OXFORD JOURNALS
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

Branding Disaster: Reestablishing Trust through the Ideological Containment of Systemic Risk Anxieties

Author(s): Ashlee Humphreys and Craig J. Thompson

Source: *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 41, No. 4 (December 2014), pp. 877-910

Published by: Oxford University Press

Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/677905

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at https://about.jstor.org/terms

*Oxford University Press* is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Journal of Consumer Research*

JSTOR

This content downloaded from
78.192.100.106 on Mon, 08 May 2023 10:51:25 +00:00
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

# Branding Disaster: Reestablishing Trust through the Ideological Containment of Systemic Risk Anxieties

ASHLEE HUMPHREYS
CRAIG J. THOMPSON

Drawing from literary criticism and institutional theory, this article analyzes the public discourse surrounding the Exxon Valdez spill of 1989 and BP Gulf Spill of 2010. While industrial accidents such as oil spills can erode consumers' trust in experts, a macrolevel analysis reveals that media coverage of such events ultimately contains the anxieties that are sparked by initial news coverage. The brand-centric disaster myths generated by media coverage frame public discourse in ways that help to reestablish consumers' trust in expert systems while also insulating corporations and governmental institutions from more systematic critiques. This analysis contributes to a macrolevel theorization of the institutional and ideological structures that shape consumers' risk perceptions and just world beliefs. It also extends prior accounts of cultural branding by identifying a set of ideological effects that operate in concert with the more commonly discussed therapeutic benefits afforded by marketplace myths.

On April 20, 2010, the Deepwater Horizon drilling rig exploded in the Gulf of Mexico, killing 11 workers and beginning what would become the largest maritime accident in the history of the petroleum industry. For 87 days, the catastrophically damaged wellhead poured an estimated 62,000 barrels of raw crude per day into the Gulf waters as an equally ceaseless stream of media reports detailed the size of the spreading oil slick, the accruing massive economic losses, and the myriad ways that the well's extreme drilling depth foiled plans to cap the leak. On September 19, 2010, the BP Macondo well site was declared to be fully sealed (Fountain 2010), but not before an estimated 4.9 million barrels (210,000,000 US gallons) of oil had spilled into the Gulf, along with 1.8 million gallons of chemical dispersants, billions of dollars in economic damage, and still-to-be-assessed long-term ecological consequences (Freudenburg and Gramling 2011). In the wake of the crisis, BP's stock price plummeted to 40% of its initial value (Economist 2010; Sutton 2010), and its Harris Poll brand reputation score fell precipitously from 67 to 50 (Harris Interactive 2011). Public support for off-shore drilling dropped from 61% to 44% (Pew 2011), and demand for Gulf seafood fell amidst consumer concerns of contamination (Green 2010; Upton 2011). Tourism also took a hit, as one fourth of visitors who had scheduled vacations to Louisiana canceled their trips (Louisiana Office of Tourism 2010). Already shaken by the financial crisis, consumer confidence fell still further after the spill (Gallup 2010; Wayne 2010), and confidence in food safety dropped 16% nationally (Degeneffe 2010).

Yet, 6 months after the explosion of the BP Macondo rig, the federal moratorium on deep sea oil drilling was lifted and, by 2012, the overall volume of oil production in the Gulf waters exceeded preaccident levels (Thompson 2012). As a *New York Times* headline aptly stated, "Deepwater Oil Drilling Picks Up Again as BP Disaster Fades" (Krauss and Broder 2012). BP's stock price rebounded to 80% of its prespill value (New York Stock Exchange 2013), and, on the consumer side, its brand reputation score rose steadily through 2012 and 2013 (Harris Interactive 2013). Public

Ashlee Humphreys is assistant professor at the Medill School of Journalism, Northwestern University, 1870 S. Campus Drive, Evanston, IL 60202 (a-humphreys@northwestern.edu). Craig J. Thompson is the Gilbert and Helen Churchill Professor of Marketing, University of Wisconsin–Madison, Madison, WI 53706 (cthompson@bus.wisc.edu). Order of authorship is alphabetical; both authors contributed equally. The authors would like to thank Kelly Hartzell and Effie Yang for their help with data collection. They also wish to thank the editor, the associate editor, and the three reviewers for their constructive and encouraging feedback.

*Ann McGill served as editor and Søren Askegaard served as associate editor for this article.*

*Electronically published August 19, 2014*



© 2014 by JOURNAL OF CONSUMER RESEARCH, Inc. ● Vol. 41 ● December 2014
All rights reserved. 0093-5301/2014/4104-0001$10.00. DOI: 10.1086/677905

This content downloaded from
78.192.100.106 on Mon, 08 May 2023 10:51:25 +00:00
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

support for off-shore drilling returned to prespill levels (see fig. 1; also Broder 2011; Dixon 2012), while consumer trust in the energy industry fully rebounded (Lloyd and Stephenson 2013). Louisiana tourism quickly recovered, increasing in both 2011 and 2012 (Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism 2013), as consumer fears of contamination faded.

This rapid return to a prespill status quo is not unique to the BP disaster. Two decades earlier, the Exxon Valdez spilled over 10 million gallons of crude oil into Prince William Sound. Iconic images of workers scrubbing crude oil off wildlife similarly shocked and galvanized the nation. The legacy of the Exxon Valdez spill had once posed a serious public opinion barrier to oil drilling in the Alaskan National Wildlife Reserve, but in more recent years, polls have shown increasing favorability toward such development initiatives—support which quickly tips into majority levels whenever gas prices spike (Hurd 2008; Saad 2011).

Commenting on the regulatory orientation that prevailed during the years separating these two iconic oil spill disasters, the National Commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon Spill and Offshore Drilling concludes: "In the years between the Exxon Valdez spill and the Spring of 2010, Congress (like much of the nation) appears to develop a false sense of security about the risks of offshore oil and gas development. Congress showed its support for offshore drilling in a number of ways, but did not take any steps to mitigate the increased perils that accompany drilling in ever-deeper water" (Graham et al. 2011, 288).

Despite their catastrophic scale and proximate impacts on public opinion and consumer confidence indexes, neither of these culturally iconic oil spills prompted enduring changes in consumer attitudes, regulatory structures, or the marketplace institutions that support consumers' fossil fuel lifestyles. Furthermore, the infrastructure of drilling rigs, pipelines, and tankers continues to be one where oil spills—though generally of a smaller scale—are routine, rather than exceptional events. For example, a US Department of Transportation (Graham et al. 2011) report states that more than 250,000 oil spills in US waters had been identified by the Coast Guard in the years from 1969 to 2000, releasing an estimated 260 million gallons of oil into domestic waterways (also see Stuart 2006). A follow-up report from the Minerals Management Bureau revealed that the number of spills larger than 50 barrels (over 2,000 gallons) occurring in the period 2000–2010 had quadrupled from the preceding decade (United Press International 2010). The problem of systemic spillage becomes even more pronounced when factoring in the nation's extensive pipeline network which has, over the last twenty years, dumped an estimated 110 million gallons of petroleum and petrol derivatives into the environment (Frosch and Roberts 2011). However, public opinion surveys report strong majority support for the construction of the Keystone XL pipeline (Ergun 2014), despite analysis showing that it poses serious environmental and economic risks, particularly given the relatively lax regulations on this aspect of the oil extraction industry (Skinner and Sweeney 2012).

**FIGURE 1**

ATTITUDES ABOUT OFFSHORE DRILLING

SOURCE.—Pew Research Center 2012.

This pattern raises a socially significant question in consumer culture: why don't major crises like oil spills provoke broad changes in public discourse concerning the systemic risks inherent to a carbon-dependent economy? From both the perspective of new social movement theory (Badiou 2006; Earley 2014; Kozinets and Handelman 2004) and the ethical values paradigm which undergirds much consumer research on sustainable consumption (Devinney, Auger, and Eckhardt 2010; Holt 2012), oil spill disasters should be disruptive events that spark broader societal questioning and grass roots activism directed at changing the prevailing status quo (Badiou 2006; Earley 2014; Kozinets and Handelman 2004). However, the cultural evidence suggests that major oil spill disasters, despite functioning as rallying points for environmental activists (Gordon, Buchanan, and Singerman 2011), exert little enduring influence on consumer perceptions and everyday consumption practices. Nor do they spark extensive grassroots movements demanding stricter regulatory oversight on the oil extraction industry, greater corporate investment in clean-up technologies, or the accelerated development of alternative energy sources. Environmental activists have christened this inability of major oil spill disasters to engender significant and sustained transformation in public opinion, consumption practices, and regulations as "oil spill amnesia" (Hertsgaard 2013; Pettit 2012).

When consumer researchers have sought to identify solutions to the seeming entrenchment of consumers in unsustainable lifestyle practices, they have typically assumed that the source of the problem stems from ineffective messaging strategies and that consumers would be motivated to adopt more sustainable lifestyle routines if presented with better targeted cognitive and emotional cues (Griskevicius et al. 2010; Kidwell, Farmer, and Hardesty 2013; Luchs et al. 2010; White, MacDonnell, and Dahl 2011). However, as McDonagh, Dobscha, and Prothero argue (2012, 278), this

This content downloaded from
78.192.100.106 on Mon, 08 May 2023 10:51:25 +00:00
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

microlevel focus on consumer decision making processes problematically ignores "the bigger systemic picture" of interlinked political and market structures that shape consumers' lifestyle practices and preferences (also see Holt 2012). Earley (2014) similarly argues for a more macro level of analysis and proposes that Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) researchers, in particular, should direct their theoretical attention "towards those who suppress dissent to preserve the status quo," rather than toward the more conventional question of "why bands of [comparatively] powerless activists fail to transform power structures."

In this theoretical spirit, we propose that the cultural phenomenon now commonly glossed as oil spill amnesia offers an analytic window into some key ideological processes through which mass-mediated consumer societies (O'Guinn and Shrum 1997; Shrum, Burroughs, and Rindfleisch 2005) produce and maintain trust in the expert systems charged with assessing, managing, and distributing systemic risk across a population (Giddens 1991). Our analysis illuminates how the disruptive potential of major oil spill disasters becomes ideologically contained through a discursive structure we characterize as the disaster myth, which is propagated by a powerful cultural influence on consumer beliefs and opinions: the national news media (Fritz and Altheide 1987; Gamson 1992; Humphreys and LaTour 2013). Drawing from literary theory (Bakhtin 1981, 1984) and institutional perspectives (cf. Humphreys 2010b; Kristensen, Boye, and Askegaard 2011; Scaraboto and Fischer 2013; Thompson and Tian 2008), we comparatively analyze national news media coverage of two iconic oil spills—the Exxon Valdez and the BP Gulf spills—to explore the relationship between mythic framing and the ideological containment.

We further argue that this mass-mediated process of ideological containment also reveals an under theorized macrolevel effect of cultural branding (Holt 2004; Holt and Cameron 2010), namely, its potential for maintaining an institutional status quo by containing cultural anxieties related to systemic risk. Disaster myths direct consumer attention toward a media designated culprit brand and provide a sense of dramatic closure to the crisis. This shift in focus, in turn, enables concerns over systemic risks to be cast to the cultural margins, where they can be more readily ignored or forgotten. In this regard, our analysis complements prior research on cultural branding that has primarily focused on how marketplace myths help to assuage sociocultural contradictions that are salient to a given social segment, as well as the corresponding therapeutic benefits provided to these consumer groups (Giesler 2012; Holt 2004, 2006; Thompson and Tian 2008). This research stream, however, has not systematically addressed the related implication that cultural branding can also contribute to various forms of cultural and political inertia by placating cultural anxieties that might otherwise be mobilized into more extended critiques of ideological meanings and, per our analysis, consumers' naturalized risk perceptions and their de facto trust in expert systems. To better theorize the process through which cultural branding can contain ideological critiques and quell anxieties related to the trustworthiness of expert systems, we begin with an overview discussion of cultural branding, institutions, and expert systems before moving on to an analysis of the public discourse that emerged in the aftermath of the Exxon Valdez and BP Gulf oil spill disasters.

## CULTURAL BRANDING AS AN INSTITUTIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Though not always commonly recognized, Holt's (2004) cultural branding paradigm arose through a theoretical engagement among CCT's view of the marketplace as a constellation of resources that consumers can incorporate into their identity projects (Arnould and Thompson 2005; McCracken 1986), the political philosophy of Horkheimer and Adorno (1944/1972), and popularizing expressions of classic arguments by contemporary anti-brand activists such as Naomi Klein (1999; and see Holt 2002). This political subtext is most evident in extensions of cultural branding that investigate how brands function as conduits for the expression of ideological meanings (cf. Holt 2006; Izberk-Bilgin 2012; Luedicke, Thompson, and Giesler 2010; Ulver-Sneistrup, Askegaard, and Kristensen 2011). For example, an iconic global brand like Coca-Cola can function as a vehicle for naturalizing ideological meanings and tacit power relationships (Foster 2008), linkages that become particularly evident when they are foregrounded by a problematizing cultural frame such as political-Islamist reconstructions of global brands (Izberk-Bilgin 2012). In addition to highlighting the ideological subtexts of brand myths, two other aspects of cultural branding are particularly germane to our analysis.

