to address the dependability of my data analysis. I asked two doctoral students (unfamiliar with my data)—one in the higher education program and one in the management and organization department—to participate in this process. Both students read 14 codes and definitions (representing the 2nd-order themes shown in Tables 3-3, 3-4, 3-5, and 3-6 and similar to the codes and definitions shown in Appendix B), evaluated 28 sample quotes from the data, and then paired each code and definition with the corresponding quote. Based on their responses, there was 89.3 percent agreement between the two students and there was 8 percent agreement expected by chance between the two students. After considering for chance (Cohen, 1960), the percentage of

agreement between the two students was .884—this falls within the 0.81-1.00 range, constituting ‘almost perfect agreement’ (Landis & Koch, 1977).

### **Confirmability**

I used a reflexive journal to address confirmability in the study. The journal contained feelings and beliefs, questions, field notes, potential themes, and relevant decision-making processes during and after the coding processes and throughout the data analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

### **Chapter Summary**

I examined the Jerry Sandusky scandal and its fallout at Penn State to understand how alumni respond to organizational scandal and how organizational scandal is associated with the expressed affective, cognitive, and behavioral responses and identification statements of alumni. I acquired access to more than 25,000 communications—copies of alumni e-mails and summaries of phone conversations—that came from more than 14,000 alumni, starting in November 2011 and ending in December 2012. Although the primary emphasis was on the e-mails and summaries of telephone conversations, I also considered the results from the university’s alumni opinion surveys from May 2012 and November/December 2012 and the six issues of the university’s alumni magazine published in 2012.

Prior to coding, I sorted the communications by date and separated the communications into three time periods to sample across the year. The first time period, November 5-December 31, 2011, represents Jerry Sandusky’s arrest and several leadership changes. The second time period, January 1-June 21, 2012, is the time between the most acute part of the scandal and the

university's former defensive coordinator's trial (up to, but not including the verdict). The third time period, June 22-December 31, 2013, represents the trial verdict—Jerry Sandusky was found guilty—and the post-trial period.

I employed grounded theory coding outlined by Charmaz (2006), Strauss and Corbin (1998), and Gioia, et al. (2013) to analyze the communications. The initial sampling strategy (Charmaz, 2006) involved randomly selecting and coding 40-60 communications from within each of the three time periods and repeating this pattern until no more distinctive codes or theoretical insights emerged. This process contributed to the development of 1st-order concepts, 2nd-order themes, and then aggregate dimensions (Gioia, et al., 2013). Finally, I addressed the four criteria of trustworthiness—credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability—throughout this study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

## Chapter 4

### Answering the Problem of the Study

In the days, months, and even a year or so after the Jerry Sandusky scandal at Penn State, more than 14,000 alumni shared their responses to the events. Some of the alumni initiated communication with a university representative or department such as the university president or the board of trustee's office. Other alumni responded to an e-mail or phone call from a university representative or department such as the chair of the board of trustees, a dean or department chair, a development officer, or the university's annual giving office (which also includes the university's telefund organization). On either occasion alumni expressed some variation of how they were feeling and what they were thinking and believing, and what all of this would mean for their relationship with the institution in the future. Some alumni also shared what they intended to do or already did to support or not support the institution because of the way that they were feeling and thinking. For example, one alumnus wrote:

For the first time since being admitted to Penn State I \*very\* sadly can no longer state that I am proud of my alma mater. I am \*horrified\* at what went on and for how long...I have taken down and removed all of my memorabilia that I have collected over the years...I feel a \*deep\* betrayal and sense of loss at this time... (Time Period 1)

Another alumnus wrote:

The events of this week have deeply shaken every Penn Stater that I know. It's as though we've lost what has grounded us for all these years as alumni...I, like many alumni, want to do something to begin the process of healing... (TP1)

And, yet another alumnus wrote, "Fire the Board of Trustees and reinstate Joe Paterno. Then, we will consider being Alum again. Until then, forget it. We are disgusted with the way this university handled the entire situation. We are cutting ties altogether." (TP2)

Of the more than 25,000 e-mails and summaries of phone calls that came from more than 14,000 alumni, I coded approximately 1,500 communications from November 2011 – December 2012. I sorted the communications by date and separated the communications into three time periods: Part 1, November 5 – December 31, 2011; Part 2, January 1 – June 21, 2012; and Part 3, June 22 – December 31, 2012, so that I could sample alumni views across the year as well as observe if and how their views changed over time (Charmaz, 2006). I randomly selected and coded 40-60 communications from within each of the three time periods. I repeated this procedure ten times, achieving theoretical saturation after the sixth time and observing that alumni generally expressed similar feelings and beliefs throughout the year following the scandal.

The problem of this study was to understand how alumni respond to organizational scandal. I found that alumni responses to the scandal and ensuing events were complex. Alumni expressed a wide range of emotions and cognitions. They tended to direct their emotional and cognitive expressions at targets (e.g., board of trustees, the university's leadership). They also expressed the status of their identification with the institution. Along with their degree of identification with the institution came some intentions and actions as an outcome of their response to the scandal. Constructed at the dimensional level, Figure 4-1 is a grounded model that depicts the relationships that constitute a skeleton theory describing the process involved in alumni responses to organizational scandal. The key concepts that contributed to the process model are emotional/cognitive expression; targets; identification modes; and intentions/actions. These concepts are explained in this chapter, and the relationships between these concepts are explained in the next chapter.

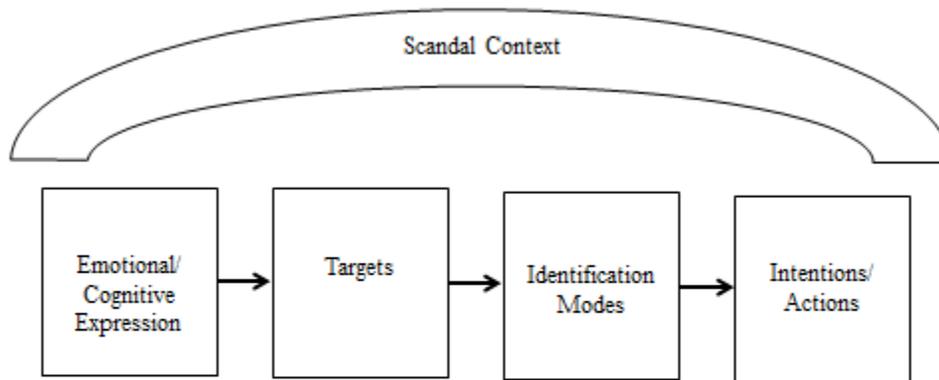


Figure 4-1. A grounded model of alumni responses to organizational scandal.

### **Emotional/Cognitive Expression**

Alumni expressed positive, negative, and disparate emotions and cognitions. Some alumni expressed highly-charged emotions that were reactionary in nature. For example, one alumnus wrote, “YOU PEOPLE MAKE ME SICK!!!!” (TP1) and another alumnus wrote, “Pathetic, embarrassing, hypocritical, I could go on and on, but won’t. Now would you please do the same....ENOUGH ALREADY” (TP2). Other alumni gathered themselves together to communicate with the institution; in these occurrences, emotions and cognitions were reflected together in the alumni communications. Their articulated expression(s) tended to be the product of emotions reconciled by cognitions, such that their emotions and cognitions were seemingly inseparable. One alumnus submitted a letter to the editor of *The Penn Stater* magazine (the

university's alumni magazine)—included in the September/October 2012 issue—that reflected emotional and cognitive expressions:

I was born with blue blood. My grandfather wrote letters and poems to Joe Paterno, and my dad wore JoePa pants, blue with white lions. My brother met his wife at Penn State. My husband was born in State College. My daughter just graduated from Penn State. Our loyalty, like so many others, goes very deep. I am so angry, confused, appalled, sad, and embarrassed. I did not wear my Penn State shirt to the gym today. I removed the Joe Paterno sticker from my car. How did this happen to our school? Above all, I am sorry for the victims. I pray for them every day. By 'no act of mine,' what am I to do? By 'no act of ours' [a reference to a phrase in the university's alma mater], what are we to do? (Your letters, 2012c, p. 9)

These expressions were explanations for the institution as well as for the alumni themselves; they were trying to understand their own emotional responses to the scandal and ensuing events.

Because alumni expressed feelings and beliefs, such that their articulated expressions to the target(s) tended to be reconciled by their feelings and/or beliefs, positive expressions, hereafter refer to positive emotions and cognitions; negative expressions, hereafter refer to negative emotions and cognitions; and disparate expressions, hereafter refer to disparate emotions and cognitions.

### **Positive expressions**

Alumni expressed positive emotions and cognitions throughout the year following the scandal such as gratitude, love, confidence, pride, and hopefulness. One alumnus wrote, "I am still PENN STATE PROUD and believe in PSU as a great institution" (TP1), and another alumnus wrote, "I love Penn State" (TP3).

**Negative expressions**

Alumni expressed negative emotions and cognitions throughout the year following the scandal such as anger, disgust, shame and embarrassment, concern, disagreement, and disappointment, sadness, and upset and sickness. One alumnus wrote, “When I saw the news headlines today, I was completely ashamed, embarrassed, and sick to my stomach” (TP1), and another alumnus wrote, “I can’t even begin to explain my level of anger and disappointment over your actions or inactions over the last several months” (TP2).

**Disparate expressions**

Although some alumni expressed only positive emotions and cognitions or only negative emotions and cognitions, some alumni also expressed disparate emotions and cognitions; these were positive and negative emotions and cognitions expressed together in the same communications. Alumni expressed feeling proud and ashamed throughout the year following the scandal. One alumnus wrote, “We are all Penn State Proud. We are all also completely ashamed of what Sandusky did and what he was allowed to do” (TP3). Alumni also expressed other disparate emotions and cognitions such as love and sadness and love and devastation. One alumnus wrote, “I love Penn State and I loved my time there. It is hard to write this email because there are no words to describe my sadness over what has happened” (TP1). Another alumnus wrote, “I love Penn State and am devastated by ‘the scandal’ and your hasty reactions” (TP1). Alumni tended to express positive emotions and cognitions toward one target, and then express negative emotions and cognitions toward a different target. Some alumni also expressed positive emotions and cognitions toward one target such as the institution, and then expressed negative emotions and cognitions toward that same target.

## **Targets**

Alumni tended to direct their emotional and cognitive expressions at targets: inside agents of the institution, outside “enemies,” and the institution in general. Alumni expressed positive, negative, and disparate emotions and cognitions toward these targets.

### **Inside agents**

Inside agents included individuals, groups, or departments within the institution (i.e., those considered a part of the institution). Alumni targeted the following individuals and groups throughout the year following the scandal: the board of trustees (including the chair), the university leadership (including university presidents, Graham Spanier and Rodney Erickson), the deceased head football coach, the athletic department (including the athletic director), and the university’s alumni association. One alumnus wrote to the university president—Rodney Erickson—and said, “We support you and thank you for your leadership” (TP2); the president was the target of positive expressions. Another alumnus wrote, “I am ashamed of one and only one thing with regard to my relationship to my school: the Board of Trustess (sic). I am ashamed of each and every one of them” (TP2); the board of trustees was the target of negative expressions.

### **Outside “enemies”**

Outside “enemies” included individuals and groups outside the institution, as well as reports prepared by groups outside of the institution (i.e., those not considered a part of the institution). Alumni targeted the media and the governor (and government officials) throughout the year following the scandal, and especially after the trial verdict, alumni targeted Judge Freeh

(Louis Freeh whose firm was hired to investigate the situation at Penn State) and the Freeh Report itself, as well as the NCAA and its sanctions. One alumnus wrote, "...I am extremely angry once again at Penn State being inaccurately put down by the media" (TP3); the media was the target of negative expressions. Another alumnus wrote, "I am angry about the NCAA sanctions, and feel they are excessive and unfair, especially (sic) to the football players" (TP3); the NCAA sanctions were the target of negative expressions. Although not mentioned extensively, the perpetrator, Jerry Sandusky (as well as the Grand Jury Testimony and the sheer occurrence of the scandal), was also considered to be an underlining "enemy" and a target of negative expressions for many alumni. Furthermore, it was far less common for alumni to express positive emotions and cognitions toward outside "enemies."

