Carmon 08 – Research and Creative Activity

Introductory Statement

As an interpersonal communication scholar, I study how at least two individuals interact with each other and how those interactions come to affect them (Bochner, 1989). I take a social scientific, mainly quantitative approach, to my research, specifically focused on how family communication patterns affect a broad range of human experiences. Family communication patterns address how and whether families encourage open conversation and conformity of opinion (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, XXXX). My research focus on the potential outcomes of family communication patterns follows two distinct lines: one focused on communication within family businesses and the other on family communication regarding matters outside the workplace including grief and ostracism.

While my research all focuses on family communication, it does so in two distinct research lines: one focused on family communication in family businesses and the workplace and one focused on family communication in family relationships outside of the workplace. My research is unique because I apply family communication patterns to contexts that have either never been looked at before or may have only been considered in a limited fashion. Further, my research is particularly meaningful because I strive to bridge the gap between family communication and organizational communication, to address how individuals' family communication experiences may extend to their workplaces.

Documentation of Research: Significance and Impact

In total, I have published six peer-reviewed scholarly articles at rank and presented 12 conference research presentations. Additionally, I have four articles currently under peer review and another two articles slated to be submitted for peer review in the next year. In my time at rank, my articles appeared in *Communication Research Reports, Journal of Family Business Strategy, Iowa Journal of Communication, Journal of Qualitative Research Reports,* and *Journal of Family Business Management*. These articles are peer-reviewed, and typically focus on different aspects of interpersonal communication, and demonstrate my strengths in quantitative methods, cross-discipline investigation, and emerging national reputation. Taken together, my research output exceeds the IUPUC standards for excellence in research, which are four peer-reviewed articles and five conference presentations. Four other articles are currently under peer-review. Please not that all my published articles are included in the Appendix.

I would like to explain the significance of my work in this section. Here, I will discuss four of my publications, selected from across my time at IUPUC. I will also describe my future research plans and discuss the impact of my work.

The four publications are my publications in the *Journal of Qualitative Research Reports*, *Communication Research Reports*, the *Journal of Family Business Strategy*, and the *Iowa Journal of Communication*. These publications show my development as a research and reflect my interests as an independent scholar. In 2010, I was the first author on an article, "Fusing family and firm: Employee perceptions of perceived homophily, organizational justice, organizational identification, and organizational commitment in family businesses" in the *Journal of Family Business Strategy*. Using the SCImago rankings, the *Journal of Family Business Strategy* is ranked 66th out of 340 Management journals worldwide and according to scholar.google.com, this article has been cited 19 times. In this study, I was responsible for the initial conceptualization, directing the data collection and analysis process, and writing a significant portion of the article. This study focused on how perceptions of interpersonal relationships affected family business employees' perceptions of organizational identification and organizational commitment. We found that family business employees' organizational justice and perceived homophily predicted their levels of organizational commitment, and, ultimately, their levels of organizational identification. This study supported previous research suggesting that employees who perceive themselves to be a part of a cohesive organization are likely to develop

positive organizational identities as well as to develop feelings of organizational identification (Bartel & Dutton, 2001; Richter, Van Dick, & West, 2004). Little to no research has addresses these variables within the context of family businesses, rather than traditional organizations. This study was the initial step in my investigation and interest in better understanding the communicative functioning of family businesses.

In 2013, I published a sole-authored article in *Qualitative Research Reports* about the use of strategically ambiguous language in family business mission statements. Using SCImago rankings, *Communication Research Reports*, where three of my articles are published is ranked 72nd out of 235 Communication journals worldwide. Despite the relative recentness of this article, it has already been cited, per scholar.google.com. While a great deal of research has been done about the mission statements within publically-held companies, little to no research has examined how family business mission statements. Therefore, I found it necessary to examine the mission statements of the largest 20 family-owned businesses in the United States. I found that family businesses appear to use strategically ambiguous language in order to be accepting of diverse opinions as well as to promote a sense of inclusivity among their many internal and external stakeholders. This article demonstrated my ability to learn qualitative data analysis techniques to best understand the development of family business mission statements. Further, it is also the best sign of my independence has a researcher, because it is the first article I sole-authored, making me responsible for all stages of the research process, as well as seeing it through publication.

Also, in 2013, I published a collaborative article in *Communication Research Reports* about how privacy boundaries within a family affect perceptions of family satisfaction, job satisfaction, and work-life balance. This article was co-authored with an undergraduate student, Kristen Brasher. While this article is not directly tied to my main lines of research, it still addresses how family communication may affect work experiences. We found that the development of family privacy boundaries were significantly related to perceptions of family satisfaction, job satisfaction, and work-life balance. Little research to date has investigated family privacy boundaries outside the context of the family (i.e., the home and/or extended family) – thus, this study provided a novel foray into the organizational context using family privacy boundaries. This article was developed from Brasher's interest in the development of family privacy boundaries and how those might extend to the workplace. This article's publication demonstrates my commitment to effective mentoring of undergraduate researchers, a commitment I have maintained through numerous subsequent research mentorships.