First, the cultural meanings of iconic brands such as Harley-Davidson (Holt 2004), Jack Daniels (Holt 2006), Starbucks (Holt and Cameron 2010; Simon 2010; Thompson, Rindfleisch, and Arsel 2006), regional brands (Thompson and Tian 2008), and Botox (Giesler 2012) are often established not through the strategic actions of marketing management per se but, rather, through the representations of these brands in popular culture via television shows, movies, political discourse, and news media coverage. Second, iconic brands are not mere collections of cognitive and emotional associations. Instead, they are mythic narratives—stories organized around culturally recognizable character types and plot lines—that help to therapeutically redress cultural contradictions and anxieties salient to a particular a sociocultural group (see Holt 2004 for a full account of these two aspects of cultural branding).

This formulation echoes Barthes's (1956) classic treatise on the mythologies expressed through popular culture. Mythic narratives, Barthes argues, work to naturalize socially constructed meanings, practices, and ideological viewpoints as taken-for-granted states of the world—whose legitimacy as social facts can "go without saying" (11). The naturalizing power of mythic narratives can thus imbue social practices and political agendas not only with an aura of naturalness but also inevitability (Barley and Tolbert

This content downloaded from
78.192.100.106 on Mon, 08 May 2023 10:51:25 +00:00
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

1997; Humphreys 2010b). Through this process of naturalization, many ideological aspects of the consumer culture are rhetorically placed outside the sphere of public debate (cf. Bernthal, Crockett, and Rose 2005; Humphreys 2010b; Kjeldgaard and Askegaard 2006; Peñaloza and Barnhart 2011; Schor 1998; Thompson and Haytko 1997).

This mythic function can also play an important role in the maintenance of institutionalized cultural meanings (Askegaard and Linet 2011; Holt 2012). When these established networks of meanings, practices, and material resources are confronted by disruptive events, various social actors in the network have a diverse but loosely coordinated constellation of institutional incentives to maintain the status quo, thus protecting valued sources of economic, social, or cultural capital from devaluation or defending deeply held ideological beliefs (Arsel and Thompson 2012; Barley and Tolbert 1997; Giesler and Veresiu 2014; Thompson and Tian 2008). Rather than being a consequence of planned collusions among influential actors, tendencies toward institutional inertia often reflect conventions and alignments that have emerged historically and are perpetuated through narrative structures and practices that have become naturalized in their respective social fields (Rose 1999). As Barley and Tolbert (1997, 94) describe, "institutions set bounds on rationality by restricting the opportunities and alternatives we perceive and, thereby, increase the probability of certain types of behaviour." While these institutional templates allow for varying degrees of contextual improvisation and adaptation, they nonetheless set the boundaries for what constitutes legitimate action and credible ways of understanding particular events. And importantly, institutions are not autonomous structures but are often ideologically aligned with other institutions through compatible interests.

To illustrate the underlying role of institutions in shaping consumer practices, consider the example of conventional consumption practices like buying a Prius or eating organic foods. These decisions can be driven by a mix of consumer motivations such as ecological concerns, status seeking, or social differentiation, but the market aligns these myriad consumer goals with the economic interests of producers catering to a particular market segment (Thompson and Coskuner-Balli 2007; Weber et al. 2008). In doing so, these market-mediated alignments between consumption practices culturally coded as sustainable and marketing interests propagate cultural meanings that further enhance companies' respective market positions and reinforce neoliberal ideological values that support individuated, market-based solutions over collective and political ones (Giesler and Veresiu 2014; Holt 2012; Schor and Thompson 2014; Zwick, Bonsu, and Darmody 2008).

Such institutional influences are not likely to be revealed through an intensive probing of consumers' emic narratives, a detailed study of a specific branding strategy, or even a sweeping historical overview of neoliberal thought, but instead discerned through a consideration of the network of relations that contextualize consumer choices and marketplace behaviors (Askegaard and Linnet 2011). Accordingly, we use an institutional perspective to explicate how disaster myths shape public discourse in the aftermath of major oil spill disasters and culturally brand these large-scale industrial accidents in terms that ideologically contain their disruptive implications. To fully set the theoretical stage for this analysis, we also need to more systematically consider the theoretically related constructs of systemic risk and consumer trust in expert systems.

## EXPERT SYSTEMS AND STRUCTURAL IMPERATIVES TO TRUST

An expert system is a network of technical specialists, monitoring technologies, performance standards, regulative processes, and analyses of trade-offs between calculable risks and expected benefits to the population (see Beck 1999, 2009; Tulloch and Lupton 2002). For example, the United States' Environmental Protection Agency provides extensive guidelines on fish consumption intended to help consumers balance the risk posed by mercury exposure and the health benefits offered by this food source (Environmental Protection Agency 2014).

Federal advisories of this type provide recommendations based on the risk profiles of different consumer groups and therefore administratively distribute risk across the broader population. For example, pregnant women and small children are advised to have fewer servings of fish than other segments of the population. Such recommendations assume risks can be effectively calculated and managed and that some level of risk exposure is warranted because the overall nexus of benefits outweighs the costs of a complete moratorium on fish consumption. The overall trustworthiness of these risk advisories therefore depends on the accuracy of monitoring technologies used to measure levels of mercury in the fish stock, the adequacy of experts' assessments regarding the respective risks posed to different population groups, and the accuracy of trade-off analyses.

More generally, such expert advisories proliferate throughout all facets of consumer culture because systemic risks are endogenous to the very functioning of a modern economy. To use Goldin and Vogel's (2012, 5) definition, systemic risks are "structural weaknesses" built into the function of complex networks. Thus, higher degrees of systemic risk increase the probabilities of breakdowns, accidents, and adverse consequences in ways that are beyond the control of any given actor in the system. While systemic risks can never be eliminated in complex systems (Hanseth 2007), much of the regulatory apparatus that governs the marketplace is directed at lowering the systemic risks facing consumers. For example, the sport of sky diving would likely have far fewer participants if industry standards allowed parachutes to fail, on average, one out of every 20 attempts. In this regard, Celsi, Rose, and Leigh (1993) discuss how safety improvements in technology have made high risk leisure sports—ranging from hang gliding to sky diving—more attractive to a wider segment of consumers by re-

This content downloaded from
78.192.100.106 on Mon, 08 May 2023 10:51:25 +00:00
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

ducing anxieties that their fate could be determined by factors outside of their control. When a consumer goes to a sky diving outfitter for his or her first tandem jump, he or she is enacting trust in the overall system of certification, licensing, training, and required safety procedures—a complex administrative system extending well beyond the actual outfitter to include the supply chain that produced the equipment and the regulatory agents who monitor the production and service delivery processes at various stages.

Expert systems are decentralized owing to the globally expansive interconnections and social interdependencies that link producers and consumers' across space and time (Beck, Giddens, and Lash 1994; Jin and Robey 2008). For example, when a consumer engages in a mundane consumption practice like buying and eating beef, he or she is relying on a spatially and temporally extended administrative network. As a function of contemporary metropolitan and suburban lifestyles, relatively few consumers raise their own livestock or even buy directly from a specific ranch. Rather, most consumers take it as a matter of course that a complex chain of geographically distant (and anonymous) ranchers, meat packing plants, safety inspectors, grocers, and restaurants are following designated safety procedures and that the system of standards, regulatory oversight, and self-monitoring procedures constitute effective safeguards.

From an institutional perspective, the conceptual gloss of trust widely used by theorists of systemic risk (Beck 1999, 2009; Giddens 1991) partly misrepresents consumers' relations to these decentralized and dispersed expert systems because it implies too much volitional choice on the part of consumers and therefore obscures the institutionalized condition of reliance on these experts systems. The institutional relationship is not so much one where consumers extend trust, but one where their dependence on expert systems demands trust. We characterize this refined notion of trust as a structural imperative to trust. That is, consumers leading more or less conventional middle-class lifestyles have strong institutional incentives to place their de facto trust in expert systems (Giddens 1991) that are charged with assessing, managing, and distributing systemic risks. Otherwise, consumers may be paralyzed by anxieties that their food may be tainted, their water contaminated, their cars unsafe, their buildings and bridges structurally unsound, their appliances an electrocution threat, and their commercial airplanes not flight worthy.

These structural imperatives to trust in expert systems, however, are periodically destabilized by crisis events that raise concerns about the affiliated expert systems, such as when news media circulate reports about *E. coli* outbreaks in a fast food franchise. In the face of these challenges, the structural imperatives to trust in expert systems often prove to be quite resilient. Such disruptive events can be culturally framed as isolated failures in an otherwise well-functioning expert system and whose specific causes can be traced and corrected. Once delimited, a disruptive event does not undermine trustworthiness of the system as a whole. Thus, a consumer who refrains from eating at Jack In The Box after a highly publicized *E. coli* outbreak will likely have few reservations about having lunch at Panera or another restaurant chain not directly implicated in the outbreak.

Less commonly, crisis-driven revelations of systemic risk can raise concern that breakdowns may not be discrete occurrences but instead may be symptoms of underlying structural weaknesses and vulnerabilities. This class of crisis events calls attention to the globally interconnected nature of global risk society (Beck 2006), sparking widespread anxieties over uncontrolled systemic risks and prompting doubts about the integrity of the relevant expert systems —as perhaps best illustrated by the bovine spongiform encephalopathy (i.e., mad cow disease) crisis that sent shock waves through the British and European beef industries in the late 1990's (Beck 1999). Such systemic-level crises pose a more significant challenge to structural imperatives to trust than those classified as self-contained accidents.

This distinction between discrete crisis events and those which are systemically scaled is itself embedded—and hence constructed and contested—in cultural and ideological discourses, much like risk perceptions themselves (Douglas and Wildavsky 1983; Thompson 2005). For example, investigative journalists and activist groups critical of the corporate controlled global food chain often attempt to reframe specific crisis points like *E. coli* outbreaks in fast food restaurants not as isolated occurrences, but as symptoms of uncontrolled systemic risk that pervade these production processes and that are further emblematic of chronic inadequacies in the expert systems monitoring, regulating, and evaluating these risks. Journalistic exposes such as *Fast Food Nation: The Dark-Side of the All-American Meal* (Schlosser 2001) and *The Omnivore's Dilemma* (Pollan 2008), *Salt, Sugar, Fat: How the Food Giants Hooked Us* (Moss 2013), as well as simpatico documentaries such as *Food Inc.* (Weber 2009) or *Fed Up* (Soechtig 2014) exemplify these efforts to culturally recode crisis events into disruptive moments of the type envisioned by Badiou (2006) whereby consumers become reflexively aware of societal problems masked by status quo perceptions and practices and, in turn, organize for social change.

While the critiques and counternarratives of food activists have helped to galvanize alternative food movements, the processed and fast food industries as a whole have continued to expand; childhood obesity rates remain at historical highs, and little organized political pressure has arisen to force broad changes in industry practices (Schlosser 2012). In our theoretical vernacular, a number of discernible cultural forces help to ideologically contain the disruptive events of food-based societal problems, crisis events, and muckraking journalistic accounts. While fossil fuel extraction is a quite different industry from fast food—presenting a distinctive matrix of institutional, cultural, and economic relations—some instructive points can be gleaned from a comparison across these two institutional fields.

First, various stakeholders in the industry have aggressively countered critiques, proclaiming they are plagued by misrepresentations, misunderstandings, and ideological bi-

This content downloaded from
78.192.100.106 on Mon, 08 May 2023 10:51:25 +00:00
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

ases (Schlosser 2012). Such industry level responses are theoretically noteworthy because they highlight that consumer understanding of these complex, global expert systems is mediated through representations in the mainstream news media, industry PR, and alternative and social media. Thus, consumers' market-oriented risk perceptions and their relative levels of reflexive doubt toward expert systems are inscribed in what can rightly been seen as a cultural branding battle between activists trying to establish an anxiety inducing doppelgänger brand image (Giesler 2012; Thompson, Rindfleisch, and Arsel 2006) and defenders of the status quo who seek to quell those disruptive reverberations by reasserting the trustworthiness of expert systems.

Second, a number of sociocultural factors extraneous to the marketplace conflict between activists and industry defenders have subtly helped to sustain the institutional status quo in the face of these challenges. For example, the embrace of countervailing food practices and politics—local sourcing, organic production, abstinence from industrialized food production—has become the cultural province of professional class consumers who have higher levels of cultural and economic capital (Guthman 2008; Johnston 2008). While the reasons for this association between food practices and class position are beyond the scope of this paper (see Guthman 2003; Holt 2014), we can note that this social status divide has served to ideologically contain these critiques within the practices of higher cultural capital consumers and, through the logic of symbolic contrast, to culturally frame the consumption of fast food (and with it, de facto trust in its governing expert systems) as a populist rebuke to cultural elitism (Flowers and Swan 2011).

The marketing management literature on brand scapegoating outcomes (Fors-Andrée 2013; Gao et al. 2012; Hagberg and Hellberg 2013) also provides some insight into psychological tendencies that can contribute to the process of ideological containment. Brand scapegoating refers to the situation in which cultural blame for a product harm crisis is projected onto a vilified brand, even though the culpability is shared by multiple organizations in the supply chain. The psychologically-oriented explanations of this consumer tendency are premised on variations of the availability heuristic (Folkes 1988; Tversky and Kahneman 1973); that is, consumers tend to ascribe undue amounts of blame to the brand first implicated in the crisis, or the brand most well-known or most relevant to their daily lives. At a sociocultural and ideological level, this psychological dynamic is congruent with structural imperatives for consumers to trust expert systems, including those called into question by product harm events. By focusing on the misdeeds of a designated culprit brand, the more daunting threats of uncontrolled systemic risk can be ignored or rationalized, and the crisis can be interpreted as an isolated occurrence rather than a sign of underlying inadequacies in the prevailing expert systems.