### **Institution**

The 'institution' consisted of the ideals of the university. That is, the alumni targeted the institution's ethical standards and the principles by which it stands. They targeted these abstract and collective ideals associated with and arguably, defining the institution. One alumnus wrote, "I am confident in the potential our university has to prove again that Penn State stands for people who are leaders with character, integrity, and compassion...This is the heart of our university..." (TP1) and another wrote, "...truly believe and live the ideals of honesty, integrity and excellence that the University represents. Penn State has given me the chance to succeed professionally and personally, and I am forever grateful" (TP1). Another also wrote,

Please stop dragging my memories, my alma mater, my morals, myself and thousands of true blue and white Penn Stater's through the collective mud. We're better than that, your better than that, and we all deserve more. We were, are and will always be Penn State...act like it. (TP2)

The findings suggested that negative expressions were mostly directed toward inside agents of the institution and outside “enemies,” rather than the university itself, thus allowing alumni to generally express some degree of identification with the ideals of the university and/or the institution itself.

### **Identification Modes**

Emotional and cognitive expressions were associated with expressed identification with the institution. Somewhat surprisingly, the findings suggested that most alumni communicated that they were not letting go of their institutional identification. Alumni expressed their identification with the institution as unconditional identification, selective identification, conditional identification, and disidentification.

#### **Unconditional identification**

Alumni expressed unconditional identification when they chose to maintain complete and unconditional association with the institution regardless of the scandal and ensuing events. One alumnus wrote:

I am sure that this is a difficult time for everyone who bleeds blue and white. For the past 3 months, our world has been turned upside down and inside out. We have gone from the top of the world to the deepest abyss...I am Penn State...We Are Penn State, and we will be forever. (TP2)

Despite the events, some alumni chose to maintain their unwavering identification with the institution.

### **Selective identification**

Alumni expressed selective identification when they chose to maintain partial association with the institution; they sought to associate with only one aspect or area of the institution and to sever their association with another area (or areas) of the institution. One alumnus wrote, “We and many thousands of students, alums, faculty and staff are Penn State. Joe Paterno [the head football coach] and Graham Spanier [the university president], as well as Timothy Curley [the athletic director] and Gary Schultz [the senior vice president for finance and business], are not” (TP1). The alumnus separated students, alumni, faculty, and staff from the university’s senior leadership; the alumnus saw one entity as representing the university (and the ideals of the university), and another entity as not representing the university (and the ideals of the university). Therefore, some alumni chose to associate with some parts (or individuals and collective bodies) of the institution over other parts (or individuals and collective bodies) of the institution.

### **Conditional identification**

Alumni expressed conditional identification when they chose to maintain association with the institution only if the university (or more specifically, inside agents) pursued favorable changes and courses of action desired by alumni. This involved alumni taking a time out and placing a hold on their association with the institution until the changes occurred. One alumnus wrote:

I will always love Penn State, and the ties that bind me to it run deeper than you would understand. But my association with the university is at an end until the Trustees who have perpetrated this shameful series of events are gone, until Dr. Erickson [the university president] is gone, and until the university really enters an era of transparency. (TP2)

Some alumni expressed a willingness to continue their association with the university if and only if a number of changes transpired at the university; most of the changes involved the removal of inside agents (e.g., the board of trustees, the university president) from the institution.

### **Disidentification**

Alumni expressed disidentification when they chose to sever their association with the institution. One alumnus wrote, “I’m done with Penn State” (TP1), and another alumnus wrote, “I used to be proud to be a PSU graduate. No more” (TP3). Due to the scandal and ensuing events, some alumni expressed their intentions to completely let go and disassociate from the institution forever. For some of these alumni, they had a change of heart for the institution.

### **Intentions/Actions**

The degree of alumni identification was evident in alumni intentions and actions; the more alumni identified with the institution, the more they expressed supportive intentions and actions and the more alumni disidentified with the institution, the more they expressed non-supportive intentions and actions. Intentions and actions varied for alumni who expressed selective or conditional identification, however. Throughout the year following the scandal, alumni expressed intentions and actions that were supportive, non-supportive, supportive and non-supportive (expressed in the same communications), and conditional. Most notably, alumni commonly referenced intentions and actions related to giving.

### **Supportive intentions/actions**

Alumni expressed supportive intentions and actions toward the institution post-scandal. They expressed what they would do to support the institution after the scandal, including their plans or intentions, and actions. Alumni expressed the following supportive intentions and actions throughout the year following the scandal: giving financially, attending football games, voting in future board of trustee's elections, offering to provide assistance to the university where it was needed, and supporting the institution (in general) or specific units within the institution. One alumnus wrote, "While I do not financially support the University as much as others and am not involved with the University as I have been recently, I am not going anywhere" (TP1), and another alumnus wrote, "We are continuing with our current pledges and have all intentions of making a major gift in the future" (TP2).

In addition to these supportive intentions and actions, alumni also expressed requests or recommendations and offers of assistance to targets, namely inside agents, as another means for supporting the institution. For example, one alumnus wrote to the alumni association with a request:

Can the Alumni Association lead the way in demonstrating Penn State pride and show the country what this family is all about? One way that we might do this is to start a fund that could be used to provide counseling services to the victims. Or maybe financial support for a child protection agency? We're not sure what might be best, but I think alums need to rally around a cause and try to bring some good out of this situation. (TP1)

One more wrote to the alumni association with a similar request:

Can the Alumni Association DO something to make an impact? Clearly, Penn State is not one person, it is not one team or one program... We are all Penn State Proud. We are all wrestling with how that pride is embodied today as compared to yesterday. Can the Alumni Associate (sic) find a way for us to express that pride in a meaningful way? (TP1)

Another alumnus wrote to the board of trustee's office with a series of recommendations:

I do think we need to remove the statue of JVP [Joseph V. Paterno, the deceased head football coach] from the stadium, as his halo has certainly been tarnished...I would also suggest that a significant fundraising effort, perhaps even THON [Penn State Dance Marathon, a student-run philanthropy], rechannel its proceeds to raise funds which support the recovery of and research into childhood sex abuse, treatment for predators, and community awareness.... (TP3)

### **Non-supportive intentions/actions**

Alumni also expressed non-supportive intentions and actions toward the institution post-scandal. They expressed what they have done or would do to withdraw their support from the institution after the scandal, including their plans or intentions, and actions, often related to foregoing or withdrawing financial support. Alumni expressed the following non-supportive intentions and actions throughout the year following the scandal: deciding not to give financially, cancelling football tickets (or not returning to campus for football games), requesting to be removed from university communications such as e-mail list serves or phone lists, discouraging prospective college students (including their own) to attend the university, and employing non-supportive intentions and actions toward the institution (in general) or toward areas within the institution. One alumnus wrote, "PSU will never see a dollar of my money" (TP1), and another alumnus wrote, "Send a child to Penn State? No...That I would rather send a child to any school other than Penn State is the ultimate thing that can convey my disgust with the school" (TP2).

In addition to these non-supportive intentions and actions, alumni also expressed requests or recommendations to targets, namely inside agents, as another means for expressing their lack of support. For example, one alumnus wrote to the board of trustee's office with a request, "I beg you, call for Dr. Spanier's [the university president] resignation before he takes the University down with him" (TP1), and another alumnus wrote to the chair of the board of trustees with

another request, “PLEASE RESIGN IMMEDIATELY, ALONG WITH ALL OF THE MEMBERS OF THE PENN STATE BOARD OF TRUSTEES” (TP3).

### **Supportive and non-supportive intentions/actions**

Alumni also expressed supportive and non-supportive intentions and actions toward the institution in the same communications. They expressed supportive intentions and actions toward some part of the institution post-scandal and non-supportive intentions and actions toward some other part(s) of the institution post-scandal. For example, alumni expressed their intentions and actions to support one area of the institution (often financially) and their intentions and actions to forego or withdraw support from another area of the institution. One alumnus wrote, “Unfortunatly (sic) we can no longer support the University financially given this situation. We will continue to contribute to THON because unlike the University’s administration we are truly for the kids” (TP1). The alumnus chose to support THON, viewing it as either separate from the institution or a distinctive part of the institution worth supporting (i.e., compartmentalizing the university). They chose to forego financial support to the institution and more specifically, the university’s administration. Interestingly, THON is a student-run philanthropy that raises money for pediatric cancer, and it is still a part of the institution (THON, 2014).

### **Conditional intentions/actions**

Alumni expressed conditional intentions and actions toward the institution post-scandal. Although these intentions and actions were overwhelming related to conditions for giving financially, alumni also expressed conditions for joining or maintaining membership in the alumni association and conditions for supporting the institution (in general) throughout the year

following the scandal. Alumni expressed conditions for giving, joining or maintaining their membership, or supporting the institution if, and only if, they observed favorable changes or courses of action within the university (often related to leadership changes). Until then, alumni expressed what they would not do to support the institution (often related to financial giving). One alumnus wrote, “We may not be the wealthiest alumni, but I assure you that my father (also an alum) and I will not be donating any money to the University until things have been handled in a manner we find satisfactory” (TP1). Another alumnus wrote, “We are moving away from giving to PSU until all current trustees have resigned or are voted out of office. When this happens, please call me and we will make further consideration” (TP2).

In the next chapter, I explain the relationships between the key concepts in Figure 4-1. I review alumni responses to organizational scandal through the findings of the main research question: How is organizational scandal associated with the expressed affective, cognitive, and behavioral responses and identification statements of alumni? Furthermore, I draw on the concepts described in this chapter, and provide insights to the associations with emotional and cognitive expressions; targets; unconditional identification, selective identification, conditional identification, and disidentification; and how these modes of identification are associated with outcomes of supportive intentions and actions, non-supportive intentions and actions, supportive and non-supportive intentions and actions (expressed in the same communications), and conditional intentions and actions.

### **Chapter Summary**

The key concepts that contributed to the process that outlines alumni responses to organizational scandal are emotional/cognitive expression; targets; identification modes; and intentions/actions. Alumni expressed positive, negative, and disparate emotions and cognitions

toward inside agents of the institution, outside “enemies,” and the institution. Their emotional and cognitive expressions and targets were associated with their identification with the institution (unconditional identification, selective identification, conditional identification, and disidentification), and their identification mode was associated with their intentions and actions (supportive, non-supportive, supportive and non-supportive—expressed in the same communications—and conditional) toward the institution.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Answering the Main Research Question**

The problem of this study is to understand how alumni respond to organizational scandal. To address this problem, I examined a main research question: How is organizational scandal associated with the expressed affective, cognitive, and behavioral responses and identification statements of alumni?

Alumni expressed a wide range of responses to the Jerry Sandusky scandal at Penn State and its unfolding fallout. Figure 4-1, shown in chapter 4, depicts the relationships that constitute a skeleton theory describing the process involved in alumni responses to organizational scandal; the process involves emotional/cognitive expression, targets, identification modes, and intentions/actions.

In this chapter, I further outline the expressed positive, negative, and disparate emotions and cognitions and targets of these expressions that emerged from the alumni e-mails and summaries of phone conversations recorded with the university from November 2011 to December 2012. Then, I describe five major themes that emerged from the recorded communications. These themes explain the relationships between the concepts in Figure 4-1. More specifically, these themes address the main research question; they explain how organizational scandal was associated with expressed affective and cognitive responses and their targets and identification, as well as how organizational scandal was associated with expressed intentions and actions and identification.