I have also engaged in interdisciplinary collaboration with Joan Poulsen, an Associate Professor of Psychology at IUPUC, related to the `perceptions of ostracism experiences in families. We examined how social ostracism is related to family communication patterns as well as psychological outcomes, including depression and self-esteem. Ostracism is a topic not often discussed in Communication research and my work with Dr. Poulsen establishes a new research topic within both Communication and Psychology. To date, this research has resulted in three peer-reviewed conference presentations (two at the Midwestern Psychological Association conference and 1 at the National Communication Association conference) as well as one peer-reviewed article in the *Iowa Journal of Communication* in 2012. We currently have a second article about the relationship between communication privacy boundaries and perceptions of family ostracism under review at *Communication Research Reports.* We also recently received a 'revise and resubmit' on an invited publication about the sources of ostracism at the *Journal of Social Psychology*. This demonstrates my ongoing commitment to interdisciplinary research and collaboration.

I have given 11 unique conference presentations at major national and regional Communication conferences, as well as at a major regional Psychology conference. These peer-reviewed presentations were at the National Communication Association conference and the Central States Communication conference, and the Midwestern Psychological Association conference. Each of these conferences has

been 800-1200 attendees from across the nation and the world. My conference presentations are usually well received and many people have asked for copies of my articles to aid in their own research. Of these presentations, one involved an undergraduate co-presenter whom I mentored through the research process, and two involved an interdisciplinary collaborator from Psychology.

Current Research

Currently, I have two articles under review at the *Journal of Family Business Strategy* and *Death Studies*, both of which are sole-authored articles. In the first study, I collected data related to family businesses in Indiana about their perceptions of organizational justice, organizational identification, job satisfaction, and organizational dissent. I found that are were no differences found in perceptions of organizational justice based on family business employees' positions within their family businesses. Further, interpersonal justice was significantly related to organizational identification, while organizational identification was related to job satisfaction. And, finally, perceptions of organizational justice were positively related to perceptions of articulated organizational dissent. This article extends my previous research looking at the communicative experiences of family business employees in the workplace. It is currently under review at the *Journal of Family Business Strategy*.

In the second study, I collected data about how individuals' family communication patterns affected their willingness to communicate about death and their perceptions of death anxiety. I found that perceptions of conversation orientation (a specific family communication pattern) was positively related to individuals' willingness to communicate about death, and individuals' perceptions of willingness to communicate about death were negatively related to their perceptions of death anxiety. This article is my initial investigation into communicative experiences related to death and dying prior to being diagnosed with a chronic illness or experiencing the loss of a family member first hand. Most research in the Communication discipline focuses on communication with those who are actively dying and their caregivers, but does not address the experiences of those who are not in those situations. Because death is considered such a taboo subject in the United States, this research (and my future research line) will hopefully provide valuable implications for communicating about death in our families. This article is currently under review at *Death Studies*.

Future Research: Trajectory for Growth

My future research plans involve extending my two primary lines of research. As described above, my primary research line addresses potential outcomes of family communication and more specifically, family communication patterns. First, I would like to extend my family business research to address more concrete differences (both communicative and structural) between family businesses and more traditional businesses. For the most part, organizational communication researchers have primarily looked at these two types of organizations independently without comparing and contrasting their similarities and differences. I am particularly interested in how family communication and family structure provides both benefits and detriments to family businesses that more traditional organizations likely do not have encounter in their day-to-day functioning. This research will likely extend for years to come because of the time-consuming nature of gaining trust and access to both family businesses, traditional organizations, and their employees. Once complete, these research results will likely help both family and traditional business owners more effectively manage the functioning of their organizations.

Second, as a result of an article currently under review (Talking about death before tragedy strikes at *Death Studies*), I am in the process of developing a scale to empirically measure individuals' perceptions of willingness to communicate about death. While the construct of willingness to communicate in general has been studied a great deal, no research has specifically applied this construct to death. The lack of this type of social scientific scale to measure willingness to communicate about

death makes it difficult to effectively pinpoint its antecedents as well as the outcomes of being willing to communicate about death and the dying process. The development of this measure will invite a great deal of research. The initial focus will be on testing the reliability and validity of the measure. Once the validity and reliability of the measure have been determined acceptable, I will begin testing the relationship between willingness to communicate about death and a variety of other family-related outcomes, including family communication patterns, death anxiety, religiosity, among others.

In sum, my research productivity exceeds the criteria for excellence in research at IUPUC in the Division of Liberal Arts, which is set at four peer-reviewed articles in reputable journals and five peer-reviewed conference presentations. I have published six peer reviewed articles, with another four articles currently under review, and have had 10 peer-reviewed conference presentations. I have shown increased independence in my research as I have developed a new area of interest after graduate school in the area of communication about death. I am the first author on all six of my publications and am the sole author on one of the articles. Further, I also co-authored a peer-reviewed article as well as conference presentation with an undergraduate. My record of superlative performance coupled with my current research activities and future research plans demonstrate that I can maintain this level of excellence into the future.