These examples of food activism and brand scapegoating also indicate that myriad factors can contribute to the resilience of status quo institutional relationships in the face of crisis events. Accordingly, we make no claim that our account of disaster myths is an exhaustive or all-encompassing explanation of why status quo trust relations tend to be sustained in the aftermath of major oil spill disasters or other significant product harm crises. In keeping with recent editorial philosophies (McGill, Peracchio, and Luce 2011), we offer this analysis as a tale from the field that analyzes a particular set of theoretically consequential relations embedded in a broader institutional complexity. We undertake a mode of macro to micro theoretical mapping that Askegaard and Linnet (2011, 396) characterize as analyzing "the context of context"; that is, situating microlevel psychological processes within their broader sociocultural, historical, and institutional settings and identifying some of the structuring relations that arise among ideological, cultural, and cognitive structures.

In this spirit, we identify how disaster myths contribute to the cultural and ideological conditions for consumers to sustain not only trust in expert systems but also their belief in the just world hypothesis and the coping mechanisms it affords (Wilson and Darke 2012). Through this analysis, we highlight previously undiscussed links between structural imperatives to trust in expert systems and the role that cultural branding can play in the ideological containment of risk anxieties and in reestablishing consumer trust in expert systems in the aftermath of oil spill disasters. In a related vein, we also call attention to the macrolevel ideological effects of a narrative structure shown to be prominent across a gamut of consumption contexts—the Romanization of nature—that has been primarily analyzed in relation to its microlevel functions in consumer's identity narratives (i.e., the therapeutic resolution of identity project conflicts and contradictions).

## DATA AND METHODS

### Data

To understand the cultural processes that help to foster ideological containment in public discourse and, relatedly, to examine the role that brands play in this containment, we examined news coverage from the BP and Exxon oil spills. We conducted content and discourse analysis of news coverage of the Exxon Valdez and BP Gulf oil spills that appeared in the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, and *USA Today*. These three publications were chosen because they have the highest circulation in the United States (Alliance for Audited Media 2013), and presented national-level coverage for both events. The sample consisted of all articles containing the words "Exxon" and "oil spill" or "BP" and "oil spill" in the headline or lead paragraph. Data span the time period from March 24, 1989, to February 27, 2013, for Exxon and from April 20, 2010, to February 27, 2013, for BP. Searches were conducted using Factiva, which produced a database of 636 articles for Exxon and 875 articles for BP (1,511 total). We chose to sample the maximum time period possible so that we could assess the full news cycle available for each event.

News media discourses play a critical role in shaping

This content downloaded from
78.192.100.106 on Mon, 08 May 2023 10:51:25 +00:00
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

public discourse by presenting culturally legitimated frameworks for understanding events (Fritz and Altheide 1987; Gamson and Modigliani 1989). In shaping public discourse, journalism constitutes what John Hartley (1996, 33–34) calls the "sense-making practice of modernity," a discursive system through which cultural tensions are worked out into collective agreements. Although social media have an increasingly important role in contributing fodder for public attention, traditional media possess a long-standing gatekeeper role in determining what constitutes legitimate public discourse (Humphreys 2010b; Lippman 1946; Meraz 2009). As Meraz (2009, 683) writes, "By virtue of creating a shared, national pseudo-environment, mass media fulfill the important function of building a public consensus on the important issues of the day." While the gatekeeping role of some newspapers may have eroded, elite mass media outlets in particular have gained even more influence in codifying public discourse and serving as cultural authorities (Meraz 2009, 701; Weber and Monge 2011).

While national news can encompass a wide range of media—television news, radio programming, and national print dailies—the conversation across media has been shown to converge on a narrow range of topics, frames, and headlines that are governed by editors' tendency to follow peers in a competitive landscape (Bell 1991; Tuchman 1978). In this media mix, scholars have argued that because print media coverage is more trusted (Kiousis 2001) and better remembered (DeFleur et al. 1992), it has a particularly strong effect on shaping the public opinion (Deephouse 2000).

Thus, to understand the narratives that contained potential ideological challenges posed by these iconic oil spills, we chose to study mainstream news coverage of their occurrence and aftermath. Because we were particularly interested in depictions of risk, which often tend to be visual, we included AP photographs from news coverage taken between 1989 and 2013. This data set, found using the same keywords as news articles, included 422 photographs from Exxon coverage and 1,773 photographs from BP coverage. Photojournalism is one crucial way that news coverage can shape public consciousness and hail readers to take action. Commenting on the power of press photos, Lucaites and Hariman (2001) write that "guided by an emotional rather than programmatic logic . . . photographs work primarily to activate and manage feelings of both vulnerability and obligations that are endemic to liberal-democratic culture" (40). We use analysis of photographs here to further examine tensions that prompt anxieties related to systemic risk and to better understand their potential resolution.

## Analysis

We first read and open coded all textual and visual data (Corbin and Strauss 2008). For the photographs, we adopted a visual rhetoric perspective that treats images as another representational means to communicate complex cultural meanings (McQuarrie and Mick 1999; Scott 1994b). We coded photographs individually, then looked for patterns within case, and finally across cases, finding similarities and differences amongst the two sets of photographs. Previous research on visual rhetoric in consumer behavior has tended to study the deployment of rhetorical devices such as visual puns in particular photographs (McQuarrie and Mick 1996; Scott 1994b). In contrast, we were more attuned to the story photographs told as a whole. And yet, the whole was sometimes represented by what Lucaites and Hariman (2001) call an iconic photo, an image that crystallizes a particular moment and, they argue, thereby "intensifies the journalistic experience, focusing the viewer's attention on a particular enactment of the tensions that define the public culture," (41).

Our discourse analysis of the newspaper articles followed from a poststructural perspective (Holt 1997; Kozinets 2008; Luedicke, Thompson, and Geisler 2010; Murray 2002; Thompson and Haytko 1997). From this standpoint, social actors—consumers, reporters, business executives—speak from particular sociocultural and institutional positions. Social actors' contextually constructed narratives draw from a broader legacy of culturally established discourses, metaphors, and tropes. Accordingly, we sought to explicate the discourses that framed how systematic risks and reflexive doubts toward the effectiveness of expert systems were represented over the chronological evolution of the disaster myth and, additionally, the role the branding of theses disasters played in containing disruptive implications and facilitating the restoration of status quo institutional relations. Importantly, these ideological effects are not contingent on the conscious intentions of social speakers, but instead emerge from the often tacit shaping of cultural viewpoints and conventional beliefs that occur whenever a particular sociocultural discourse provides the mythic resources for conceptualizing, interpreting, and articulating salient cultural issues, tensions, and conflicts (see also Swidler 2001).

Similar coding schemes emerged for both texts and photographs; however visual data added insight into the visceral qualities of some codes (e.g. purity and filth). We first coded the data for themes and narratives within each case. Next, we analyzed the relationship in themes and narratives amongst the two cases, tracking commonalities and differences in narratives used to explain each oil spill and depict each brand. Once the narrative structures were specified, we further looked for protagonists and antagonists created within each narrative as well as changes in narratives over time.

To illustrate the complex interrelationships among these narrative structures and ideological frames, our reported findings are based primarily on our qualitative interpretation of the texts and photographs. However, we supplemented the discourse analysis with quantitative methods in order to examine the correlation between narratives and to track changes in their occurrence over time. Following procedures outlined by Pennebaker et al. (2007), we developed a list of words commonly associated with themes, narratives, and actors based on our qualitative analysis (table 1). These word lists were then validated using three coders, as recommended

This content downloaded from
78.192.100.106 on Mon, 08 May 2023 10:51:25 +00:00
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

**TABLE 1**

DICTIONARY TABLE FOR TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

| Category | Words | Number of words | Agreement |
|---|---|---|---|
| Narratives: | | | |
| Segregation | separate, skim, dispersant | 10 | .78 |
| Restoration | restore, reclaim, renew | 8 | .90 |
| Exception | glitch, error, accident | 6 | 1.00 |
| Reprobation | blame, guilt, reckless, responsible | 5 | 1.00 |
| Actors: | | | |
| Individual | captain, first mate, inspector | 8 | .88 |
| Company | BP, Exxon, company | 10 | .88 |
| Government | president, senate, Coast Guard | 6 | .88 |
| Themes: | | | |
| Economic | fund, repay, cost | 6 | 1.00 |
| Legal | trial, liable, lawsuit | 11 | .92 |
| Environmental | water, wildlife, air, birds | 15 | .94 |
| Filth | dirt, filth, foul, disgust | 15 | .92 |
| Crisis | disaster, crisis, tragedy | 4 | 1.00 |
| Technology | science, innovation, engineer | 8 | .95 |

by Pennebaker et al. (2007; see also Humphreys 2010b). For the quantification of themes amongst photographs, we took a content analytic approach (Belk and Pollay 1985; McQuarrie and Mick 1999). After qualitative analysis, two research assistants coded photographs based on content (people, animals, settings, and natural elements such as water). Inter-coder reliability overall was acceptable at alpha = .75 (table 2), and disagreements were resolved by a third coder (Krippendorf 2012). After developing and aggregating the occurrence of these basic codes, we connected patterns of occurrence with themes and categories at the theoretical level and triangulated these findings with patterns that arose in the textual analysis.

## (POSTINDUSTRIAL) GROTESQUE REALISM AND IDEOLOGICAL CONTAINMENT THROUGH DISASTER MYTHS

In our exposition of the findings, we will follow the mythic narrative as it chronologically unfolded, first by examining how textual and visual representations brought a dramatic awareness of systemic risk into public discourse and problematized existing brand image. In the second section of our findings, we examine how and why the critical implications and transformative pressures harbored by these initial representations—which correspond to the breach phase of a dramatic narrative (Giesler 2008)—were narratively foreclosed, thus containing anxieties over systemic risk and reestablishing trust in besieged expert systems and their underlying institutional structures. In the cultural branding of these disasters, the mythologizing discourse not only anchors on particular brand culprits, but also further elaborates on the malfeasance or incompetence of specific actors (ship captains, inattentive inspectors, out of touch CEO's, etc.). These narratives, which highlight or downplay particular actors, contribute to the ideological process through which systemic critique was contained not only through particular narratives structures, but also through patterns of narrative omission.

### Postindustrial Grotesque Realism and the Articulation of Systemic Risk

The initial news media coverage of both oil spills represented early stages of the crises through the narrative conventions of postindustrial grotesque realism. In his pioneering account of this literary genre, Bakhtin (1984) argued that grotesque realism was a highly subversive mode of cultural practice and expression integral to the medieval carnival. In the liminal spaces of ribald public festivals, the earth-centric cosmology of rural folk could be ritualistically enacted in ways that lampooned the authority of the Church and its oppression of these Pagan myths and practices. In particular, the grotesque realism of the medieval carnival targeted Catholicism's ethereal ideals of spirituality and purity, and thereby performatively rebuked its disciplining system of moral controls (Holquist 1990). Through the comic camouflage offered by the carnival, the peasant class deployed grotesque realism to reveal that higher cultural authorities—the monarchy and the papacy—were, despite their lofty social rank, earth-bound bodies who ate, defecated, copulated, died, and decomposed in the earth just like the common folk. This aspect of grotesque realism not only punctured sanctifying conceits but also celebrated the fecund and life-giving power of the earth and incarnate bodies: "The essential principle of grotesque realism is degradation, that is, the lowering of all that is high, spiritual, and abstract; it is a transfer to the material level, to the sphere of Earth and body in their indissoluble unity. . . . To degrade also means to concern oneself with the lower stratum of the body, the life of the belly and the reproductive organs; it therefore relates to acts of defecation and copulation, conception, pregnancy, and birth. Degradation digs a bodily grave for

This content downloaded from
78.192.100.106 on Mon, 08 May 2023 10:51:25 +00:00
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

**TABLE 2**

CONTENT ANALYSIS CATEGORIES FOR VISUAL ANALYSIS

| | | Frequency | | Percent | | K | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Category | Description | Exxon | BP | Exxon | BP | Exxon | BP |
| Worker | People in yellow or orange suits cleaning rocks and laying out booms | 66 | 139 | 23.91 | 8.61 | .94 | .74 |
| Scientist | People in white coats cleaning and testing rocks or animals | 13 | 28 | 4.71 | 1.73 | .62 | .66 |
| Protester | People holding signs and dressed to parody company executives | 12 | 64 | 4.35 | 3.97 | .77 | .84 |
| Government official | Government officials including the President, senators, and congresspersons | 16 | 257 | 5.80 | 15.92 | .77 | .70 |
| Government hearing[a] | Formal context in which company executives and regulators are questioned | 4 | 296 | 1.45 | 18.34 | .45 | .77 |
| Resident[a] | People dressed in plainclothes (e.g. fishermen, beachgoers, etc.) | 20 | 186 | 7.25 | 11.52 | .53 | .71 |
| Court | Formal context of legal trials (e.g. captain, executives) | 10 | 82 | 3.62 | 5.08 | .69 | .91 |
| Press conference | Context in which government officials or company reps are making statements | 20 | 224 | 7.25 | 13.88 | .70 | .64 |
| Animals | Living and dead animals such as fish, otters, and birds | 37 | 109 | 13.41 | 6.75 | .86 | .85 |
| Booms | Long orange or yellow devices used to separate oil from shore | 20 | 69 | 7.25 | 4.28 | .73 | .83 |
| Oil | Black liquid covering rocks, animals, or floating in water | 125 | 198 | 45.29 | 12.27 | .99 | .76 |
| Water | Close or wide shot of water on shore or surrounding ships | 57 | 313 | 20.65 | 19.39 | .81 | .86 |
| Shore | Beach, sand, or rocks that share a boundary with water | 44 | 126 | 15.94 | 7.81 | .68 | .72 |
| Average | | | | | | .73 | .77 |

[a]Krippendorf's alpha for this category is unusally low because of the small number of instances in the data set.

a new birth; it has not only a destructive, negative aspect, but also a regenerating one" (Bakhtin 1984, 19–21).