Finally, this study was not intended to address 'why' alumni responded to organizational scandal in these ways; in part, because the database was only partially set up to answer this question. On many occasions, however, a subset of the alumni e-mails and summaries of phone

conversations provided an articulation of their reasons for unconditionally identifying, selectively identifying, conditionally identifying, and disidentifying with the institution, as well as their reasons for supporting, not supporting, supporting and not supporting (expressed in the same communications), or conditionally supporting the institution. The fact that these reasons existed in direct ways provided insights into why the alumni responded in these various patterns. Therefore, in addition to describing ‘how’ organizational scandal is associated with emotional/cognitive expressions and their targets, identification, and intentions/actions for each of these emergent themes, I also offer an exploratory analysis for ‘why’ the alumni may respond in these ways.

### **Emotional/Cognitive Expression and Targets**

Alumni expressed positive, negative, and disparate emotions and cognitions throughout the year following the scandal. During the time of the greatest media attention to the scandal and immediate fallout (e.g., the removal of the university president, the head football coach, and two other former administrators), November 5 – December 31, 2011, alumni expressed overwhelmingly negative expressions in response to the scandal. They expressed these emotions and cognitions toward all entities potentially involved (e.g., the university leadership including the university president and the board of trustees, the head football coach) in what they perceived to be a cover-up. Alumni expressed feeling especially sad, ashamed and embarrassed, disgusted, upset and sick, shocked and dismayed, appalled, and angered. They also expressed feeling disappointed and disturbed. One alumnus wrote, “I am shocked, embarrassed, appalled and angry about the events that have been uncovered over the past week,” and another alumnus wrote, “As a Penn State alum, I’ve never been so disgraced and sickened in all my life.” Alumni also signed

their e-mails, “A very disappointed graduate of ol’ PSU” and “Shamed & Disappointed,” for example. Another alumnus also titled the subject of their e-mail communications, “So Sad.”

Alumni continued to express similar feelings in the time leading up to the verdict of the trial, January 1 – June 21, 2012; they expressed feeling especially ashamed and embarrassed, disgusted, upset and sick, angry, sad, and disappointed. The distinguishing feature of this timeframe was that the board of trustees consistently emerged as the primary target for alumni expressions. One alumnus explained, “I am a proud PSU alum, but the actions of the Board of Trustees has (sic) really embarrassed me over the last few months,” and another wrote, “I’ve never doubted the integrity of my school or the high character individuals it’s produced, but I am honestly ashamed by ALL of you.” Alumni also made comments like, “I am embarrassed (sic) and I am saddened by the weak and cowardly rationalization of our Board of Untrustees (sic),” and “I can not (sic) tell you how disappointed I am with the board of trustees and their knee-jerk reaction to possible press releases and scandal.”

Alumni continued to express similar feelings after the trial, June 22 – December 31, 2012; they expressed feeling especially ashamed and embarrassed, disappointed, sad, appalled, angry, and disgusted. Although the magnitude of negative expressions was noticeably diminished compared to those leading up to the verdict, the volume of alumni communications continued unabated. One alumnus explained, “I, as have many others, watched in horror as the events of the past 10 months have unfolded. That horror quickly morphed into extreme disappointment and eventual anger at how the Board of Trustees...” Similarly, another wrote, “I am appalled about the events of the last many months.” Although the board of trustees remained a target for negative expressions, the focus shifted from the former university president (Graham Spanier) when the news of the scandal broke to the sitting president (Rodney Erickson) during the trial verdict. Shortly after the scandal broke, an alumnus wrote, “Your vapid comments regarding your trust in your team make me sick,” and another wrote, “Graham Spanier and all involved parties MUST

resign before the healing can begin.” In the time following the trial verdict, an alumnus wrote, “For us to move ahead; the President and BOT [Board of Trustees] (other than the 3 just appointed) should resign!”

Individuals and groups outside of the university such as the media, while present in the time leading up to the verdict, also continued to serve as a target for alumni expressions in the post-trial period. This was in part because after the trial verdict, the findings from the university’s internal investigation were released in the Freeh Report and the NCAA imposed a series of harsh sanctions against the university and its football program. Judge Freeh and the report itself, as well as the NCAA and its sanctions were targets for alumni expressions.

Although a number of negative expressions consistently emerged throughout the year following the scandal, alumni also expressed gratitude, love, confidence, pride, and hopefulness. One alumnus wrote, “After this week and attending Saturday’s game, I don’t think I can properly put into words how proud I am to be a Penn Stater” (TP1). Other alumni wrote, “Thanks again for all you do! I can’t even imagine that level of responsibility!” (TP2), and “I am proud of this institution, its staff, faculty and students and I appreciate all that you have completed to date. Thank you for continuing to make us Penn State proud” (TP3). Another alumnus wrote, “They, like me, remain proud of our school” (TP3). These findings are consistent with the university’s alumni opinion surveys that reported the majority of alumni who completed the surveys expressed having a great deal of pride in their Penn State degree even months after the scandal. In the survey issued from November 28 – December 11, 2012, 74 percent of alumni reported having a great deal of pride in their Penn State degree (Penn State Alumni Association, 2013), compared to 76 percent in May 8 – 20, 2012 (Penn State Alumni Association, 2012), and 75 percent in 2009—two years prior to the scandal (“The results are in,” 2012).

Relatedly, alumni also expressed disparate emotions and cognitions during the scandal and its fallout. Throughout the year following the scandal, for example, alumni expressed feeling

proud along with some other negative emotion or cognition (in the same communications), such as feeling proud and ashamed. This emotional and cognitive conflict also provided insight into a seemingly apparent sense of ‘family’ shame shared among some members of the alumni community. One alumnus wrote, “For the first time in my life, I am ashamed to admit I went to Penn State” (TP3), and another wrote, “I’m almost ashamed to have a (sic) alumni plate on my vehicle” (TP1). Interestingly, there is a line within the university’s alma mater that references ‘shame.’ It reads, “May no act of ours bring shame, To one heart that loves thy name, May our lives but swell thy fame...” (Penn State, 2014). Alumni also referenced the alma mater in their communications to the university. One alumnus wrote, “...This isn’t simply an Alma Mater, it is an oath” (TP1), and another alumnus wrote, “My immediate family alone boasts seven Penn Staters—we have all sung the same alma mater which includes the words ‘let no act of ours bring shame...’” (TP1). Other alumni also submitted letters to the editor of *The Penn Stater* magazine—included in the January/February 2012 issue—that cited the alma mater:

The first line in the final verse of Penn State’s alma mater reads, ‘May no act of ours bring shame.’ Sadly, as many times as the administrators involved in this alleged cover-up sang this wonderful song at Penn State events, they certainly didn’t heed the message. (“Your letters,” 2012a, p. 7)

Another alumnus wrote a letter to the editor that read, “We know that two wrongs don’t make a right, but surely a thousand rights must far outweigh one wrong...Let us be Penn State proud, and raise the song, raise the song” (“Your letters,” 2012a, p. 9). The phrases “raise the song, raise the song” are also a part of the university’s alma mater (Penn State, 2014).

## **Targets**

Throughout the unfolding fallout of the scandal, alumni targeted their positive, negative, and disparate expressions at inside agents of the institution such as the university leadership and

board of trustees; outside “enemies” such as the media, the Freeh Report, and the NCAA; and the institution’s ideals. Although negative expressions were to be expected in the wake of a scandal associated with an organization with which alumni identify, alumni consistently targeted their negative expressions at inside agents of the institution and outside “enemies.” In fact, the negative expressions represented in Table 3-7 (in chapter 3) were all targeted at inside agents of the institution. Conversely, alumni targeted almost all their positive expressions as well as some disparate expressions toward the university itself, as a beloved institution. These findings are consistent with the university’s alumni opinion surveys that reported the majority of alumni who completed the surveys expressed having positive feelings toward Penn State today. In the survey issued from November 28 – December 11, 2012, 81 percent of alumni reported having very positive or somewhat positive feelings toward Penn State today (Penn State Alumni Association, 2013), compared to 82 percent in May 8 – 20, 2012, (Penn State Alumni Association, 2012), and 91 percent in 2009—two years prior to the scandal (The results are in, 2012).

### **Emergent Themes**

In addition to selectively targeted expressions, alumni responses also involved identification statements and expressed intentions and actions. Five major themes emerged from the data addressing the association with emotional and cognitive expressions and their targets and identification, and the association with expressed intentions and actions and identification.

The first two themes are illustrated in Figure 5-1; I constructed this model at the thematic level because the relationships are more apparent at that level. In both instances, the themes represent extreme cases. The first theme within the model illustrates the association with exclusively positive expressions targeted at the idealized institution (i.e., the institution’s ideals), unconditional identification with the institution, and supportive intentions and actions toward the

institution; this is an extreme case where alumni expressed only positive emotions and cognitions. The second theme within the model illustrates the association with exclusively negative expressions targeted at inside agents of the institution and/or the institution itself, disidentification with the institution, and non-supportive intentions and actions toward the institution; this is an extreme case where alumni expressed only negative emotions and cognitions.

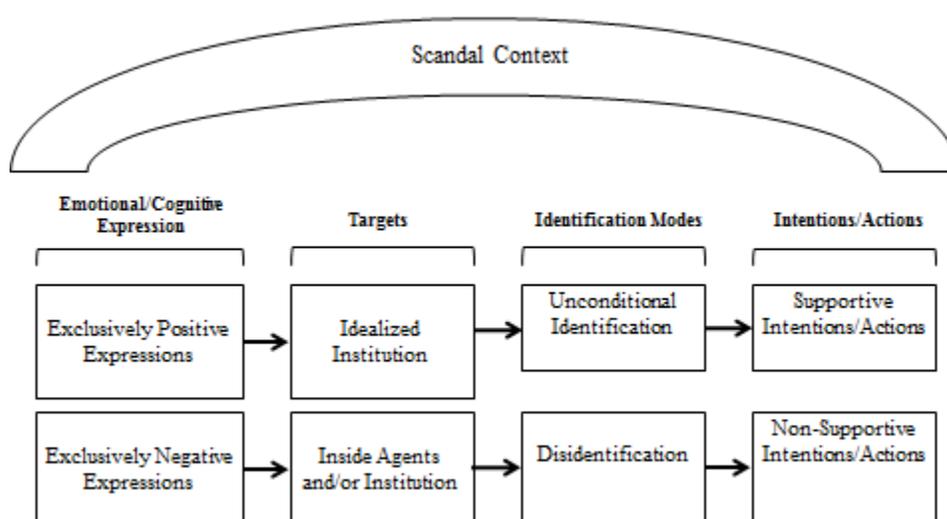


Figure 5-1. Alumni responses: Exclusively positive and exclusively negative expressions, identification modes, and intentions/actions.

The remaining three themes—and the focus of the study—are illustrated in Figure 5-2; I also constructed this model at the thematic level because the relationships are more apparent at that level. The first theme within the model illustrates the association with disparate expressions targeted at inside agents of the institution, outside “enemies,” and the institution; unconditional identification with the institution; and supportive intentions and actions toward the institution. The second theme within the model illustrates the association with disparate expressions directed at the same three targets; selective identification; and supportive and non-supportive intentions

and actions (expressed in the same communications) toward the institution. The third theme within the model illustrates the association with disparate expressions directed at the same three targets; conditional identification; and conditional intentions and actions toward the institution.