In our contemporary global economic age—which has been variously termed as postindustrial, third wave, or neoliberal capitalism (Doogan 2009; Giddens 2003; Schor 2010)—many key cultural manifestations of grotesque realism seek to challenge and subvert the neoliberal vernacular of global brands, the global economy, and the system that reduces socioeconomic and material relations to an abstract system of indexes (growth rates, credit rankings, stock values, and shareholder) and "world is flat" (Friedman 2005) idealizations that rhetorically elide the material realities of manual labor, resource extraction, and ecological degradation (Last 2013; Thompson 2007). Oil spill disaster myths such as the Exxon Valdez and the BP Gulf disaster are particularly potent expressions of postindustrial grotesque realism because they direct cultural attention toward the material flows of noxious substances, vast networks of machinery and technology, manual labor, and transformations in land and seascapes that support the carbon-based, global economy. For example, although BP adopted the tagline "beyond petroleum" in 2000, these idealized and abstract meanings were clearly challenged by the material realities of the 2010 oil spill. Whereas medieval forms of grotesque realism gained their cultural license and ideological cover through the comic exuberance of the carnival, the contemporary disaster myth we investigate emerges against the destabilizing backdrop of risk society anxieties that inevitably arise whenever globally interlinked expert systems spectacularly fail (Beck 2009).

Consistent with the genre of postindustrial grotesque realism, news coverage of both disasters metaphorically echoed bodily processes associated with the "lower body stratum" that Bakhtin regarded as a hallmark of grotesque realism. Oil "spewed," "gushed," and "seeped" into water that was cast as "pure" and "pristine" (see, e.g., *New York Times*, March 27, 1989; *New York Times*, June 24, 2010; *USA Today*, March 27, 1989; *Wall Street Journal*, April 23, 2010) and "fouled" natural preserves and wildlife (*New York Times*, April 5, 1989; *USA Today*, June 24, 2010). Images that depicted bodily filth were cast as problematic vis-à-vis wildlife, water, and the scenic landscape. As one article, quoting the (pro–offshore drilling) governor, Bobby Jindal, says, "Gov. Bobby Jindal of Louisiana said Wednesday that sheets of heavy crude oil from the offshore spill had seeped deep into the delicate marshes around the mouth of the Mississippi River. . . . 'These are not tar balls, this is not sheen, this is heavy oil,' Mr. Jindal told reporters on a pier here, holding up a plastic bag full of sticky brownish liquid, after taking a helicopter and boat tour of the area. 'What we are seeing yesterday and today is literally this heavy oil coming into our wetlands'" (*New York Times*, May 2, 2010).

The "heavy" crude, is depicted as coarse, unnatural, and as an intrusive threat to the "delicate marshes" of the lower

This content downloaded from
78.192.100.106 on Mon, 08 May 2023 10:51:25 +00:00
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

**FIGURE 2**

POSTINDUSTRIAL GROTESQUE REALIST IMAGES OF THE EXXON OIL SPILL

SOURCE.—Associated Press, March 27, 1989.

Mississippi. It "[seeps] deep," Jindal argues, and should not be confused with surface oil. The governor, for effect, holds up a bag full of "sticky brownish liquid" to make the display of filth even more vivid, more material. As Mary Douglas (1966) contends, contamination is culturally coded as a profound threat to the moral order, the defilement of purity through the profane encroachments of filth. For both events, the narratives in the early part of news coverage vividly depict the oil spill as violating a sacrosanct (and Romanticized) boundary between the man-made, industrial realm and the pristine realm of nature. While this Romantic framing of oil spill disasters problematizes status quo portrayals of oil extraction as economically beneficial and controllable, it also raises the latent prospect that purifying technologies and practices (Canniford and Shankar 2013) can also restore the mythic boundary between unspoiled nature and contaminating oil spills.

In the breach phase (Turner 1988) of the national news media coverage, BP is portrayed as one of several potential protagonists, along with Haliburton, TransOcean, and the US Corps of Army Engineers. However, over time as the narrative unfolds, BP becomes a more prominent actor through the media's intensive focus on its cleanup efforts. That is, BP is mentioned more frequently in articles over time ($M_{4\text{mo}} = 1.12\%$ vs. $M_{14\text{mo}} = 1.69\%$), and these mentions of BP increase linearly ($r_{\text{time}} = .202$, $p < .01$).

The specter of contamination and the invocation of purifying practices, often manifested in the most literal sense of washing, skimming and dispersing of spilled oil, is evident in the 1989 news media coverage of the Exxon Valdez disaster as well. Here, photographs of workers cleaning oil covered birds forever etched this iconic imagery into popular discourse. For instance, the photograph depicted in figure 2 became an iconic image from the spill and was reproduced in coverage of the BP spill 21 years later. As a crystallization of the grotesque realism characteristic of the national news media's initial coverage, it embodies an ideological challenge to the status quo. Contaminated birds and other wildlife, so vividly depicted in countless newswire photographs, provide a viscerally gripping testament to a timeless natural order disrupted by the polluting intrusions of uncontained crude oil, a dark, viscous blotch staining the white (pure) Alaskan wilderness. While having attained iconic cultural status, this photograph was by no means unique. 45% of Exxon photographs and 12% of BP photographs depict oil washing up on beaches, on rocks, and coating wildlife (fig. 3).

Many articles commented on these images, incorporating

This content downloaded from
78.192.100.106 on Mon, 08 May 2023 10:51:25 +00:00
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

**FIGURE 3**

REPRESENTATIONS OF PEOPLE, OBJECTS, AND SETTINGS IN AP PHOTOGRAPHS: EXXON VS. BP

their visceral responses of on-site observers into the public discourse (e.g., *New York Times*, March 1, 1990, May 1, 1990; *USA Today*, March 13, 1990). Depicting the efforts of cleanup crews, one article reports: "Even after 18 years of working with birds soiled by oil spills, she [the cleanup worker] was dismayed by the Prince William disaster. 'Humans are a terribly dirty species,' she said this morning as carpenters built pools for the birds. 'Why is it that everywhere we go, we leave a mess?'" (*New York Times*, April 3, 1989)

Speaking from a position of authority—as established by appeals to the worker's 18 years of experience and her eyewitness standing—this narrative reframes human actions and technologies as inherently polluting forces that bring filth, disarray, and destruction to the natural world. Such representations blend postindustrial grotesque realism—which highlights the polluting waste our carbon-dependent society leaves in its wake—and the Romantic bifurcation between the sacred, pristine wilderness and the profane realm of humanity and technological artifacts (Canniford and Shankar 2013; Cronon 1996; Thompson 2004) to convey hope for restoration of this boundary. While belying the risk society proposition that the environmental risks posed by fossil fuel extraction and transport can be contained and controlled, the corresponding romanticization of nature also sustains the belief that its mythic purity can be recovered from the unnatural, contaminating effects of human civilization. In this way, technological incursions into the wilderness can symbolically function both as a source of transgression by invoking technophobic anxieties (Best and Kellner 2001; Kozinets 2008) and salvation by promising a technologically mediated restoration.

Not only did the Exxon Valdez media coverage canonize a narrative and visual paradigm for reporting on oil spills—blending grotesque realist imagery of oil saturated landscapes and wildlife with Romantic hopes for restoring its lost purity—the disaster itself provided a comparison point for assessing the degree of contamination wrought by the BP spill. We find that grotesque realist tropes first established in the coverage of the Exxon spill resurface immediately in the coverage of the BP spill. Among the BP articles, 184 (21%) contain reference to the Exxon spill, and this is especially common in the early part of the coverage ($N_{\text{Ex4mo}} = 141$). Consider this *New York Times* report from the early response stage of the BP disaster, which details BP President Tony Hayward's mollifying description of the spill: "Mr. Hayward, of BP, said the crude spilling from the well was very light, the color and texture of 'iced tea' and implied that it would cause less environmental damage than heavier crude, like the type that spilled from the Exxon Valdez into Prince William Sound in 1989. He said in most places it was no more than a micron thick and in the thickest areas was one-tenth of a millimeter, or the width of a hair" (*New York Times*, April 29, 2010).

Through his metaphor-laden comparison to the Exxon Valdez spill, Mr. Hayward represents the Gulf spill as a far less threatening occurrence. His narrative invokes the conventional privileging of the higher over the lower, a symbolic distinction that narratives of grotesque realism originally sought to subvert (Bakhtin 1984). By describing the oil as "the width of a hair" or something you might drink like "iced tea," Hayward tellingly associates the oil spill with elements culturally indicative of the "higher" body stratum: the head and face. In so doing, his narrative dissociates the oil spillage from the metaphorical realm of the lower body stratum, with its connotations of filth and contamination, and instead transfers it to the higher bodily stratum associated with the head, face and—by cultural implication—abstract reasoning and creative thought. Hayward's elaboration on the lightness trope, via the analogy to iced tea,

This content downloaded from
78.192.100.106 on Mon, 08 May 2023 10:51:25 +00:00
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

further signifies that the spill exists in the realm of tamed nature which has been cultivated to enrich human society. By contrast, the Exxon Valdez spill—with its imagery of oil saturated animals and landscape serving as the cultural iconography of an oil spill disaster—is represented as a threatening, heavy substance that coated nature in its viscous, dirty ooze and that brought about devastation. Paradoxically, the historical legacy of the prior oil spill serves as a rhetorical device for advancing the comparative argument that the unfolding BP disaster was less grotesque (i.e., lighter, more tea-like), and therefore less threatening than the Exxon Valdez spill.

For both the Exxon Valdez and BP Gulf oil spill disasters, images and discourses characteristic of postindustrial grotesque realism pervade the early coverage across all three news outlets we studied (see the appendix, available online). These news media reports exhibit recurrent representations of the deleterious environmental consequences of oil pollution and concomitant cultural associations with the transgressive sphere of filth and degradation that challenge the dematerializing status quo of global capitalism. In so doing, these grotesque realist narratives cast reflexive doubt on the systemic risks posed by oil drilling and the expert systems presumed to manage and control those risks. But how long did this problematization last? Do signs of ideological containment begin to appear as the news cycle unfolds?

As a first step toward addressing these questions, we wanted to measure the length of the news cycle for each of the events. To do this, we counted the number articles over time for each incident. As shown in figure 4, the news cycle for Exxon lasted approximately 605 days, from March 1989 through November 1990, although there was a long tail of coverage lasting through November 1994, while the cycle for BP lasted approximately 395 days. The initial volume of coverage for the BP spill was considerably higher, with a maximum of 199 articles in June 2010 (compared to the maximum for Exxon of 57 articles in April 1989), but this news coverage expired sooner.

While we have established that the volume of coverage was greater for the BP spill, it's possible these stories were not as prominent in the public discourse because of their placement within the newspaper. Where were oil spill stories placed in the newspaper throughout the news cycle? To answer this question, we conducted a second analysis of page number. In all, there were 26 front page appearances for Exxon, and 127 for BP. (Note, however, that the two events aren't directly comparable because page number was underreported between 1989 and 1992.) Of BP's front-page appearances, more than half (94 out of 127) occur in the first three months. (Unfortunately a comparable analysis for Exxon could not be conducted because of underreported page data between 1989 and 1992. Of the available data, 7 out of 26 of the front pages, or 26%, occurred in the first three months.) Once again, the BP spill garnered an early flurry of intense media coverage, but fell out of prominence before the well had been capped.

Images of grotesque realism, represented through words associated with filth and contamination, were common in the first part of the coverage, but then declined quickly for BP and more slowly for Exxon (fig. 5*a*). Photographic depictions of filth decreased throughout the period as well, although this was delayed for BP, as oil did not hit shore for several weeks (fig. 5*b*). Yet, as shown in the preceding analysis, these grotesque realist images offered clear representational challenges to the dematerializing discourses and brand symbolism that constituted the status quo prior to the spills. Within months, however, narratives emerged that began to resolve the ideological rupture posed by grotesque realism. In the case of Exxon, this resolution took longer, as institutional and legal processes for assigning responsibility and meting out punishment were not well established and, importantly, a much larger volume of oil contaminated the visible shore, providing a greater reserve of grotesque realist imagery. In the case of BP, the legacy of the Exxon Valdez provided a cultural and legal template for assessing liability issues. Furthermore, the BP spill itself had a less visible impact on the shoreline due to the intensive application of chemical dispersants. Though these chemicals may have increased the overall toxicity of the spill (Martinez et al. 2013), they dispersed the water born oil in ways that "had the short-term effect of making the catastrophe look less severe" (Gayle 2012) and, hence, limited news media opportunities for emotionally gripping photographic and video documentation. Thus, news coverage of the BP Gulf disaster more quickly segued from reports of uncontrolled oil spillage and visible damage to wildlife to clean-up and control efforts and, ultimately, to tales of technological triumph.