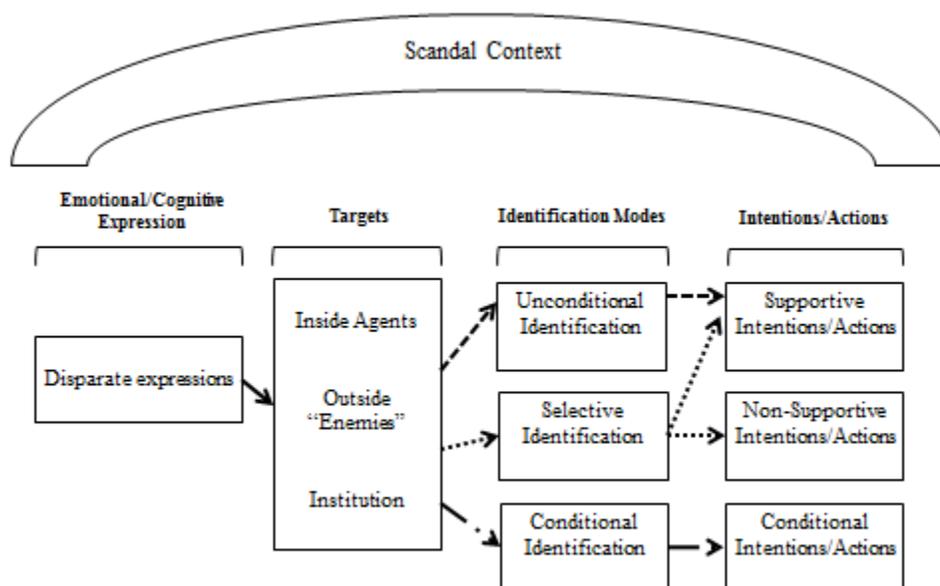


Figure 5-2. Alumni responses: Disparate expressions, identification modes, and intentions/actions.

### **Exclusively positive expressions and unconditional identification**

The first relationship within Figure 5-1 illustrates the association with exclusively positive expressions, the idealized institution as a target, and unconditional identification with the institution. It also illustrates the association with unconditional identification with the institution and supportive intentions and actions toward the institution.

Despite the scandal and ensuing events, some alumni expressed exclusively positive expressions toward the university, a beloved and idealized institution. The distinguishing feature of this theme was that these positive expressions were associated with alumni unconditionally

identifying with the institution. Alumni expressed unconditional identification when they chose to maintain complete and unconditional association with the institution regardless of the scandal and ensuing events. One alumnus wrote:

I just wanted to reach out to you and tell you that I am still a proud Penn Stater. I will bleed blue and white...I think we are all shocked and saddened by what happened but know that I am in your court...We ARE PENN STATE! [the commonly shared slogan and chant used at athletic events, and a strong identity statement with deep meaning to organizational members and alumni] (TP1).

Other alumni ended or signed their e-mail communications with phrases such as, “We are...Penn State” (TP1), “Thank you, I remain” (TP1), “For the Glory [a reference to a phrase in the university’s alma mater], and forever PSU loyal” (TP1), and “Sincerely Penn Staters forever” (TP1). The alumni continued to articulate their identification with the university in the year following the scandal. One alumnus wrote, “The flag is flying outside our front door, and we are glad to be recognized as Penn State graduates...” (TP2), and another alumnus wrote, “It is still my privilege to say that I am a Penn Stater!” (TP2). The alumni also continued to end or sign their e-mail communications with more phrases such as, “WE STILL ARE!” (TP3), and “We ARE...and I WILL!” (TP3).

Along with their unconditional identification with the institution came supportive intentions and actions toward the institution. Supportive intentions and actions included the following: giving financially, attending football games, voting in future board of trustees’ elections, offering to provide assistance to the university where it was needed, and supporting the institution (in general) or specific units within the institution. Supportive intentions and actions also included requests or recommendations and offers of assistance from alumni in support of the institution. One alumnus wrote:

If I can help in any way, I am here for my Penn State family. Although we all wish the facts were different and that this nightmare would go away, nothing can take away the pride many of us have for the school...WE ARE Penn state, always and forever (TP1).

Other alumni wrote, “We feel that it is the responsibility of any alumnus to support their university in any way they can, financial and/or non financial...We will continue our support...” (TP2), and “My wife and I will be on campus on September 1, as we have been many times this summer, to support our alma mater and express our pride in our students and our school” (TP3).

### **Exclusively negative expressions and disidentification**

The second relationship within Figure 5-1 illustrates the association with exclusively negative expressions, inside agents as a target and/or the institution, and disidentification with the institution. It also illustrates the association with disidentification with the institution and non-supportive intentions and actions toward the institution.

Some alumni expressed exclusively negative expressions toward inside agents of the institution and/or the institution itself. The distinguishing feature of this theme was that these negative expressions were associated with alumni disidentifying with the institution. Alumni expressed disidentification when they chose to sever their association with the institution and disassociate from the institution forever. One alumnus wrote, “I am no longer proud to be a Penn State alumna. The actions of all of you are reprehensible” (TP1). The alumni continued to articulate their disidentification with the university throughout the year following the scandal. Some alumni ended or signed their e-mail communications with phrases such as, “For what glory?” (TP2), and “No more glory” [a reference to a phrase in the university’s alma mater, ‘For the glory’] (TP2). Another alumnus wrote, “Through this whole mess I remained 100% behind PSU and remained proud. Not now, not ever again” (TP3).

Along with their disidentification with the institution came non-supportive intentions and actions toward the institution. Non-supportive intentions and actions included the following: deciding not to give financially, cancelling football tickets (or not returning to campus for

football games), requesting to be removed from university communications such as e-mail list serves or phone lists, discouraging prospective college students (including their own) to attend the university, and employing non-supportive actions toward the institution (in general) or toward areas within the institution. Non-supportive intentions and actions also included requests or recommendations calling for the removal of inside agents and overturning institutional decisions, for example. Some alumni wrote, “Not another red cent” (TP1), “I will never send another penny to PSU and will encourage my friends to take the same position” (TP1), and “You won’t be receiving any further gifts from any of us” (TP2). Alumni continued to express similar non-supportive intentions and actions throughout the year following the scandal. One alumnus wrote, “With the continuing leadership failures at my alma mater, I am done offering any future support” (TP3), and another wrote, “I wish you well but I cannot in good faith give money to people I no longer trust” (TP3).

### **Disparate expressions and unconditional identification**

The first relationship within Figure 5-2 illustrates the association with disparate expressions, the targets of these expressions (inside agents, outside “enemies,” and the institution), and unconditional identification with the institution. It also illustrates the association with unconditional identification with the institution and supportive intentions and actions toward the institution.

Some alumni expressed disparate emotions and cognitions toward inside agents of the institution, outside “enemies,” and the institution. The distinguishing feature of this theme was that these disparate expressions were associated with alumni still unconditionally identifying with the institution. In fact, there were enduring expressions of pride in the institution itself. One alumnus wrote, “Not quite as Penn State Proud as I was. But there are still lots of things to proud

of, and I whenever I get that sick feeling in my gut, I think of those” (TP1). Other alumni wrote, “My loyalty and the loyalty of fellow Penn Staters with whom I’ve spoken remains strong. We are just devastated that those in leadership positions could have chosen a path that was so clearly morally wrong, never mind illegal” (TP1), and “After learning of the horrific allegations against Mr. Sandusky, I knew in my heart that if anything positive could come out of the scandal, the Penn State community could bring it forth. I remain a very proud Penn Stater!” (TP1). Another alumnus also wrote:

...At any given moment I have to be prepared to represent Penn State well when colleagues, family, friends, and often complete strangers lay charges at my feet and I have to defend myself and my university. In a sense, we have been the foot soldiers, engaged in hand to hand combat for many frustrating and emotionally draining weeks, while the general and his staff have been comfortably situated at HQ developing battle plans, but being distant and behind the scenes. (TP2)

Despite their disparate expressions, the alumni continued to articulate their unconditional identification with the university throughout the year following the scandal. One alumnus wrote:

Let me start by saying I will never attend a rally or join any other group that criticizes Penn State’s leaders or other Penn Staters. I agree with very little the Board of Trustees had done over the last 10 months, but I will never publically criticize anyone who gives their time to Penn State. After my family and my firm, nothing is as dear to my heart as Penn State. (TP3)

Other alumni wrote, “I am proud of Penn State, it is part of what defines who I am, but I am not proud of the failed leadership we continue to endure” (TP3), and “As an Alum, I feel betrayed by administration, who failed to fight for what we know was always the right way....The Penn State Way...I am Penn State Proud....I wish my leadership was also. It is not too late !!!” (TP3).

Along with their unconditional identification with the institution came supportive intentions and actions toward the institution. Alumni wrote, “In the meantime, don’t worry - I am, & remain, a committed supporter of PSU” (TP1), and “...I will still give because as one of the board members said the university is bigger than one person” (TP1). One alumnus even passed along a message included in their Christmas letter that read, “Like many of you (Penn Staters and

other friends across the United States) I grieve over the Sandusky abuse charges...I also am concerned about Penn State's future...My support for the university and its future remain unwaveringly strong" (TP1). Alumni continued to express supportive intentions and actions throughout the year following the scandal. One alumnus wrote, "I will continue to give to Penn State in the modest way that I am able" (TP2). Other alumni also wrote, "I am still Penn State proud and will do all I can to help restore the reputation the public/media have trashed due to to (sic) the actions of 4 individuals" (TP3), and "Our support to the students, activities like Thon, the NLC [Nittany Lion Club, the fundraising arm of the university's athletic department], and general funds will continue. Our support of the University is not the issue" (TP3).

### **Disparate expressions and selective identification**

The second relationship within Figure 5-2 illustrates the association with disparate expressions, the targets of these expressions (inside agents, outside "enemies," and the institution), and selective identification with the institution. It also illustrates the association with selective identification with the institution and supportive and non-supportive intentions and actions (expressed in the same communications) toward the institution.

Although other alumni also expressed disparate emotions and cognitions toward inside agents of the institution, outside "enemies," and the institution, the distinguishing feature of this theme was that these disparate expressions were associated with alumni selectively identifying with the institution. Alumni expressed selective identification when they chose to maintain partial association with the institution; they sought to associate with only one aspect or area of the institution and to sever their association with another area (or other areas) of the institution. They associated with some parts of the institution over other parts of the institution. For example, one

alumnus wrote, “Aside from academics, this is NOT the Penn State that I knew and believed in” (TP2).

Alumni expressions of selective identification with the institution were tightly coupled with their expressed supportive and non-supportive intentions and actions (in the same communications) toward the institution. One alumnus wrote, “...I WILL renew my membership in the Alumni Association, however, due to my dissatisfaction with the handling of Joe Paterno and the scandal in general, I will not make any other donations to Penn State this year” (TP2).

The alumnus chose to identify with and support the alumni association, but chose not to financially support other aspects of the institution. Another alumnus also wrote:

...I can assure you my loyalties will forever be with Penn State and we will continue to contribute to the NLC [Nittany Lion Club], as I have done in the past, but my future involvement with the President’s Club will only come when I see a positive and supportive attitude and actions that we are now moving forward in support of Penn State...(TP3)

This alumnus chose to identify with and support the Nittany Lion Club (the fundraising arm of the university’s athletic department), but chose not to support the President’s Club (a giving circle at the university level). Another alumnus wrote, “I will choose for the foreseeable future to support the individual colleges and activities of my choice, within the University” (TP3). This alumnus expressed his or her intention to support some colleges and activities over other colleges and activities.

Other alumni also wrote, “Note that I am still happy to hear from my Alma mater. But the checkbook is still closed. Penn State is also no longer in my estate plans--and we have no children” (TP3), and “I will always support my alma mater, but I will be doing so by working to ensure that it is never again lead (sic) by such incompetent people” (TP3). In these examples, alumni chose to identify with and support one area of the university (emotionally or physically) while not supporting other areas of the university.

### **Disparate expressions and conditional identification**

The third relationship within Figure 5-2 illustrates the association with disparate expressions, the targets of these expressions (inside agents, outside “enemies,” and the institution), and conditional identification with the institution. It also illustrates the association with conditional identification with the institution and conditional intentions and actions toward the institution.

Although other alumni also expressed disparate emotions and cognitions toward inside agents of the institution, outside “enemies,” and the institution, the distinguishing feature of this theme was that these disparate expressions were associated with alumni conditionally identifying with the institution. Alumni expressed conditional identification when they chose to maintain association with the institution only if the university (or more specifically, inside agents) pursued favorable changes and courses of action desired by alumni. For example, one alumnus wrote, “...After 50 plus years of association with the place, I am done with Penn State until EVERYONE associated with how Joe Paterno [the deceased head football coach] was treated is gone from the University, including the Board of Trustees, Erickson [the university president], and Corbett [the governor of Pennsylvania]...”(TP2).

Alumni expressions of conditional identification with the institution were also tightly coupled with their expressed conditional intentions and actions toward the institution. Alumni overwhelmingly expressed conditions for giving financially to the institution throughout the year following the scandal. One alumnus wrote, “I do not intend to donate money to Penn State while Spanier [the university president] and Paterno [the head football coach] hold their current positions” (TP1). Other alumni wrote, “I, for one, refuse to donate another dime until and unless I am convinced that the University has purged itself of every individual who had knowledge of the big cover-up” (TP2), and “So instead of terminating my contributions to Penn State, similar to

what the Trustees did to Joe Paterno, my future contributions are on administrative leave until this is resolved and all of the facts are known and disclosed” (TP2). Other alumni also wrote, “I will not donate ANY money directly to my alma mater until the BOT [Board of Trustees] can be more transparent regarding their responsibility in the degradation of my school’s reputation world wide both academically and financially” (TP3), and “... I have served her [my alma mater] faithfully with my resources and time...I owe Penn State much. I deeply love Penn State. But I cannot continue to support her as long as the current board remains in place...” (TP3).

These conditions for giving also provided insight into a seemingly apparent sense that the sheer nature of placing a ‘hold’ on their giving to the institution provided some members of the alumni community with another mechanism for expressing their disparate emotions and cognitions. One alumnus explained, “Money has power...We have the power to show them that we will not allow our dollars to support child abuse” (TP1). Another wrote, “...As an expression of my outrage regarding these events, I am suspending further contributions to the university until all those responsible are held accountable” (TP1). One more alumnus wrote:

Unfortunately, with any big organization such as PSU, money is the only thing that talks, so I am pulling my meager contribution, which will be a symbolic gesture to let them know how strongly I feel that they have mishandled this whole thing...I will see how this plays out and may reconsider my decision later... (TP1)

In addition to conditions for giving, alumni also expressed other conditional intentions and actions such as conditions for joining or maintaining membership in the alumni association and for supporting the institution in general. One alumnus wrote:

While I still believe in the university, the BOT [Board of Trustees] leaves a lot for me to desire. The quick rush to judgement (sic) and firing of Joe Paterno [the deceased head football coach] was wrong. Plain and simple. I have not made a decision yet on whether I will continue to support Penn State. The actions of the BOT during the next several weeks will have a lot to do with my decision. (TP1)

Other alumni also wrote, “I will no longer support PSU till you all resign!!” (TP2), and “I WILL NO LONGER SUPPORT THE UNIVERSITY IN ANY WAY SO LONG AS YOU AND YOUR COHORTS REMAIN ON THE BOT [Board of Trustees]” (TP3).

### **Exploratory Analysis**

During the year following the scandal, some alumni expressed why they were experiencing positive, negative, or disparate emotions and cognitions, as well as why they were going to continue to identify with and/or support the institution (or parts of the institution) or why they were going to disidentify with and/or withdraw support from the institution (or parts of the institution). These reasons provided insights into the alumni responses. Based upon the data and with some speculation, these reasons seem to be related to alumni identification with the institution prior to the scandal and ensuing events, the sheer taint of the scandal and its fallout, and the trust (or lack thereof) with the institution’s leadership.

#### **Identification with the institution prior to the scandal**

Throughout the year following the scandal, alumni articulated their pre-scandal identification with the university. In fact, alumni consistently referenced their class year, family legacy, and the mere fact that they were a graduate of Penn State or a “Penn Stater” in their communications with the university. Alumni would generally either open or conclude their communications with this background information. For example, one alumnus wrote, “As a 1972 undergraduate of the University and a life member of the Penn State Alumni Association, I recommend that...” (TP1), and another wrote, “I am a Penn State Alumni. My wife and I

graduated from PSU in 1992, my sister graduated from PSU in 1994, and my mother graduated from PSU in 1966...My family and I bleed Blue and White” (TP2). Another alumnus wrote:

Since graduating in December 2000, I have receipts for \$11,620 of gifts to Penn State...My lifetime membership for the Alumni Association is paid in full. I am a dues-paying member of two Penn State clubs...I have held football season tickets for ten seasons. A near majority of my wardrobe displays the Penn State logo.  
(TP3)

The more alumni identified with the institution prior to the scandal, the more seemingly difficult it was for the alumni to completely disidentify with the institution, despite the scandal and its fallout. One alumnus submitted a letter to the editor of *The Penn Stater* magazine— included in the November/December 2012 issue—that reflects their identification with the institution:

Lately, I get asked questions like, How can you wear that Penn State shirt after what happened? I absolutely cannot support the heinous actions that brought us to this point, but I cannot condemn an entire university for this. Penn State is where I received a great education, developed my independence, and truly became an adult. No sanctioning entity will ever change that. How can I wear that Penn State shirt? How can I not? (“Your letters,” 2012b, p. 10)

Consistent with social identity theory, the higher individuals’ identification with an organization is situated within their hierarchies of social identity, the stronger their identification will be with the organization (Mael & Ashforth, 1992; Tajfel & Turner, 1985; Turner, 1985). Some of the alumni seemingly articulated the depths that they personally identified with the organization, i.e., what it means to them to be a ‘Penn Stater.’ For these alumni, in particular, they had reason(s) to identify avenues for maintaining their identification with the organization despite the scandal and its fallout. Although some alumni expressed disparate emotions and cognitions toward inside agents of the institution, outside “enemies,” and the institution, alumni who highly identified with the institution prior to the scandal generally chose to maintain their association with the university as a beloved institution. Some alumni identified unconditionally and sought to maintain complete and unconditional association with the institution, but others created new avenues for reconciling

and maintaining some degree of association. They selectively identified and conditionally identified with the institution; those who chose to selectively identify sought to maintain partial association with the institution (or individuals and groups within the institution); and those who chose to conditionally identify sought to maintain their associations conditionally. Both processes—selective identification and conditional identification—enabled alumni to maintain some degree of the identification that they had with the institution prior to the scandal.

### **Taint of the scandal and its fallout**

In addition to alumni identification prior to the scandal, alumni also attributed the sheer taint of the scandal and its fallout as factors related to their responses. Alumni wrote, “Sadly, the decisions of two men...have tainted what I once felt about my alma mater, and its football program” (TP1), and “We don’t want any more ill-judged, or ill-timed black marks against our alma mater” (TP1). Another alumnus submitted a letter to the editor of *The Penn Stater* magazine—including in the January/February 2012 issue—that said:

Since 1983, I have been a proud graduate of The Pennsylvania State University—until now. Sadly, because of the actions of a group of University employees, we alumni find ourselves in limbo, not knowing what it is we are representing. The ideals that were once ‘Penn State’ are forever tarnished. Penn State and Happy Valley have been reduced to punch lines for comedians. For the faithful of this hallowed institution to regain belief in what it means to say, ‘We are Penn State,’ actions must be swift and severe. Otherwise, the chants will resonate, ‘We are...embarrassed.’” (“Your letters,” 2012a, p. 7)

The taint of the scandal and its fallout overwhelmingly brought about feelings of personal embarrassment and shame; alumni seemingly expressed feeling stigmatized by virtue of their association with the institution (and its leadership). Alumni wrote, “This is personal and should be personal to all PSU Students, Educators and Alumni” (TP1), “Not only is this a national embarrassment for the university, this is a personal embarrassment and humiliation for every

Penn State (sic) alumnus in the world” (TP1), and “The Penn State administration has brought shame and disgrace on the whole of Penn State at a level...” (TP1). Other alumni also wrote, “...I’m embarrassed to admit I’m a PSU alumni” (TP2), “...you make me ashamed to be associated with you people,” (TP2), “I didn’t do anything and my PSU credentials have been harmed by these people who say something happened a long time ago” (TP3), and “...It may take a generation to remove the stain to the point where we can be proud to wear the Blue and White again” (TP3).

Because a scandal and its fallout inflict stigma on the organization and those who associate with it (Mishina & Devers, 2012), individuals who choose to remain identified with the stigmatized organization also endure the stigma on a personal level. Therefore, some alumni chose to disidentify and they expressed their desire to maintain no further association with the institution. They also expressed non-supportive intentions and actions (often related to financial giving). They wrote, “No more donations” (TP1), “Gift -- to Penn State !!!!!!! You must be joking!!!!!!!!!!!!!!” (TP3), and “Don’t ever ask this alumni for another penny” (TP3). Nevertheless, alumni generally sought to distance themselves from inside agents of the institution as well as outside “enemies” (i.e., those responsible for the taint), and continued to express some degree of identification—unconditionally, selectively, and conditionally—with the institution while nonetheless blaming someone or some collective body for actions with which they disagreed.

### **Trust (or lack thereof) with the institution’s leadership**

Furthermore, alumni also attributed trust (or lack thereof) with the institution’s leadership as reasons for their responses to the scandal. One alumnus wrote, “Bottom line this is obviously how you’d treat anyone. So, I no longer trust Penn State” (TP2). Other alumni wrote, “I hope you

realize how much trust and faith I have in the board now to run a multi-billion dollar university. Virtually zero...” (TP2), “I do not trust the environment that the university has set up...” (TP2), “YOU HAVE LOST ALL ‘TRUST’ IN BEING A ‘TRUSTEE’” (TP3), and “...The word trustee obviously stems from ‘trust’. Does this Board of Trustees honestly believe that it has either earned or possesses the trust of the PSU family?” (TP3). Another alumnus wrote:

My alma mater, however, has no credibility at this point and it hurts beyond words. Everything I’ve ever known and loved about Penn State is gone - in an instant...Penn State will not get another dime from this alum until you have regained my trust and restored the institution’s credibility. (TP1)

One more also wrote:

Between the Catholic Church, ‘Wall Street’ and Penn State, I’ve had my fair share of institutions with which I most identify under pressure and scrutiny over the past four years which has led me to one conclusion... It’s the leaders - those people who distinguish themselves among the community during times of crisis when others have let us down - that give us faith in the system and our ability to grow and heal. (TP3)

The decisions made by the board of trustees and the university’s leadership during the scandal and its fallout brought about feelings of distrust among the alumni community; they had seemingly entrusted the leadership to serve in the best interest of the institution. In fact, the university’s alumni opinion surveys also indicated feelings of distrust among the alumni community. More specifically, only 50 percent of alumni reported that they trusted the board of trustees to provide them with information about Penn State in the November 28 – December 11, 2012 survey (Penn State Alumni Association, 2013) and only 46 percent in the May 8 – 20, 2012 survey (Penn State Alumni Association, 2012).