In sum, the quantifiable patterns in the news cycle around the Exxon Valdez and BP Gulf oil spills supports the proposition that news media discourse evolved in ways that gradually contained anxieties over systemic risk invoked by the grotesque realist representations of major oil spill disasters. Our research attention now turns to the network of narratives that coalesced as a disaster myth and to the ways that myth worked to contain dissonant brand meanings, ideological critiques and related cultural pressures for institutional change.

## Ideological Containment through Disaster Myth

Four underlying narratives constitute the disaster myth that arose in the aftermaths of the Exxon Valdez wreck and the BP Deepwater Horizon explosion. Each narrative in this constellation respectively serves to ideologically contain a distinct type of disruption engendered by grotesque realist accounts of these catastrophic oil spills. Grotesque realism, as a genre that problematizes the naturalized trust in expert systems, challenges taken-for-granted assumptions about systemic risk. However, over the course of the disaster myth, we find that the invoked anxieties over systematic risk are gradually contained through the emergence of these four inter-related narratives, leading to the renaturalization of the predisaster status quo.

The first narrative is that of purifying segregation. This

This content downloaded from
78.192.100.106 on Mon, 08 May 2023 10:51:25 +00:00
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

**FIGURE 4**

ARTICLE FREQUENCY OVER TIME FOR EXXON AND BP OIL SPILL DISASTERS

narrative recounts the intricate process of separating the filth produced by fossil fuel disasters from the naturally-existing "pure" environment, exemplified by animals, pristine beaches, and adjacent water systems. The second narrative, exception, details how human or technological error precipitated the accident, thereby rendering it as an unforeseeable and random event. These stories focus on highly localized triggers, often in the form of irresponsible deviations from standard protocols, and thereby work to divert cultural attention from the consideration of systemic risks. The third

This content downloaded from
78.192.100.106 on Mon, 08 May 2023 10:51:25 +00:00
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

**FIGURE 5**

*A*, PERCENTAGE OF FILTH LANGUAGE OVER TIME FOR EXXON AND BP; *B*, REPRESENTATIONS OF FILTH OVER TIME: EXXON AND BP

This content downloaded from
78.192.100.106 on Mon, 08 May 2023 10:51:25 +00:00
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

and fourth narratives in this constellation—reprobation and restoration—afford a sense of closure to the disaster story, even though the consequences of such large-scale accidents can last for decades (Graham et al. 2011). This twin tale documents the process of identifying and punishing the responsible parties and the complementary efforts to restore the ecological and socioeconomic systems damaged by the disaster. In this section, we detail each narrative and provide evidence demonstrating its ability to ideologically contain reflexive doubts regarding expert systems.

*Segregation.* The narrative of purifying segregation is premised on the idea that the filth associated with oil can be separated from the purity of nature, a process that would restore the defiled—but mythically romanticized—realm. Oil is described as filthy "sludge" that has "spewed" forth or "leaked" out, while the natural environment of either the Prince William Sound or the Gulf Coast is described as "pristine." Segregation narratives anchor on processes for separating these two elements, often in great technological and numerical detail. The culprit brand first becomes focal in the segregation stage due to its cleanup efforts. In the Exxon case, for example, an early article describes the cleanup:

> Of the load of crude oil aboard the ship, about 240,000 barrels, over 10 million gallons, leaked into the sound. Since then, company cleanup teams have deployed more than 22 miles of floating barriers designed to corral large oil slicks into compact areas in which the oil can be skimmed off. The technique has recovered only a small fraction of the oil dumped into the water. Exxon said that to date about 10,000 barrels of recovered oil fill two barges, and a smaller amount has been collected by other means. Nevertheless, a triple enclosure of barriers around the San Juan salmon hatchery in Sawmill Bay at the southern end of the sound has held off the oil so far. There have been reports that some oil has slipped under the barriers into hatchery waters, but officials say that what they call "the battle of Sawmill Bay" has not yet been lost. (*New York Times*, April 5, 1989)

Rhetorically enlivened through the metaphor of battle, this narrative of segregation portrays crude oil as an invading army and Sawmill Bay as the sacred, perhaps virgin, entity under siege. The passage then assures readers that segregation efforts ("triple enclosure of barriers") have been somewhat successful and that the "battle of Sawmill Bay" has not yet been lost." This rhetorical framing also employs a subtly passive tone—akin to the oft derided "mistakes were made" deflection (Tavris and Aronson 2007)—that acknowledges a failure or breakdown in institutional norms and safeguards, while still rhetorically exonerating those involved from direct responsibility. In this case, a sense of agency is figuratively ascribed to the spreading oil via the invading army trope, which elides the role of human actions in precipitating the crisis. The narrative also directs readers' attention to the heroic efforts of the Exxon clean up team to stave off the invading oil and, hence, protect the sacred boundary between pristine nature and the polluting taint of the marauding oil. Visually, segregation is communicated through depictions of booms and barriers, blasts of orange separating the dark oil from the shoreline, which often contains snow, trees, or wildlife (fig. 6). As we will see, news media coverage of these corporate-sponsored clean-up efforts also serves to direct attribution of blame toward the culprit brand rather than dispersing attribution amongst various companies in the industry.

Many of these same narrative structures frame news reports of the BP Gulf disaster but in a way that conveys a greater sense of urgency and imminent crisis as the quantity of oil is not discrete, but continues to "spew" or "gush" from the broken well. As one article reports:

> The ultimate solution to stop the flow of oil and gas from the well is to drill a relief well, a process that takes about three months. We obviously wanted to minimize or stop the flow of oil and gas into the Gulf long before that. So we readied a multifaceted strategy, featuring a series of technological approaches to be deployed in parallel and in sequence. These included a large containment dome that could not be successfully deployed several weeks ago, the riser insertion tube tool (RITT) that was attached with partial success, and the "top kill" and "junk shot" approaches we tried over several days and eventually abandoned. (*Wall Street Journal*, June 4, 2010)

In comparison to the Exxon Valdez case, the BP Gulf disaster's longer period of uncontrolled spillage—and the leaks' unprecedented volume and pace—were material conditions that could have undermined the ideological capacity of these narratives to contain anxieties over systemic risks. However, the out-of-control nature of the damaged well instead amplified the heroic subtext of the disaster myth, while casting the coastal regions and wetlands as the pure nature under threat.

Per this later point, news coverage of the BP spill often adopted a proportionality logic that reproduced, albeit in more subtle ways, BP Tony Hayward's PR-minded proclamation that the BP spill was "relatively tiny" compared to "the very big ocean" (*New York Times*, June 6, 2010). Through this logic, the oil spilling into the vast region of the Gulf waters—a metaphoric battle already lost—could be cast as a relatively minor transgression of nature's purity whereas the more significant battle would be to prevent the oil from reaching the coastal regions. Accordingly, public discourse concerning the BP disaster over time began to center on the quest to tame the well before its out-of-control oil flows would overwhelm the barriers erected to protect the fragile Gulf coast. Technology, and those who deployed it, became the heroic characters in this reconfigured disaster myth.

Over the course of the news cycle, the technological details of cleaning up or stopping the oil spillage become a narrative focal point in the news media coverage. For example, articles describe advanced "skimmers" (*USA Today*, May 10, 2010), containment domes (*Wall Street Journal*, May 5, 2010), dispersants (*New York Times*, April 5, 1989,

This content downloaded from
78.192.100.106 on Mon, 08 May 2023 10:51:25 +00:00
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

**FIGURE 6**

VISUAL RHETORIC OF SEGREGATION

May 3, 2010), and, most crucially in the case of BP, images of robots deep below the surface (fig. 7). After three months, the national news media declared the triumph of technology when engineers were able to effectively cap the damaged well (*New York Times*, July 16, 2010). Thus, the segregation narrative works to ideologically manage the critical implications of grotesque realism by shifting attention to the processes and actions through which expert systems, and the institutional actors who control them, reassert control and order over transgressive oil spills. Drawing from already naturalized ideas of technological power, anxieties about a lasting breach between purity and filth could be subsumed

This content downloaded from
78.192.100.106 on Mon, 08 May 2023 10:51:25 +00:00
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

**FIGURE 7**

TECHNOLOGICAL TRIUMPH IN THE BP GULF OIL SPILL

SOURCE.—Associated Press, June 10, 2010.

within a dominant modernist narrative promising that technological acumen can conquer the unpredictability of nature (Kozinets 2008).

*Exception.* Narratives of exception portray oil spill disasters as the consequence of irresponsible and even unconscionable deviations from standard practices or a tragic cascade of random events and breakdowns whose co-occurrences defied all probabilities. Exception narratives presume a "normal" state of the world in which oil extraction is safe, regulated, and well-monitored, and depict major oil spills as an aberration, resulting from human or technological error. For example, in the case of the BP oil spill, one article reports: "The root of the problem appears to be a towering stack of heavy equipment 5,000 feet below the surface of the gulf known as a blowout preventer. It is a steel-framed stack of valves, rams, housings, tanks and hydraulic tubing that is designed to seal the well quickly in the event of a burst of pressure. It did not work when the Deepwater Horizon oil rig exploded" (*New York Times*, May 3, 2010).

The "problem" described in this article is localized to the "blowout preventer," the network of "valves, rams, and housing" that failed to prevent a larger spill, which we see diagrammed in visual coverage (Grondahl et al. 2010). Within the exception narrative, the cause of the spill is ascribed to a faulty mechanism within an otherwise well-designed system of control. This narrative also delimits institutional accountability for the accident by implying that responsibility lies with those who had direct control over the faulty blow-out valve somewhere in the process of its design, construction, installation, or routine inspection. In contrast, more systemic definitions of accountability, which would question underlying risk society calculations, are elided through this tacit ideological legitimation of the precrisis status quo. In this way, the exception narrative directs cultural attention away from the idea that the system's routine functioning carries a degree of uncertainty that defies conventional risk society calculations.

While news coverage of the BP spill highlights technological exceptions, the Exxon Valdez version of the exception narrative places the cultural spotlight on human error. The clear villain of the story is the captain of the tanker, Joseph Hazelwood. Captain Hazelwood was reported to be below deck at the time of the accident, leaving the vessel in the hands of a third mate. Upon rescue, Hazelwood was found to have a blood alcohol level of .061%, and was missing for several days after the accident (*New York Times*, March 27, 1989). One article reports: "Exxon also declined to comment on its procedures for checking ship officers' personal habits. But Arthur McKenzie, director of the Tanker Advisory Center, said Exxon checks the background of new employees and watches present employees very closely.

This content downloaded from
78.192.100.106 on Mon, 08 May 2023 10:51:25 +00:00
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

'But you can always have something slip through, whether it's alcohol or drugs,' said Mr. McKenzie, a 40-year veteran of Exxon" (*Wall Street Journal*, March 29, 1989).

Thus, an analogous narrative relationship can be seen between the mechanical failure profiled in the BP coverage and the alcoholic captain at the helm of the Exxon Valdez, as both are represented as exceptional errors. Thus, Captain Hazelwood's irresponsible use of alcohol is framed as an accident-inducing deviation that inadvertently "[slipped] through" the cracks of an otherwise reliable system for containing accidents and monitoring employees. By identifying and correcting (or punishing) this source of failure, the implication is that faith in the system could also be restored. In the visual rhetoric of Exxon Valdez disaster, Captain Hazelwood became the crucial symbol of rectified failure as he is pictured being arraigned in court, berated at news conferences, and transported to and from jail (4% of Exxon photographs). Whereas the BP exception narrative calls attention to an unexpected mechanical failure in the system, the Exxon Valdez disaster places primary responsibility on the shoulders of the inebriated captain and minimizes the role of technological failures, though one article reports that the worst consequences of the accident could have been avoided if the tanker had been equipped with the so-called double hull design (*New York Times*, May 15, 1989). However, the attribution of personal irresponsibility and incompetence, rather than a cost-saving decision about the design of Exxon's tanker fleet, remained the dominant explanatory motif in the public discourse. For example, there was a positive correlation for the co-occurrence between the exception narrative and individuals (such as the captain) in the articles about Exxon, but not for BP ($r_{\text{excindvEx}} = .227$, $p < .01$ vs. $r_{\text{excindvBP}} = -.01$, NS). Conversely, there was a positive correlation between the exception narrative and technology language in the articles about BP, but not in those about Exxon ($r_{\text{exctechEx}} = -.024$, NS vs. $r_{\text{exctechBP}} = .149$, $p < .01$).