Similar to the taint of the scandal and its fallout, some alumni chose to disidentify with the institution (and the inside agents), perhaps believing that the degree of mistrust with the institution (and its leadership) was beyond repair. Alumni generally chose to maintain identification with the institution, however. Alumni who highly identified with the institution prior to the scandal may have chosen to unconditionally identify with the institution; they

seemingly expressed unwavering faith in the university. One alumnus wrote, “I do believe that our University can, and will, bounce back from this. We will become stronger...I will forever support Penn State and have not lost faith in what our University stands for” (TP3). Other alumni may have chosen to selectively identify with the institution, and therefore maintain association with some part(s) of the institution (not the institution’s leadership). Other alumni may have also chosen to conditionally identify with the institution, and therefore maintain association only if members of the board of trustees or the university’s leadership step down from their positions. By selectively identifying or conditionally identifying with the institution, alumni allowed time to pass and their trust with the institution (and new inside agents) to be restored. One alumnus wrote:

All the fine professors, all the research programs , all the graduates who have gone forward with their degrees with pride now are blemished because the MEN at the top put money from football ahead of what a university is really supposed to be about...I truly hope this new board, that we alums have elected, will get the priority right this time and give us back our Penn State Pride in the diplomas my husband and I have hanging in our home. (TP3)

### **Underlying process to the exploratory analysis**

In addition to some of the reasons why alumni responded with unconditional identification, selective identification, conditional identification, and disidentification, there was one process in particular that appeared to operate in influencing the degree of identification that an alumnus had with an organization following a scandal and its unfolding fallout: targeting. Targeting provided alumni with a means for aligning their expressed positive, negative, and disparate emotions and cognitions in a direction that enabled them to maintain their identification with the institution. In this study, alumni expressed strong negative emotions and cognitions toward both inside agents of the institution and perceived outside “enemies,” yet expressed

positive and disparate emotions and cognitions toward the institution itself and/or its ideals. The wording of the expressions toward the university suggested that alumni were treating their alma mater university as a kind of “institutional ideal,” rather than merely an organization, per se, so the expressions of pride, love, and allegiance were usually quite strong and passionate. They also expressed emotional ambivalence, which is “the association of both strong positive and negative emotions with some target” (Pratt & Doucet, 2000, p. 205) towards the university. They expressed feeling disparate emotions and cognitions, such as pride and shame or pride and disgust, during the course of the year following the breaking news of the scandal. Generally, however, the alumni felt disgust mainly towards the board of trustees (inside agents), for example, and pride and love for the university (the institution) at large. So, although, alumni expressed positive, negative, and disparate emotions and cognitions, they seemingly engaged in a targeting process to reconcile the emotional and cognitive ambivalence that they experienced when the organization underwent a scandal.

### **Chapter Summary**

Overall, the findings show that alumni targeted positive, negative, and disparate expressions toward inside agents of the institution, outside “enemies,” and the institution. Despite overwhelmingly negative emotions and cognitions expressed toward inside agents and outside “enemies,” alumni generally chose to maintain their identification with the university as a cherished institution. Alumni expressed unconditional identification (and supportive intentions and actions), selective identification (and supportive and non-supportive intentions and actions in the same communications), conditional identification (and conditional intentions and actions), and disidentification (and non-supportive intentions and actions). In all but one of these themes, alumni pointedly did not disidentify with the institution. Instead they distanced themselves from

inside agents of the institution as well as outside “enemies” to which they could attribute blame and label as the source of their shame, and they chose to identify with the institution and its ideals. The reasons for the alumni responses is seemingly related to alumni identification with the institution prior to the scandal and ensuing events, the sheer taint of the scandal and its fallout, and the trust (or lack thereof) with the institution’s leadership.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Conclusion**

In this study, I examined alumni—an important stakeholder group who contribute to organizations in a variety of ways—and their responses to organizational scandal. A priori I expected negative expressions to be accompanied by disidentification—i.e., I expected that it would be easy for alumni to disidentify with the university. Instead, I learned that alumni responses are complex. Alumni expressed a wide range of positive, negative, and disparate emotions and cognitions, but most found a way to maintain their identification with the organization (unconditionally, selectively, or conditionally). I found that alumni can simultaneously express disparate emotions and cognitions and unconditional identification with the institution. They manage to do so by directing their negative expressions at specific targets, in this case inside agents of the institution and outside “enemies,” which allows them to identify with elements of a valued, but scandal-tainted organization.

In this chapter, I address the implications of this study for research and practice, and then, I address the limitations for this study and directions for future research. Finally, I offer closing remarks to this study.

### **Implications for Research**

This work contributes to a growing interest in alumni as important organizational stakeholders, offering five implications for research. This study offers a theoretical framework for alumni responses to organizational scandal, bringing together affective, cognitive, and behavioral responses and organizational identification. This study also introduces a new process for how individuals construct their attitudes toward the organization. Furthermore, this study extends the

identification literature, builds upon Hirschman's (1970) framework for exit, voice, and loyalty, and furthers the higher education literature in the areas of alumni identification and alumni engagement.

### **Theoretical framework for alumni responses to organizational scandal**

The findings of this study indicate that alumni responses to organizational scandal are complex; alumni do not simply express positive and negative emotions or positive and negative cognitions. Nor do they simply identify or disidentify with the organization, or express supportive and non-supportive intentions and actions. Although the extant literature recognizes that three kinds of responses— affective, cognitive, and behavioral— contribute to the formation of attitudes (Eiser, 1986), this study brings together these three responses and organizational identification, offering a skeleton theory describing the process involved in alumni responses to organizational scandal. The process involves emotional/cognitive expression (positive, negative, and disparate emotions and cognitions); targets (inside agents, outside “enemies,” and the institution); identification modes (unconditional identification, selective identification, conditional identification, and disidentification); and intentions/actions (supportive, non-supportive, supportive and non-supportive expressed in the same communications, and conditional intentions/actions). This study explains the patterns of relationships between these key concepts and therefore, describes alumni responses to organizational scandal. Because on many occasions a subset of the alumni communications included an articulation of their reasons for these responses, this study also provides some insights into why alumni responded in these patterns.

## **Targeting**

Not only did targeting provide alumni with a means for maintaining their identification with the institution at large, but it provided alumni with a means for constructing their attitudes toward the institution. Through targeting, alumni seemingly separated and compartmentalized the institution (including its individuals and collective bodies) into parts that they embraced and viewed as part of the institution and parts that they wanted to distance themselves from moving forward. For example, some alumni chose to embrace the alumni association, the university's student-run philanthropy (THON), and the student body more broadly, and some alumni chose to distance themselves from the university president and other members of the university's senior leadership team as well as the board of trustees. Some alumni also embraced the athletic department (and its football program), while other alumni sought to distance themselves from the athletic department (and its football program). Through targeting, alumni expressed positive (and disparate) emotions and cognitions toward parts of the institution and they expressed negative (and disparate) emotions and cognitions toward other parts of the institution. Similarly, alumni expressed supportive intentions and actions toward some parts of the institution and non-supportive intentions and actions toward other parts of the institution.

This targeting process suggests that the way alumni construct their attitudes toward the organization is quite nuanced. By conceiving of the institution in parts and aligning their expressions and intentions and actions in those directions, alumni were generally able to maintain some identification with the institution. Contrary to my expectations, alumni appeared to go to great lengths to maintain their identification with the institution (or parts of the institution) even when that organization was stigmatized. It is not necessarily easier for alumni compared to other stakeholders to simply disidentify with an organization.

### **Unconditional, selective, and conditional identification**

Although the findings suggest that alumni generally communicated that they were not letting go of their identification with the institution, there was evidence of an ‘identification struggle.’ Alumni tended to identify with elements of the institution in four distinct ways: unconditional identification, selective identification, conditional identification, and disidentification. The first three ways contributed to the ‘identification struggle.’ Some alumni sought to maintain complete and unconditional association with the institution regardless of the scandal and ensuing events. But other alumni sought to maintain only partial association with the institution, associating with some part(s) of the institution over other parts of the institution, and still other alumni sought to maintain associations conditionally with the institution, associating with the institution only if the university (namely inside agents) took some actions desired by alumni.

The extant literature addresses identification and disidentification (c.f., Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004), but the findings of this study, especially as it relates to unconditional identification, selective identification, and conditional identification, further add to the identification literature. More specifically, unconditional identification extends the notion of identification to where individuals express unwavering association with the institution despite what has happened or could happen to the organization in the future. Unconditional identification is also seemingly related to positive emotions and cognitions.

Furthermore, selective identification extends the notion of ambivalent identification where individuals “simultaneously identify and disidentify with one’s organization (or aspects of it)” (Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004, p. 4), to where individuals employ targeting to separate and compartmentalize the institution (including its individuals and collective bodies) into parts. Individuals select and associate with some part(s) of the institution over other parts of the

institution. Supportive and non-supportive intentions and actions are also seemingly apparent when individuals express selective identification; alumni express supportive intentions and actions toward some part(s) of or some individuals and collective bodies within the institution and non-supportive intentions and actions toward other parts of or some individuals and collective bodies within the institution.

Conditional identification also further contributes to the identification literature in a new way. When conditional identification occurs, individuals place a hold on their association with the organization until they observe some desired changes or actions. Conditional intentions and actions are also apparent when individuals express conditional identification. If individuals observe some desired change or action within the organization, then they will resume their association with the organization, as well as express supportive intentions and actions.

### **Hirschman's (1970) framework for exit, voice, and loyalty**

Hirschman (1970) proposed a framework, centered on exit, voice, and loyalty that examined customer (or member) responses to decline in firms and organizations; the framework resonates with the ways that alumni in this study responded to organizational scandal. In his framework, exit occurs when customers (or members) sought to escape from the organization (e.g., no longer purchasing goods or services). Voice occurs when customers (or members) sought to change the "objectionable state of affairs" for the organization (p. 30); it "is the only way in which dissatisfied customers or members can react whenever the exit option is unavailable" (p. 33), as is often the case in social organizations. Loyalty occurs when customers (or members) "are willing to trade off the certainty of exit against the uncertainties of an improvement in the deteriorated product" (p. 77). According to Hirschman (1970), "[l]oyalty is a key concept in the battle between exit and voice...members may be locked into their

organizations a little longer and thus use the voice option with greater determination and resourcefulness than would otherwise be the case” (p. 82). Furthermore, boycott is another option between voice and exit. Boycott occurs when “exit is actually consummated rather than just threatened; but it is undertaken for the specific and explicit purpose of achieving a change of policy on the part of the boycotted organization” (p. 86). A boycott is a “temporary exit” with the understanding that customers (or members) will re-enter the organization once “certain conditions which have led to the boycott are remedied” (p. 86).

In this study, alumni expressed their identification with the institution after the scandal in four ways: unconditional identification, selective identification, conditional identification, and disidentification. Unconditional identification occurred when alumni chose to maintain complete and unconditional association with the institution; this approach is consistent with Hirschman’s (1970) theory of loyalty. Selective identification occurred when alumni chose to associate with some part(s) of the institution over other parts of the institution; this approach is seemingly an extension of Hirschman’s (1970) theory of loyalty. Conditional identification occurred when alumni chose to maintain associations conditionally with the institution; their identification was conditional or contingent on the organization making certain changes desired by alumni. This approach is related to Hirschman’s (1970) boycott phenomenon. Disidentification occurred when alumni chose to completely dissociate from the institution forever; this approach is consistent with Hirschman’s (1970) exit option.

Furthermore, alumni in this case seemingly exercised their ‘voice’ either literally or through their resources of time, talent, and especially treasure (i.e., they could continue giving, give to other parts of the institution, offer conditions for giving, or stop giving). According to Hirschman (1970), customers (or members) express voice “through individual or collective petition to the management directly in charge, through appeal to a higher authority with the intention of forcing a change in management, or through various types of actions and protests” (p.

30). Hirschman (1970) further refers to voice as a residual of exit as well as an alternative to exit. In this study, for example, some alumni called for members of the board of trustees to resign, some called for the university's leadership to honor the deceased head football coach, and others called for the alumni association to help them enhance the university's reputation. Some alumni also threatened to stop giving, to cancel their football tickets, and to forgo their alumni association membership, while other alumni expressed their willingness to continue giving (and even give more), to return to campus for a football game, and to renew their alumni association membership.

Aside from studying a unique stakeholder group that further extends Hirschman's (1970) exit, voice, and loyalty framework, this study also considers the association of expressed affect, cognition, and behavior with identification. This study also highlights the important role that the targeting process has for alumni in maintaining some association with the institution. Alumni generally manage to find a way to remain loyal to the institution in its entirety or at least to parts of the institution by targeting inside agents and outside "enemies" and blaming others for actions associated with the scandal and its fallout.

### **Extant higher education literature**

Although the extant higher education literature acknowledges that demographics, collegiate experiences, and alumni experiences (c.f., Mosser, 1993) contribute to alumni support, this study extends our understanding about how alumni identify with (and support) the institution even after a scandal. The findings suggest that alumni generally maintain their identification with (and support of) the institution (or parts of the institution) after a scandal, but their identification with the institution is nuanced. Some alumni maintain complete and unconditional association with the institution and express supportive intentions and actions toward the institution. Some

alumni maintain only partial association with the institution and express supportive intentions and actions toward the part(s) to which they associate and non-supportive intentions and actions toward the other parts of the institution. Some alumni maintain associations conditionally; if they see that the institution engages in some desired change or course of action, then they will resume their association with the institution. In the meantime, they express conditional intentions and actions toward the institution. Finally, some alumni maintain no association with the institution and express non-supportive intentions and actions toward the institution.

Although this study was not intended to address ‘why’ alumni responded to organizational scandal in these ways; some alumni provided reasons for unconditionally identifying, selectively identifying, conditionally identifying, and disidentifying with the institution. Some alumni also expressed reasons for supporting, not supporting, supporting and not supporting (expressed in the same communications), or conditionally supporting the institution. One of the reasons that alumni seemingly maintained some degree of identification with (and support of) the institution is related to their identification with the institution prior to the scandal and the degree of embeddedness of their identification with the university. In this study, some alumni think about and write about their membership in the alumni association or particular giving societies or the number of family members who attended the university. This reason is consistent with the higher education literature that suggests a positive relationship between alumni identification and alumni support (c.f., Mael & Ashforth, 1992; Tom & Elmer, 1994).

### **Implications for Practice**

Although there are a number of lessons to be learned from the Jerry Sandusky scandal at Penn State, I gleaned five key lessons in the area of alumni engagement by analyzing alumni

responses to the scandal. The lessons relate to: leveraging the alumni association; listening, learning, and implementing change; surveying for alumni interests; fundraising during a scandal; and embracing alumni differences. The practical lessons in alumni engagement are outlined in this section; my hope is that in the higher education context, they will add value to college and university administrators, development and alumni relations officers, and alumni volunteers in leadership positions. Outside of higher education, my hope is that some of these lessons will add value to senior leaders (and decision-makers) within organizations.

### **Leveraging the alumni association**

First, a university's alumni association (or alumni office) is undoubtedly an important resource to the alumni community during a scandal and its fallout. Alumni seemingly view the alumni association as a separate entity but one that is related to the university; they look to the alumni association for information, but more importantly, they look to it as an avenue for expressing their feelings, concerns, opinions, and ideas for addressing the scandal and its fallout. Therefore, college and university administrators should work with their alumni association to leverage the rapport that alumni already have with the association to develop a comprehensive communications plan. Alumni depend on communications from their alma mater to keep them informed, especially those who live across the state, across the country, or around the world and especially in times involving a scandal.

Furthermore, college and university administrators (in collaboration with the alumni association) should also create opportunities to foster a dialogue with alumni, as alumni seek avenues for expressing their feelings and opinions to college and university administrators and for connecting with other alumni. Some possible channels for communication exchange are social media, town hall discussion forums (both on campus and around the country), and regional

alumni chapters and alumni interest groups. In fact, colleges and universities with regional alumni chapters and alumni interest groups should maintain regular communication with their volunteer leaders, and coordinate opportunities to engage the local alumni community.

### **Listening, learning, and implementing change**

Second, once institutions create forums for alumni interaction, colleges and universities should listen carefully to what alumni share with the institution. It is not feasible, and often times not appropriate to consider and implement all of the requests, ideas, or changes that the alumni community brings forth to the institution. Colleges and universities should be open to alumni feedback, however. Administrators should listen for concerns that continue to surface time and time again, as well as for ideas that could enhance current institutional processes and procedures. After all, the alumni community is composed of some knowledgeable professionals and experts in a number of areas; their perspectives are valuable (and often times, complimentary) resources to an institution.

It is not only vital for the alumni community to have an open dialogue with the institution and with each other, but it is also important for alumni to see that the institution is genuinely interested in hearing (and where possible acting on) their ideas and concerns. Administrators (in partnership with the alumni association) should plan to communicate important decisions and new changes underway within the institution to the alumni community. This serves as a means for keeping the alumni informed and where possible, illustrating that these efforts consider the ideas and address the concerns expressed by the alumni community.

### **Surveying for alumni interests**

Third, there is a tendency for organizations to want to survey stakeholders about their perspectives and their opinions on a scandal and its fallout, but college and university administrators should again leverage the relationship that the alumni association has with the alumni community to administer a survey focused on alumni interests. If institutions engage with and listen to alumni on social media, in town hall discussion forums, and in regional alumni club and alumni interest group activities, alumni feelings, concerns (and needs), and opinions related to the scandal and the fallout should be well-known. Furthermore, this study shows that alumni responses to organizational scandal are wide-ranging. Therefore, the college or university (with the alumni association) should develop a survey—informed by what is heard from the alumni community (and the findings of this study)—focused on how they wish to be involved with specific areas of the institution post-scandal. This information would inform the continual development of the institution's communications plan. It would also inform college and university administrators about where there are high areas of alumni interest (and support) and where there are gaps in alumni interest (and support), giving insights into future resource opportunities and challenges.

### **Fundraising during a scandal**

Fourth, alumni responses to organizational scandal are complex, and not every alumnus feels the same way and shares the same beliefs after a scandal and its fallout. Although development officers, through their typical job responsibilities, already seek to steward meaningful relationships with alumni and prospective donors, this approach is critically important after a scandal and during its fallout. In fact, although universities should continue to fundraise

during and after a scandal, development offices (and officers) should develop a cultivation and solicitation plan that is ‘high touch,’ in terms of outreach to the prospect community. Generally, development offices should limit the number of mass mailings during this time period, and utilize personalized mailings, phone calls, and in-person visits (on and off campus). Development offices (and officers) should listen carefully to their prospects’ and donors’ interests, including not only major gift donors but annual donors (as they are the pipeline of future major gift donors). From there, development offices should tailor future outreach to each prospect accordingly. Although the approach to personalized outreach could be intensely time consuming for a development office, development officers could streamline this process by mapping their prospects’ responses onto the patterns described in Figures 5-1 and 5-2, shown in chapter 5. A series of outreach tactics could be developed for each pattern of alumni responses.

### **Embracing alumni differences**

Finally, it is important for organizations to recognize that they will not ‘win them all back’ immediately and especially, not all in the same way. Although some alumni will maintain complete and unconditional association with the institution, some alumni will maintain only partial association and other alumni will maintain associations conditionally. Some alumni will also maintain no association with the institution.

Rather than trying to convert all alumni to having complete association with the institution, development and alumni relations officers (and college and university administrators) should embrace the individual differences among the alumni community. For some alumni who will identify with only parts of the institution, such as an academic college or the athletic department, the development office and especially the alumni association (and even alumni interest groups) should create opportunities to learn more about the parts of the institution that are

of interest to them. From there, these offices (and volunteer groups) should also create opportunities to strengthen alumni engagement. Over time, the institution may ‘win back’ alumni interest in other areas too, but it will take time.

For some alumni who will maintain association if and only if the institution engages in some change or action such as firing members of the board of trustees or the university president, the development and alumni relations officers must, first and foremost, remain loyal ambassadors to the institution. In doing so, they should continue to provide the alumni with information updates. They should also adopt a personalized approach, where alumni can continue to express their feelings, concerns, opinions, and ideas with the institution. The institution may ‘win back’ these alumni, but since it depends on certain activities or changes desired by alumni, it may take more time. The key is, this is a time of healing (and sensemaking) for the alumni community; development and alumni relations officers (and college and university administrators) are encouraged to be patient, and to serve as resource for alumni, where possible.

### **Limitations and Directions for Future Research**

Although this study contains some limitations, there are also other opportunities for future research. My hope is that these recommendations will continue to contribute to theory and practice for organizations in higher education and beyond.

#### **Limitations**

Every study has limitations that should be considered. First, this study examines a single research setting, and specifically alumni responses to a scandal at a single institution, with all the usual cautions implied. Second, although the dataset is indeed extensive, I need to be aware of the

possible biases in it. Some of the communications were self-initiated, suggesting that these communications came from alumni who were interested in and willing to write or call the university, perhaps because they already identified strongly with the university. Other alumni e-mails and telephone conversations were elicited by a communication from a university representative or department, however. In both instances, the source of the communications contributes to examining alumni responses, including how alumni can experience multiple feelings and beliefs at the same time—expressing negative emotions and cognitions toward one target and positive emotions and cognitions toward another target.

### **Directions for future research**

Through this study, I hope to have contributed to a greater understanding of alumni responses to organizational scandal. There are still a number of opportunities for future research, however.

First, understanding the intersection of emotional/cognitive expression, intentions/actions, and organizational identification for a valuable stakeholder group has some other important theoretical implications that suggest the need for further research. For example, future research should build on this study to investigate the intersection of emotions and cognitions, identification statements, and ‘actual’ donation behaviors post-scandal. Revisiting alumni communications when they expressed conditions for giving, for example, to see if they actually ever gave after the scandal and after the institution underwent a number of changes would offer particularly valuable insights that would deepen our understanding of alumni responses.

Second, future research should examine the different types of affiliations that alumni expressed having with the institution prior to the scandal (e.g., alumni association membership,

donor and volunteer status, and family legacy). Although, the higher education literature posits that a number of these factors contribute to the likelihood for alumni support (c.f., Mosser, 1993; Newman & Petrosko, 2011), the findings indicated that not all alumni expressed the same degree of support for the institution after the scandal. Future research should develop an investment index, using the different types of affiliations that alumni expressed in the data, to further understand alumni identification.

Third, future research should employ other methodological techniques such as interviews with alumni who submitted letters to the editor of *The Penn Stater* magazines during the scandal and its fallout, to learn more about ‘why’ alumni responded to organization scandal in the ways that emerged in this study. Furthermore, another iteration of the alumni association’s survey for example, could also be modified to include question(s) related to alumni interest areas, as a means for understanding where alumni maintain their association with the institution. By further understanding alumni interest areas the alumni association may strengthen alumni engagement post-scandal.

Fourth, the findings indicate that although alumni generally identified with the institution after the scandal, they aligned their positive (and disparate) expressions with some part(s) of the institution and negative (and disparate) expressions with other parts of the institution. In light of how alumni construct their attitudes toward the institution, future research should consider what a ‘college or university’ is to alumni (and arguably, what ‘it’ is to students since they will soon become alumni). By understanding student and alumni perceptions of a college or university (and the members of its community), college and university administrators may identify where there are gaps (and areas of opportunity) to enhance its relationship with students and alumni.

Finally, and although not directly related to this study (in terms of its research questions), several themes related to the institution’s culture and its values emerged throughout the data. Further research should develop research questions related to organizational culture, and

reexamine this data to understand alumni perceptions of organizational culture. In addition, there is a seemingly apparent relationship between a college or university and its athletic program. In fact, for some alumni, the athletic program is the lens by which they view the institution. Further research should also examine this relationship and its implications for alumni identification.

### **Closing Remarks**

In this study, I sought to understand how alumni respond to organizational scandal and how organizational scandal is associated with the expressed affective, cognitive, and behavioral responses and identification statements of alumni. The findings indicated that alumni expressed a wide range of positive, negative, and disparate emotions and cognitions in response to scandal and ensuing events. They expressed emotions and cognitions toward inside agents of the institution, outside “enemies,” and the institution; they tended to express negative emotions and cognitions toward inside agents and outside “enemies,” enabling alumni to generally express some degree of identification with the institution itself. The degree of alumni identification was also evident in alumni intentions and actions. More specifically, alumni who expressed unconditional identification—maintaining complete and unconditional association with the institution—tended to express supportive intentions and actions toward the institution. Alumni who expressed selective identification—maintaining partial association with the institution—tended to express supportive intentions and actions toward part(s) of the institution and non-supportive intentions and actions toward other parts of the institution. Alumni who expressed conditional identification—maintaining associations conditionally with the institution—tended to express conditional intentions and actions toward the institution. When they observed some desired change or course of action, then they would support the institution. Still some alumni who expressed disidentification—maintaining no association with the institution—tended to express

non-supportive intentions and actions toward the institution. Nevertheless, this important stakeholder group generally chose to maintain its identification with the institution (and its ideals) while holding inside agents (of the institution) responsible for negligent action or inaction.