When confronted by the grotesque realism of major oil spills, per the Bakhtinian thesis, public discourse does occasionally address the question of whether such accidents are due to inherent systemic risks. As the following press conference exchange between a *USA Today* reporter and the then Lieutenant Governor of Alaska Steve McAlpine illustrates, the exception narrative is well-suited for deflecting such systemic considerations by focusing on the particularities of the events that precipitated the disaster:

> USA Today: Many people have said the spill was inevitable. Do you agree?
>
> McAlpine: It wasn't inevitable. To say it was inevitable is to say that the bombing of the Pan Am flight—the crash in Scotland—was inevitable. No one I have talked to can imagine a trained mariner putting a 980-foot vessel loaded with a million barrels of crude oil up on Bligh Reef, the most obvious hazard in all of Prince William Sound. No kid borrows his daddy's motorboat and goes fishing down the sound who isn't aware that Bligh Reef is there and the dangers that it imposes. So, to say that it's inevitable is completely off the mark.
>
> USA Today: So you blame human error?
>
> McAlpine: This involves such a calamity of human error that it's almost inconceivable that the event took place in the first place. They've got state-of-the-art tracking capability, state-of-the-art communications, state-of-the-art on-board instrumentation. It shouldn't have occurred. (*USA Today*, April 11, 1989)

The material reality of a major oil spill disaster unsettles, in myriad ways, the cultural status quo under which dematerializing risk society discourses can be authoritatively expressed in a naturalized and unproblematic way. Confronted by this disruption while speaking in his official capacity, McAlpine reaffirms trust in the expert systems designed to control the risks of oil transportation through a nexus of tracking, communication, and instrumentation devices. In McAlpine's technotopian (Kozinets 2008) framing, technology is a powerful tool that enables humanity to assert control over the materiality and unruliness of nature, placing it in the service of more abstract goals and ideals. This rhetorical gloss functions to reassert the besieged symbolic boundary between the productive and enriching flows of global capitalism and the destructive, mucilaginous flows of uncontained petroleum. Through this ideological formulation, the prospect that the system of control may harbor inherent risks and dangers—that is, the disconcerting idea that such catastrophic breakdowns are inevitable—can be deflected by appeal to the random vicissitudes of human error and the dissolute taint of irresponsibility and incompetence.

In both the Exxon Valdez and BP cases, those speaking from positions of institutional authority were predisposed toward exception narratives that represented the disasters as aberrations respectively embodied in the Exxon Valdez's alcoholic captain or the Deepwater Horizon's faulty blowout preventer. These exception narratives delimit the risk contingencies to a preventable set of localized conditions, rather than being seen as endogenous properties of the larger network of actors involved in fossil fuel extraction. Just as generals are always fighting the last war, exception narratives tout preventive measures tailored to the last oil spill disaster.

*Reprobation and Restoration.* Narratives of exception explain the proximate cause of the disaster in meticulous detail. The cast of characters is defined, a series of causal events are recounted, and blame is ascribed to particular actors or specific technological components that were improperly monitored, be it a drunken captain or a faulty blowout preventer. After this narrative has set the dramatic stage, reprobation and restoration narratives then take hold, the former detailing that penalties will be assessed to the culprit brand and the latter describing how the resulting resources will be used to restore the environment to its preaccident state. This narrative couplet of reprobation and restoration provides the denouement or sense of resolution (Celsi, Rose,

This content downloaded from
78.192.100.106 on Mon, 08 May 2023 10:51:25 +00:00
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

and Leigh 1993), in the dramatic structure of disaster myth, thereby facilitating an experience of cathartic release for the audience following the unfolding events of the disaster.

Reprobation takes the form of elaborate stories that direct attention toward the exacting of punishment and repayment, with political authorities often making impassioned pledges to the general public that all steps will be taken to hold the culpable companies fully liable for their malfeasance. For example, one article reports, "Speaking to reporters in the rain in Venice, La., after talking with response teams that have amassed on the coast to try to stem the tide of oil lapping the shoreline, Mr. Obama vowed that the government would keep up the pressure on BP. . . . The president again reiterated that American taxpayers would not foot the bill. 'BP is responsible for this leak—BP will be paying the bill,' Mr. Obama said" (*New York Times*, May 3, 2010). As a structure of ideological containment, reprobation narratives have much the same effect as exception narratives; they focus attention on one faulty node in the broader organizational network rather than on the system as a whole. However, reprobation stories tend to be more elaborate and more generalized, meticulously documenting the precedents, demands, legal strategies, and major points of conflict in the process of attaining justice.

The story of reprobation is also told through images of court proceedings and hearings (5% of Exxon photographs, 23% of BP photographs; fig. 8). These proceedings visually depict brand-centric "culprits," representatives of companies and others involved in regulatory oversight, in the proverbial hot seat, answering questions and seated at tables often below demanding inquisitors who are leading the government hearings. Similarly, company representatives are shown being hounded by reporters as they enter and leave courtrooms. Such images tell the story of public scrutiny and bureaucratic oversight, a key component to the restoration of legitimacy (Weber 1922/1978). In concert with news reporting, these images detail the bureaucratic steps taken to punish designated wrongdoers, an apparatus key to the enactment of retributive justice and the idea that punishment proportionate to a crime can restore balance and thus fulfill a sense of societal fairness (Rawls 1999). These images instill a publically viewable sense that the appropriate parties have been chastened through bureaucratic and legal processes.

The drama and intricacy of the initial efforts to mitigate the damage of the accident through technical controls provided a media friendly focus for narratives of purifying segregation. Similarly, the complexities of legal maneuvering and estimates of reparation damages tend to assume a dominant role in stories of reprobation:

> A Federal jury in Anchorage yesterday ordered the Exxon Corporation to pay $5 billion in punitive damages to about 34,000 fishermen and other Alaskans who said they were harmed by the Exxon Valdez oil spill more than five years ago. . . . The 11-member jury also ordered the former captain of the Exxon Valdez, Joseph J. Hazelwood, to pay $5,000 in punitive damages. . . . Patrick Lynch . . . one of Exxon's lead trial lawyers, said the verdict would fuel debate about the fairness of huge punitive damages. "I think it's a common experience in the law right now that punitive damage awards by juries are a problem, because it is difficult to give a jury meaningful standards to determine in money what will constitute punishment or deterrence," said Mr. Lynch, noting that Exxon had already spent $3.4 billion cleaning up Prince William Sound in Alaska and taking other measures to respond to the Valdez spill. (*New York Times*, September 17, 1994).

The thematic undercurrent of this news report is the ambiguity and uncertainty posed by the task of determining a sufficient level of punishment. The reprobation narrative maps the broader problem of assessing systemic risks, whose long-term material economic and ecological costs of accidents are difficult to calculate. Accordingly, these calculations are framed by ideological discourses that represent who does or does not have legitimate claims, how expansive the sphere of culpability should be, and how much economic compensation is warranted. Nonetheless, the unquestioned assumption in these narratives of reprobation—even those that call attention to some of the underlying ambiguities—is that punitive fines can be used to deter future accidents. As illustrated by the preceding quotation, the segregation efforts depicted in the first narrative also function as exculpating evidence in the broader cultural branding story. The idea is that once debt has been repaid, the Exxon brand can legitimately reenter the trustworthy network of norms and institutions governing fossil fuel production and distribution. Ironically, the disaster myth that initially censures the transgressive brand subsequently helps to reintegrate it into status quo system of structural imperatives that demand trust from consumers.

The templates for legal liability established in the Exxon case, as in the quotation above, then resurfaced almost immediately in the case of BP (*New York Times*, April 30, 2010; *USA Today*, May 4, 2010); 48% of the Exxon coverage contained discussion of legal processes and procedures (vs. 28% for BP; $z = 8.00$, $p < .001$). Much of this coverage concerned the unfolding processes for assessing legal liability and compensation to fishermen and Native American groups and for funding an account to pay for cleanup not just for the Exxon spill but for other future spills as well. As one article reports:

> The fund was set up by Congress in 1986 but not financed until after the Exxon Valdez ran aground in Alaska in 1989. In exchange for the limits on liability, the Oil Pollution Act of 1990 imposed a tax on oil companies, currently 8 cents for every barrel they produce in this country or import. . . . The result is a rainy-day fund, which over the years has been used mostly for spills that exceed the liability caps by relatively small amounts. . . . The money is also used to prepare for spills, including anticipatory measures like stockpiling oil containment booms. And Congress can use money from the fund to reimburse the Coast Guard and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration for their spill-related expenses. "The idea behind creating it was that we wouldn't have to wait on money to clean up an oil spill," said Michael

This content downloaded from
78.192.100.106 on Mon, 08 May 2023 10:51:25 +00:00
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

**FIGURE 8**

BUREAUCRATIC FORMS REPROBATION

This content downloaded from
78.192.100.106 on Mon, 08 May 2023 10:51:25 +00:00
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

> C. LeVine, the Pacific senior counsel for Oceana, an environmental group. (*New York Times*, May 2, 2010)

This expression of the reprobation narrative implies that risk may be built in to the price of oil through a corporate tax to fund cleanup and restoration efforts in the event of a spill. The Exxon oil spill set templates, both legal and cultural, for the representation and resolution of an oil spill in news media coverage of the BP spill. The legal recompenses established in litigation over the Exxon Valdez spill enabled fairly swift resolution to questions of liability in the case of BP. Importantly, this narrative historically links the Exxon Valdez and BP spills in terms of legal precedents, rather than any consideration of regulatory failures or underlying systemic risks.

Although the reprobation narrative suggests a sense of moral order will be restored through the punishment of responsible parties, it does not directly address the risk society anxieties sparked by the prospect of lasting environmental damage. This form of ideological containment is constituted through tales of restoration. Whereas reprobation focuses on punishment for wrongdoing, restoration focuses on compensation, on righting wrongs, and thus on restoring justice. Often, restoration takes the form of money allocated to pay third parties to restore the environment, and many articles covered payments of restitution to harmed fishermen and locals (e.g., *New York Times*, July 4, 2010; *USA Today*, December 21, 2010). However, one taken-for-granted aspect of restoration narratives is the idea that restoration of the environment is economically feasible.

In the years following the Exxon and BP disasters, narratives propagated by local advocacy and environmental watchdog groups reported on signs of lasting environmental damage. By challenging the viability of ecological restoration in the aftermath of major oil spill disasters, these news media expressions of grotesque realism function as potentially destabilizing countermemories (Foucault 1977)—that is, subjugated or marginalized viewpoints that diverge from official histories and other culturally dominant narratives (also Lipsitz 1990; Medina 2011). While having the potential to raise anxieties over systemic risk, such countermemories are also ideologically contained by the more widely diffused restoration narratives in the mainstream news media.

Restoration narratives often recast previous ecological incidents in a positive light, appealing to the regenerative powers of nature, a Romantic myth that has broad cultural resonance (Giesler 2012; Thompson 2004). For example, a report on the aftermath of the Exxon Valdez disaster states, "How profound or long-lasting the damage will be to the environment or to local fishermen is impossible to predict. Moreover, in many spills, ecosystems have proven extraordinarily resilient after such shocks. And, depending on tidal flows, much of the crude could be washed out to sea, dissolving the spill's impact" (*Wall Street Journal*, March 28, 1989). While acknowledging the uncertainty of calculating the spill's full damage, the *Wall Street Journal* simultaneously corrals those concerns by appealing to nature's extraordinary resiliency. Tacitly leveraging the nature versus civilization distinction, the narrative suggests that the fragile and threatened areas lie in the immediate coastal regions where fishing, tourism, commerce, and other human actions are located. In contrast, the vast expanse of the sea is represented as the resilient force that can magically dissolve its impact and quite literally erase the consequence of the spill.

Two decades later, this same narrative emerged in coverage of the BP disaster though it was couched in a more cautionary tone indicative of a greater risk society awareness of the ever increasing toxic burden humanity asks nature to carry: "When tankers sunk in the gulf during World War II and coated Grand Isle in oil, waves eventually washed the beaches clean. The gulf again will have to clean up and restore life as we, like Victor Frankenstein, have proved ourselves inadequate to the task. But we may not be around this time to see what that new life will look like. And in the meantime we should not exploit or even take for granted the gulf's restorative nature" (*New York Times*, July 11, 2010).

Through its mélange of metaphors, this news report grapples with the increasingly complicated and conflicted cultural understanding of the relationship between oil spill disasters and the ecological system. As with the preceding narrative, a mythic appeal is made to nature's restorative power, but the nature-humanity duality is further articulated through the Frankenstein's monster trope. The direct implication is that humanity lacks the power to restore the damaged ecosystem; moreover, it also harbors a veiled suggestion that humanity's hubris is creating a monster that defies our efforts to control its actions and effects. Yet, the destabilizing critique of irrevocable environmental contamination subtly raised by this (mixed) metaphor is immediately contained by reference to nature's own restorative power. The narrative portrays nature as an agentic and, indeed maternal, force that cleans up after humanity's industrial messes. Whereas the 1989 version of this narrative represented Mother Nature as having an inexhaustible restorative capacity, the more contemporary expression is qualified by a clear sense of ecological limits and worrisome prospects of broader and lasting ecosystem degradation. Nonetheless, these challenging implications are softened by the admonition to not take nature's restorative power for granted, which implies that nature will continue to take care of us—so long as humanity pays proper penance for its transgressions.

## From Boundary Conditions to Articulations

We have argued that disaster myths are one noteworthy discursive structure that helps to reestablish consumer culture's status quo trust in expert systems in the wake of potentially disruptive crisis events. One methodological question raised by this analysis is that of boundary conditions; that is, when is the disaster myth narrative not likely to ideologically contain critique? In the most basic sense, an explication of boundary conditions would require an ex-

This content downloaded from
78.192.100.106 on Mon, 08 May 2023 10:51:25 +00:00
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

tensive analysis of the cultural branding of various industrial accidents, including those not related to fossil fuel extraction such as the Union Carbide/Bhopal disaster of 1984 or the Fukushima nuclear power accident of 2013. While such an account would be more appropriate to a book-length treatment than a single journal article aiming to identify this ideological effect, we can glean some basic insights from one key comparative case: the Three Mile Island nuclear meltdown of 1979.

While media coverage of this disruptive event evinced many of the same disaster myth characteristics—an emphasis on faulty components within a presumably fail-safe system, human errors, and heroic technological interventions to resolve the crisis—the accident precipitated a public backlash (Gamson and Modigliani 1989) and provoked significant, prolonged reflexive doubt toward nuclear energy including massive reforms in the industry and its expert system of governance. As Behr (2009) observes, this industrial accident "stopped the U.S. nuclear power industry in its tracks" for over 30 years, as no nuclear power plants have been commissioned or completed since (Behr 2009).

A confluence of cultural factors may have contributed to the inability of the disaster myth structure to contain reflexive doubts and profound cultural concerns over systemic risk. First and foremost, the Three Mile Island disaster occurred during the height of political tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union, when the threat of nuclear annihilation lurked in the cultural and political background. While not directly related to nuclear weapons, nuclear power plants tended to invoke associations to death and destruction (Weart 1988), and these generalized anxieties may have presented a persistent countervailing tendency to the placating function of disaster myths. Not to be overlooked is the fact that this accident co-occurred with the release of the *China Syndrome*, a film that dramatizes a catastrophic nuclear accident and heightened cultural anxieties over the dangers of radiation and nuclear winters. Given the backdrop of Cold War anxieties, this emotionally gripping cinematic representation of systemic risk inherent in the nuclear power industry may have proven to be a much more potent cultural branding device than the news media cycle, even if it did follow the disaster myth narrative.

This alignment between threats of cold war nuclear annihilation, a spectacularized cinematic representation of a nuclear accidence, and news reports on Three Mile Island meltdown amplifies what Schudson (1989) terms resonance, an alignment with the salient life concerns of an audience that may bolster a message's cultural circulation and integration. As a comparison case, we can consider the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant disaster of 2011, which is decades removed from Cold War anxieties and spatially distanced from American consumers, though its radioactive fallout has reached North American shores (Poladian 2014). This ongoing nuclear accident seems to have more closely followed the disaster myth narrative we found with the Exxon Valdez and BP Gulf disasters: an intense period of 24/7 crisis coverage followed by a closure narrative suggesting the crisis has been resolved despite scientific evidence to the contrary, with the latter information cast to the news media back pages and their cultural equivalents. Without these supporting political and cultural alignments, the Fukushima disaster precipitated fewer extended ideological disruptions than Three Mile Island.

Disaster myths are situated in a complex network of relationships, and hence their particular ideological consequences are contingent on these variegated sociohistorical and institutional configurations. For this reason, the conventional consumer research goal of identifying boundary conditions is at odds with a more macro-oriented level of analysis. The trope of boundary conditions implies that there is a conceptual space where disaster myths cease to operate, much like a cell phone that can no longer receive a signal in a no-coverage area. For an ideological analysis, a more appropriate conceptual metaphor is that of articulation (Hall 1980; Kozinets 2008), which explores the ways in which different discourses, meanings, and practices become linked together in a given institutional setting to create a particular cultural and ideological formation. However, to recognize how different cultural discourses intersect and create contextually nuanced meanings, it is also necessary to first tease out these distinctive discursive threads, such as the disaster myth and its ideological linkages to structural imperatives to trust and systemic risks.

# DISCUSSION

## Disaster Myth and the Process of Ideological Containment

Oil spill disaster myths emerge at the intersection of several significant discursive and institutional influences: the role of national news media in shaping public discourse; the complex array of institutional authorities and sociotechnological systems charged with assessing, managing, and distributing systemic risks; structural imperatives for consumers to place de facto trust in these expert systems; the material realities and ecological consequences of fossil fuel production that perpetually threaten to taint the venerated neoliberal image of "global flows" with meanings of contamination and degradation; and, last but not least, the grotesque realist media portrayals that arise when the systems designed to control these material risks catastrophically fail.

By comparatively analyzing news media coverage of two iconic oil spills, we find the stories in the immediate aftermath of the spills initially direct cultural attention toward the material environmental and economic devastation wrought by these disasters. These postindustrial grotesque realist representations harbor the potential to destabilize status quo trust in the expert systems that govern fossil fuel production by raising collective awareness of systemic risks that lurk in off-shore oil drilling and more broadly in the carbon-dependent economy. As news coverage of oil spill disasters develops over the course of the crisis, however, these destabilizing implications are ideologically contained by an emergent disaster myth.

This content downloaded from
78.192.100.106 on Mon, 08 May 2023 10:51:25 +00:00
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

**FIGURE 9**

IDEOLOGICAL CIRCUIT OF BRAND-CENTRIC DISASTER MYTHS

As our analysis highlights, disaster myths are formed by a constellation of narratives—purifying segregation, exception, reprobation, and restoration—that, in different ways, rhetorically assuage cultural concerns that major oil spills may be indicative of systemic risk. We further suggest that the power of disaster myths to shape public discourse emanates from their alignment with structural imperatives for consumers to place de facto trust in the expert systems that govern much of their everyday lives, a trust largely incompatible with anxieties over systemic risks. The oil spill disaster myth that is forged and communicated through news media coverage—and that draws from an intricate network of ideological and mythological narratives not directly related to the phenomenon of oil spills per se—frames public discourse in terms that help to restore status quo trust in experts systems. While other readings and interpretations of a text are always possible, as indicated by the rich reader-response tradition in consumer research (Scott 1994a), we found ample textual and visual support for one possible interpretation, namely, that the circulation of these narratives foreclosed the ideological challenges posed by oil spill disasters. Drawing from literary theory, we find that disaster myths encompass two discernible literary motifs—grotesque realism (Bakhtin 1984) and the Romanticization of nature (Arnould, Price, and Tierney 1998; Canniford and Shankar 2013; Cronon 1996)—that alternatively unsettle trust in expert systems and offer the cultural resources for restoration.

These relationships are visually summarized in figure 9. Beginning at the bottom of the diagram, we have a status quo condition where trust in expert systems is taken for granted. These can be seen as the periods of renaturalized equilibrium that exist between iconic oil spill disasters. The first period of equilibrium is from 1979 (the time of Ixtoc oil spill disaster in the Gulf Mexico) to the 1989 Exxon Valdez spill; the second is between the Exxon Valdez spill and the BP disaster of 2010. Owing to their catastrophic scale, these potentially disruptive events are quickly incorporated into the 24/7 crisis news cycle. Early reports provide graphic accounts of the damage created by the accidents through a narrative format we have characterized as post-industrial grotesque realism, a genre that calls attention to the otherwise seldom discussed systemic risks manifest in fossil fuel extraction. These disruptive events pose an ideological contradiction to the structural imperatives for consumers to place trust in expert systems. Thus, the previously noted return to the cultural status quo in the aftermath of such disasters—a pattern often characterized as oil spill amnesia—raises the question of how such trust in expert systems is restored in the face of a disruptive event. We have argued that the process of reestablishing trust is integral to the cultural branding of oil spill disasters and its ideological consequence, quelling cultural anxieties over uncontrolled or miscalculated levels of systemic risk.

Our analysis of oil spill disaster myths has illuminated ideological parallels between more microlevel expressions of consumer culture and their broader macrolevel ideological consequences, which in this case contribute to the reestablishment of trust in expert systems. By *parallel*, we simply mean that microlevel processes, such as consumers' therapeutic desires to reduce feelings of anxiety or a particular cultural branding strategy, can have a synergistic alignment with higher-order macrostructures, such as structural imperatives to trust in expert systems. This cultural and institutional level thereby produces meanings and effects related to and supported by, but not reducible to, the microprocesses. Cultural narratives may, in fact, provide the resources for assuaging doubts on the microlevel, but the macrolevel

This content downloaded from
78.192.100.106 on Mon, 08 May 2023 10:51:25 +00:00
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

institutional structures create the ideological demand for consumers to finds way to reestablish trust in the disrupted status quo and its expert systems. In the following sections, we further elaborate on four key ideological parallels related to (1) consumers' just world coping mechanisms (Wilson and Darke 2012), (2) the Romantic construction of nature that pervades many domains of consumer culture (Arnould and Price 1993; Canniford and Shankar 2013), (3) cultural branding (Holt and Cameron 2012), and (4) what can be characterized as the institutional stickiness or ideological lock-in (Holt 2012) of unsustainable consumption practices.

## Just World Coping

The narrative arc of the disaster myth discursively produces a sense of closure that the crisis has been resolved and that the culpable parties have been identified and disciplined through narratives of reprobation and restoration. Not only does this mythic narrative help to restore trust in the expert systems; it also reinforces and affirms consumers' tendency to interpret potentially problematic relations with marketing agents through the interpretive lens of "just world coping." Wilson and Darke (2012, 616) define just world coping as "the belief that the world is a benevolent and just place, which thereby bolsters or restores their trust in marketing agents." By detailing the legal and financial repercussions in public discourse, the reprobation and restoration narratives rebuild consumer trust in expert systems by offering assurances that justice has been meted out.

While our data does not allow us to tease out direct connections between the macrolevel expressions of disaster myths and the microlevel manifestations of consumers' just world coping inferences, we can discuss some implications that exist between these two levels of analysis. As Wilson and Darke (2012, 624) discuss, consumers tend to abandon rationales based on just world coping assumptions when they suspect that marketing agents harbor obvious ulterior motives: "consumers who hold a strong BJW [belief in just world] are not gullible dupes who always trust marketers but rather seem to use just world coping up to a point . . . Consumers seek to strike a balance between the goal of feeling secure and any clear concerns that the source should not be trusted." When we expand the scope of just world coping rationales to consumers' perceptions of the risks inherent to complex and interlinked systems (Beck 1999), we see that the awareness of systemic risk is analogous to the role that ulterior motives play in undermining dyadic trust relations. That is, consumer concerns that a crisis has been caused by unrecognized or unacknowledged systemic risk—a prospect raised by postindustrial grotesque realist accounts of oil spill disasters—can spark reflexive doubt toward the trustworthiness of the experts, institutional authorities, and technological systems charged with evaluating, monitoring, and controlling the systems in question. By containing anxieties over systemic risk, however, disaster myths create cultural conditions that are conducive for consumers to experience the state of optimistic trust that follows from just world coping.

On a related point, Wilson and Darke (2012) further posit that just world coping is an individual level trait that positively correlates with consumers' tendency to hold just world beliefs. While this conceptualization makes intuitive sense when applied to dyadic relationships—should I trust that this salesperson has my best interests in mind?—the dynamics of just world coping become more complex when attention turns to the institutional backdrop of consumers' everyday lives. Whether trusting that one will not be electrocuted when plugging in a laptop or will not acquire a dangerous pathogen when consuming store-bought milk, consumers living in developed consumer societies have been culturally conditioned to place de facto trust in the institutional authorities that sanction the safety of these routine consumption practices. This structural imperative to trust is symbolically legitimated in myriad ways ranging from inspection certificates in elevators to the pasteurization labels on milk to the Underwriter Laboratories safety seal on electrical appliances.

Thus, institutional safeguards and affirmations present strong cultural inducements for consumers to act in ways that are consistent with just world beliefs and just world coping inferences. Once disrupted by the threat of systemic risk, this breached trust has to be proactively restored through some combination of institutional change and discursive myth making before a sense of crisis can be allayed. Disaster myths correspond to this discursive aspect and help to reconstitute a sense of trust in institutional authorities by ideologically containing cultural anxieties over systemic risk. Our proposition is consistent with prior consumer research indicating that a wide range of consumer perceptions—ranging from health risks (Chandran and Menon 2004) to perceptions of legitimacy (Humphreys and LaTour 2013)—are readily influenced by message framing effects. Accordingly, there is no a priori theoretical reason to assume that just world beliefs would be immune to such message framing influences. Whereas Wilson and Darke (2012) conceptualize belief in a just world as an individual difference variable, our research raises the possibility that just world beliefs are an interpretive orientation that can be heightened or assuaged according to cultural context.

Our findings further suggest that naturalized cultural myths can frame the ways that consumers interpret and then adjudicate salient moral issues (Haidt 2001). The configuration of disaster myth, and in particular its components of reprobation and restoration, makes moral justifications based on just world thinking readily available as sense-making devices for attributing blame and causality to key institutional actors, rather than systemic risks, thereby allowing for an anxiety-reducing sense of closure. In sum, when consumers have to evaluate their susceptibility to systemic risks, just world coping beliefs are not only institutionalized in everyday consumption practices but are also reinforced—and restored—through public discourse about the crisis moments when institutional safeguards and expert systems appear most suspect. In this regard, our findings dovetail with recent findings in comparative anthropology and behavioral

This content downloaded from
78.192.100.106 on Mon, 08 May 2023 10:51:25 +00:00
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

economics that suggest that many cognitive traits—ranging from visual perception to economic reasoning and perceptions of fairness—are contingent on the constellations of cultural and environmental influences that shape the social practices and collective outlooks of those in a given society (Henrich, Heine, and Norenzayan 2010).

Recognizing this ideological parallel further extends research on the cultural shaping of consumer cognition (Fischer, Otnes, and Tuncay 2007; Thompson 2005; van Laer et al. 2014; Humphreys and LaTour 2013). These studies have shown that consumers' goal striving behavior, perceptions of legitimacy, risk perceptions, and tendencies to be transported by narratives are contingent on a nexus of cultural meanings and socioculturally grounded predispositions. However, these theorizations stop short of considering how these culturally embedded cognitive tendencies also predispose consumer beliefs to resonate with ideological narratives like disaster myths that help to insulate status quo conditions from disruptive events (Badiou 2006; Earley 2014) and, in a dialectic fashion, how this ideological consequence further reinforces these cognitive tendencies. In effect, the ideological circuit between mythic framing and cognitive predilections has a mutually affirming and self-perpetuating tendency that poses another barrier to activist efforts to transform product harm crises into disruptive events that could mobilize consumers to change particular consumption practice and rally for institutional changes.