Understanding the intersection of affective, cognitive, and behavioral responses and organizational identification for the alumni community offers important theoretical and practical implications. In light of the growing number of organizations experiencing scandals and the increasingly important role that alumni have in organizations today, I hope to have offered contributions to the organizational and higher education literatures, as well as practice, by offering an explanation for how, and to some extent why, alumni respond to organizational scandal.

## Appendix A

### Permission to use data

The following message outlines my e-mail correspondence with Rodney Kirsch, Senior Vice President for Development and Alumni Relations, Penn State and Kelly Snyder, Executive Director, Office of Research and Analytics, Penn State. This e-mail exchange follows an in-person meeting that I had with Rod, Kelly, and Linda Treviño.

-----Original Message-----

From: Kirsch, Rodney [mailto:RPK6@psu.edu]  
Sent: Monday, June 17, 2013 7:49 AM  
To: Jennifer L. Eury  
Cc: Snyder, Kelly; Robert Hendrickson (rmh6@psu.edu); Linda Trevino  
Subject: Re: Update on Research Project

Jen, I approve. Sounds very worthwhile. Rod.

Sent from my iPhone

On Jun 16, 2013, at 10:32 PM, "Jennifer L. Eury" <jld345@psu.edu<mailto:jld345@psu.edu>> wrote:

Dear Rod and Kelly,

Thank you again for all of your assistance in my current research project, focused on the Sandusky scandal.

Since our meeting in November 2012, the data that was provided to me by the Research and Prospect Development office has been rendered unidentifiable by a trusted, third-party representative—Lia Tjotos, an undergraduate student hired by Penn State's Division of Development and Alumni Relations and the Smeal College of Business. Lia completed this assignment in early March, and she graduated in May.

Also, since our meeting in November where you suggested further carrying out this research, I have discussed this more with my chair, Dr. Robert Hendrickson and committee member, Linda Trevino, and I have decided that this project will also serve as the topic for my dissertation (and future publications). While my project is currently a sub-set of a larger initiative and is considered under the existing IRB Protocol ID #38530, I am now taking the appropriate steps to submit a new application to accompany my dissertation materials. The new application will include my name and the specific details of my dissertation project, which will explore how a scandal is associated with the affective, cognitive, and behavioral responses of organizational alumni. As part of this process, I would like to also submit a supporting attachment that reconfirms your permission for me to use the dataset that you previously provided.

If you could please reply to this e-mail, providing me with your "approval" to once again use this dataset, it would be greatly appreciated.

Best regards,  
Jen

## Appendix B

### Definitions of 2nd-order themes and aggregate dimensions

**Emotional/cognitive expression:** Alumni express positive, negative, and disparate emotions (feelings) and cognitions (beliefs) throughout the scandal and its ensuing events.

**Positive expressions:** Refers to words used to express positive emotions (feelings) and cognitions (beliefs). Some alumni use only one word to express their feelings and beliefs; other alumni use a string of words in one sentence to express their feelings and beliefs. Although alumni tend to direct these emotions and cognitions at individuals, groups, reports prepared by groups, departments, and the institution, the emphasis of this code is on their *positive* emotions and cognitions.

**Negative expressions:** Refers to words used to express negative emotions (feelings) and cognitions (beliefs). Some alumni use only one word to express their feelings and beliefs; other alumni use a string of words in one sentence to express their feelings and beliefs. Although alumni tend to direct these emotions and cognitions at individuals, groups, reports prepared by groups, departments, and the institution, the emphasis of this code is on their *negative* emotions and cognitions.

**Disparate expressions:** Refers to words used to express disparate emotions (feelings) and cognitions (beliefs); this occurs when alumni express positive emotions and cognitions and negative emotions and cognitions in the same e-mail or summary of a phone conversation. Alumni may express positive emotions and cognitions toward one target such as individuals, groups, reports prepared by groups, departments, or the institution, and then express negative emotions and cognitions toward a different target. Alumni may also express positive emotions and cognitions toward one target and then negative emotions and cognitions toward the same target; both instances would be examples of disparate emotions and cognitions. The emphasis of this code is on their *positive and negative* emotions and cognitions expressed together in the same communications.

**Targets:** Alumni direct their emotions (feelings) and cognitions (beliefs) toward targets inside the institution, outside the institution, and the ideals of the institution itself.

**Inside agents (inside targets of feelings and beliefs):** Refers to specific individuals such as the president, groups such as the board of directors, and departments within the institution; the individuals, groups, and departments are considered to be a part of the institution. Alumni express emotions (feelings) and cognitions (beliefs) toward these individuals, groups, and departments; they are targets of emotions and cognitions. The emphasis of this code is on the targets, the specific individuals, groups, and departments *within* the institution.

**Outside enemies (outside targets of feelings and beliefs):** Refers to specific individuals and groups outside of the institution such as the NCAA, Louis Freeh, and reports prepared by groups outside of the institution; the individuals, groups, and reports are not considered to be a part of the institution. Alumni express emotions (feelings) and cognitions (beliefs) toward these individuals, groups, and reports; they are targets of emotions and cognitions. The emphasis of this code is on the targets, the specific individuals, groups, and reports *outside* of the institution.

**Institution:** Refers to the feelings and beliefs about ideals of the university such as its ethical standards; the principles by which the university stands. Alumni express emotions (feelings) and cognitions (beliefs) toward the ideals of the university; the institution itself and/or its ideals are targets of emotions and cognitions. The emphasis of this code is on the targets, the *ideals of the university*.

**Identification modes:** Alumni express their identification with the institution post-scandal; some choose to unconditionally identify and maintain complete and unconditional association with the institution; some choose to selectively identify and maintain partial association with the institution; some choose to conditionally identify and maintain association with the institution conditionally; and some choose to disidentify and maintain no association with the institution.

**Unconditional identification; maintaining complete and unconditional association:** Occurs when alumni choose to maintain all association with the institution regardless of the scandal and ensuing events; alumni stay by the institution and positively identify with the institution itself. The emphasis of this code is on their *unwavering* association with the institution despite what has happened or could happen to the institution in the future.

**Selective identification; maintaining partial association (slicing and dicing):** Occurs when alumni choose to maintain association with only one aspect or area of the institution such as its ideals or with a well-liked individual or group within the institution such as the deceased head football coach or the alumni association, and to sever their association with another area (or other areas) of the institution such as the institution's leadership. To do this, alumni 'slice and dice' the institution (and individuals and groups within the institution). The emphasis of this code is on their decision to associate with *some part(s) of the institution over other parts* of the institution.

**Conditional identification; maintaining associations conditionally:** Occurs when alumni choose to maintain association with the institution only if the university takes favorable courses of action. This involves alumni taking a time out and placing a hold on their association with the institution, until they observe some change(s)—for the better, from their perspective—within the institution such as leadership changes. The emphasis of this code is on their *pending decision to resume their association* with the institution; the decision depends on if the changes occur.

**Disidentification; maintaining no association:** Occurs when alumni choose to sever their association with the institution; alumni seek to completely disassociate from the institution forever. The emphasis of this code is on their desire to *completely let go* of their identification with the institution.

**Intentions/actions:** Alumni express intentions and actions to support or withdraw support from the institution (or parts of the institution) post-scandal; some choose to support the institution, some choose to withdraw their support from the institution, some choose to support parts of the institution and withdraw support from other parts of the institution, and some choose to conditionally support the institution. Even though expressions of supportive or non-supportive intentions and actions may suggest positive or negative emotions and cognitions, when specific supportive or non-supportive intentions and actions are mentioned, the data about those intentions and actions should be coded using the following set of codes.

**Supportive intentions/actions:** Refers to phrases used to express supportive intentions and actions toward the institution post-scandal. Alumni express what they will do to support the institution after the scandal; this involves their plans or intentions, and actions. The emphasis of this code is on what intentions and actions they will take to *support* the institution moving forward (post-scandal).

**Non-supportive intentions/actions:** Refers to phrases used to express non-supportive intentions and actions toward the institution post-scandal. Alumni express what they have done or will do to withdraw their support from the institution after the scandal; this involves their plans or intentions, and actions, often related to foregoing or withdrawing financial support. The emphasis of this code is on *non-supportive* intentions and actions.

**Supportive and non-supportive intentions/actions:** Refers to phrases used to express supportive intentions and actions and non-supportive intentions and actions in the same e-mail or phone conversation; this occurs when alumni express supportive intentions or actions toward some part(s) of the institution post-scandal and non-supportive intentions and actions toward some other parts of the institution post-scandal. Alumni support one area of the institution (often financially) and forego or withdraw support from another area of the institution. The emphasis of this code is on their *supportive and non-supportive* intentions and actions expressed together in the same e-mail or phone conversation.

**Conditional intentions/actions:** Refers to phrases used to express conditional supportive intentions and actions toward the institution post-scandal. When alumni observe the university taking favorable courses of action such as making leadership changes, then they will express supportive intentions and actions toward the institution. Until then, alumni express what they will not do to support the institution (often related to financial giving). The emphasis of this code is on *what the alumni will not do* until some change(s)—for the better, from their perspective—occurs.

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- Your letters. (2012b, Nov./Dec.). Your letters. *The Penn Stater*, 9-10.
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### Education:

Ph.D. – Higher Education, The Pennsylvania State University, *Expected 2014*  
M.S. – Business Administration, The Pennsylvania State University, *Expected 2014*  
M.Ed. – Higher Education, The Pennsylvania State University, 2007  
B.A. – Public Relations/Advertising, The Pennsylvania State University, 2005

### Academic Work Experience:

1/2014 – present: Honor and Integrity Director and Instructor in Management  
Smeal College of Business, The Pennsylvania State University  
6/2008 – 12/2013: Director of Alumni Relations  
Smeal College of Business, The Pennsylvania State University  
6/2006 – 6/2008: Admissions Officer/Writer  
Undergraduate Admissions Office, The Pennsylvania State University  
7/2005 – 5/2006: Public Relations Coordinator  
Department of Geography, The Pennsylvania State University

### Teaching Activities:

*MGMT 451W: Business, Ethics, and Society* (undergraduate)  
Student Rating of Teaching Effectiveness on overall quality of instructor:  
6.60/7.00 (Spring 2014), 6.91/7.00 (Fall 2013), 6.25/7.00 (Fall 2012)  
*PSU 006: First-Year Seminar Business* (undergraduate)  
Student Rating of Teaching Effectiveness on overall quality of instructor:  
6.14/7.00 (Fall 2009)  
*BA 297A: Career Planning Strategies* (undergraduate)  
Lab counselor, Spring 2009, Fall 2009

### Research Activities (Selected):

#### Publication

Griffin, K. A., Eury, J. L., & Gaffney, M. E. with York, T., Bennett, J.,  
Cunningham, E., & Griffin, A. (*Forthcoming*). Digging deeper: Exploring the  
relationship between mentoring, developmental interactions, and student agency.  
*New Directions in Higher Education*.

#### Presentation

Eury, J. L. “Identity and identification: Alumni responses to an organizational  
scandal,” presented as part of “Penn State and the Sandusky scandal:  
Autoethnographic accounts, tales, and analyses” with Trevino, L. K., Kreiner, G.  
E., Gioia, D. A., Corley, K. G., & Bishop, D. at the Academy of Management  
Annual Meeting, Lake Buena Vista (Orlando), Florida, August, 2013 – *Showcase  
Symposium*

### Service Activities (Selected):

Consulting Editor, *Higher Education in Review*, 2011 – present  
Advisory Council, Association of Business School Alumni Professionals, 2012 – 2013