## Romanticization of Nature

Our work illustrates another, previously unrecognized ideological function of the Romantic mythos in consumer culture. As previous work has shown, the Romantic mythos symbolically portrays nature as a pure and sacred domain distinct from civilization and technology (Arnould, Price, and Tierney 1998; Canniford and Shankar 2013; Cronon 1996; Giesler 2012; Thompson 2004). Romanticized nature is a Utopian construct (Cronon 1996), and this mythic ideal of natural purity and revitalizing enchantment has served different ideological functions in the course of American history. Most notably, numerous scholars have documented how the idealization of nature has functioned as a symbolic anodyne for the societal ills attributed to urbanization, the rise of bureaucratic work, suburban living, and myriad social disruptions of late modernity (Löwy and Sayre 2001). This Romantic framing also suggests that the purity of nature is under constant threat from contamination and further implies that humanity has a moral duty to protect this sacred space (Arnould, Price, and Tierney 1998; Cronon 1996).

We find that a Romantic construction of nature is central to the dramatic structure of oil spill disaster myths. Major oil spills raise the disconcerting specter of irreversible defilement. In the face of these crisis perceptions, disaster myths contain this disruptive implication by suggesting that nature itself can reestablish the symbolic boundary between purity and filth and quite literally dissolve the moral stain left by these human transgressions. The ideological message is that nature has the power to absolve humanity for its transgressions against these Utopian spaces. This moral and ecological absolution necessitates that the designated culprits pay penance and engage in rituals of purification, a demand fulfilled by the narratives of reprobation and restoration.

Similar to our analysis, Cronon (1992, 1996) contends that the romantic bifurcation of nature and civilization, and its moral and aesthetic privileging of the former, is an ideological construct. For Cronon (1996), one important ideological effect of this duality is to naturalize everyday manifestations of pollution, habitat damage, and other forms of ecological degradation in urban and suburban areas, which are culturally coded as being outside of pristine nature. In the context of disaster myths, however, the ideological effect is subtly different. The Romantic construction of nature as a magical place of purity (and purifying power) creates a cultural predisposition to see spectacular moments of environmental pollution—as exemplified by oil spill disasters—as the pivotal moments of contamination. Thus, oil spill disasters become culturally coded as spectacular anomalies that paradoxically affirm that mythologized nature still exists in a robust, pure state.

This macrolevel ideological rendering also has a cultural analogue at the level of consumption practices and experiences. As discussed by Canniford and Shankar (2013, 1054), consumers can engage in so-called purifying practices "to hide the hybridity of nature and culture." Writing in the context of surfing culture, Canniford and Shankar suggest that surfers are continually confronted by circumstances that contravene their romantic idealizations of nature, such as realizations that seashores have been dramatically transformed by the forces of touristic development or the recognition that their surfing equipment and reliance on air travel are sources of environmental degradation. Through a range of purifying practices, however, surfers are able to assemble technologies, geographies, and discourses in ways that sequester these incongruities and allow them to experience a Romanticized construction of nature.

When prior consumer research is reconsidered in light of Canniford and Shankar's (2013) framework, we can see ample evidence that consumers engage in various purifying practices when immersed in other consumption contexts organized around the Romantic binaries of nature/civilization and purity/filth (Arnould and Price 1993; Belk and Costa 1998; Giesler 2012; Humphreys 2010b; Thompson 2004). In the context of corporate branding, for example, Wilk (2006, 316) notes that bottled water brands make astute use of text and imagery that signify cultural ideals of purity and healthfulness in their packaging: "the bottle is a reassurance that one small piece of nature has been protected from the hovering danger of chemicals and microorganisms." Per ritualistic consumption practices, Belk and Costa (1998, 232) discuss how participants in mountain rendezvous cling "to a romantic fiction" that they are authentically reenacting life in nineteenth-century trader camps but routinely violate these historical norms for reasons of "comfort and expediency," which in turn necessitates considerable interpretive

This content downloaded from
78.192.100.106 on Mon, 08 May 2023 10:51:25 +00:00
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

work to justify, excuse, or mask these deviations. In effect, these participants are seeking to purify their Romantic ideals of the mountain man's rugged, one-with-nature existence from the contaminating encroachments of modernity.

In light of this cultural pattern, we suggest that there is a symbiotic complementarity between the Romantic construction of nature manifest in disaster myths (and the corresponding logic of ideological containment) and the purifying practices that consumers use to insulate their Romantic ideals from symbolic and material threats. On the one hand, the expression of Romantic ideals and bifurcations in the authoritative statements of national news media reports and often quoted credentialed experts further naturalizes these Romantic ideals in public discourse. Conversely, consumers who have been deeply socialized in these Romantic ideals are culturally predisposed to find disaster myths' ideological appropriation of this Romantic construction of nature to be credible. Furthermore, consumers' tendencies to engage in purifying practices in order to sustain their Romantic ideals may also foster a cultural receptivity to the idea that corporate and government actors can also purify the nature despoiled by an oil spill.

## Cultural Branding

Our third point of structural synergy concerns the process of cultural branding and its ideological effects. Prior research on cultural branding has, first and foremost, highlighted the therapeutic and strategic aspects of brand narratives. This logic of analysis lends itself to questions of how brand strategists can assess the sociocultural contradictions facing their target market and create a resonant brand myth that not only allays these consumers' collective anxieties but also provides a more innovative (or less parasitic) cultural resource for consumer identity work (Holt and Cameron 2010). A second research stream building on cultural branding precepts seeks to garner insights into the ways that consumers' sociocultural position shapes their understanding and co-creative uses of brand meanings or branded social movements (e.g., Arsel and Thompson 2011; Avery 2012; Holt 2006, 2014; Holt and Thompson 2004; Kristensen, Boye, and Askegaard 2011; Luedicke, Thompson, and Giesler 2010; Ulver-Sneistrup, Askegaard, and Kristensen 2011). A third variation of the cultural branding logic explores how the broader cultural construction of brand meanings—and in particular the linkage of an iconic brand with a nexus of negative connotations and detrimental societal outcomes—can coalesce as a doppelgänger brand image that can undermine corporate-sponsored brand myths (Freund and Jacobi 2013; Giesler 2012; Thompson, Rindfleisch and Arsel 2006).

Our analysis extends this variegated cultural branding logic by exploring the broader sociocultural and ideological effects that arise from the cultural branding of oil spill disasters. In the most straightforward extension, disaster myth narratives expressed in news media can precipitate the formation and diffusion of a doppelgänger brand image or exacerbate an existing one. For example, the BP Gulf disaster elicited culturally widespread expressions of skepticism toward the credibility and authenticity of the company's $200 million "Beyond Petroleum" advertising campaign and its accompanying green starburst logo, which sought to associate the brand with ideals of sustainability, clean energy alternatives, and responsible ecological stewardship (Landman 2010). These circumstances lend themselves to immediate managerially oriented questions such as the impact this emergent doppelgänger brand image—BP as an irresponsible producer of dirty energy—might have on the brand's market and identity value as well as how these negative meanings could be sequestered from the brand image promoted by the sponsoring corporation (Giesler 2012).

However, at an ideologically parallel level, the cultural branding of oil spill disasters through the designation of culprit brand, such as Exxon or BP, also contributes to the ideological containment of anxieties over uncontrolled systemic risks. Our work suggests that while news media framing of an oil spill disaster may negatively impact the culprit brand's market value for some time after the disaster, it has the ideological effect of diverting cultural attention away from the industry-level systemic risks that been had highlighted by the postindustrial grotesque realist representations that initially marked the breach phase of the 24/7 crisis event news cycle. By helping to reestablish status quo trust in these expert systems and ultimately reducing pressures for regulatory reforms, the cultural branding of oil spill disasters helps the broader industry to weather the proverbial storm without making lasting and consequential changes in its operations. This ideological process can also create conditions conducive to the recovery of market value by the culprit brand, as evinced by BP's rapid recovery of its stock price value and brand reputation (Harris Interactive 2013; New York Stock Exchange 2013).

Here, we can draw an informative parallel to Schudson's (1984) analysis of advertising as a mode of capitalist realism. At the individual level, a firm views advertising as a persuasive form of marketing communication that aims to influence the attitudes and behaviors of those in a given target segment and, more broadly, to impact tangible market measures such as perceived brand equity, sales volume, or market share. As Schudson (1984) discusses, the institution of advertising also promotes an ideological vision of the good society that portrays consumption as a path to happiness and self-worth and further links these idealized portrayals to venerated cultural ideals of progress, optimism about the future, and emancipation from social and material constraints. From this macrolevel standpoint, the pragmatic marketing consequences of a given ad campaign are far less consequential than the aggregate ideological influence wielded by the institutionalized conventions of advertising. Even when an ad campaign does not produce a favorable shift in sales or consumer perceptions, it still reinforces the broader ideological frame of capitalist realism that in turn provides the necessary preconditions for the success of advertising in general. As applied to the cultural branding of disaster myths, the implication is that the designated culprit

This content downloaded from
78.192.100.106 on Mon, 08 May 2023 10:51:25 +00:00
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

brand—regardless of the microlevel reasons leading to that identification—may function as an ideological device helping to reestablish the status quo conditions that serve the economic and political interests of the brand as well as other key stakeholders in the institutional system.

Building on this idea, BP spent $93 million in advertising between April and July 2010—more than three times its baseline amount for those months (DuBois 2010). The vast majority of these additional marketing communication expenditures were directed at managing the brand image crisis created by the Gulf disaster. As documented by Muralidharan, Dillistone, Shin (2011), corrective action was the dominant motif in these advertising and other PR efforts. A key component of the corrective action story, along with providing economic assistance to the damaged communities, was restoring the damaged ecology through oil clean up and habitat repair. Evidence from social media and public opinion tracking studies, as well as the large number of cultural jamming parodies of BP's PR tactics, suggests that these corrective actions did not defuse public anger toward the company or insulate the company's brand image from being tarnished (Muralidharan, Dillistone, Shin 2011). While BP's primary strategic goals may not have been accomplished, its PR campaign ideologically dovetailed with the news media restoration narrative and thereby reinforced the disaster myth's logic of ideological containment. By channeling cultural attention toward BP, which, like Exxon, became the designated scapegoat brand, the restoration narrative narrowed the sphere of culpability, thereby exempting the broader oil industry and its conventional risk society assessments from more extensive critical scrutiny.

This ideological effect has further implications for consumer research on market construction and legitimacy. Prior work on the role of cultural discourses in the legitimation process has centered on the role of these discourses in legitimizing a new or previously questionable practice (Giesler 2012; Humphreys 2010b). In this research, we have examined another aspect of legitimacy, namely, the cultural forces that help to maintain the legitimacy of status quo consumption practices and marketplace structures even in the aftermath of profoundly problematizing events. As Johnson et al. (2006) note, legitimacy does not exist in perpetuity; institutions must continually adapt to withstand problematizing ideas and events in the environment. By studying the discursive processes surrounding oil spills, we find that the cultural legitimacy of the oil industry is paradoxically renewed through the mass-mediated disaster myths that arise in the aftermath of major oil spills. Previous research has found that particular narrative techniques based on inclusion—amplification, extension, and bridging—work to legitimize an industry or idea (Humphreys 2010a; Snow and Benford 1988). We find that a different set of narrative techniques based on a logic of ideological containment—separation, exception, reprobation, and restoration—equally work to maintain legitimacy of the industry in the face of grotesque realist accounts of deleterious material consequences and systemic risks.

## Institutional Stickiness and the *Dispositif* of Unsustainable Consumption Practices

Drawing from Foucault's (1977, 1979) conceptualization of power and discourse, we can further note that the legitimating power of disaster myths is grounded in a diffuse network of discursively aligned practices and norms. Foucault (1980, 194–95) characterized this loosely coupled but historically aligned network of heterogeneous actors, discourses, and institutional structures as the disciplinary apparatus or *dispositif*: "What I'm trying to pick out with this term is, firstly, a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions—in short, the said as much as the unsaid. Such are the elements of the apparatus. The apparatus itself is the system of relations that can be established between these elements. . . . Thus, a particular discourse can figure at one time as a means of justifying or masking a practice which itself remains silent, or as a secondary reinterpretation of this practice."

When naturalized understandings and cultural practices are challenged by problematizing narratives, this established network of discourses, interpretive conventions, and institutionalized and habituated social practices should exhibit varying degrees of adaptive robustness in the face of problematizing challenges. Rabinow and Dreyfus (1983, 109) characterize these heterogeneous but structurally compatible reactions as "strategies without strategists." That is, the actions and outlooks of heterogeneous actors across diverse sites display a tacit coordination because they are operating from a collectively shared understanding and situated within a common historical legacy of rules, regulations, and routines that reflect those understandings. The disaster myth forged and communicated through news media coverage, which draws from an intricate network of ideological and mythological narratives not directly related to the phenomenon of oil spills per se, is one discursive means through which the broader *dispositif* of the consumption-driven and fossil fuel economy is sustained even after its naturalized ideological status has been problematized by a crisis event.

In this vein, our analysis also has some noteworthy tangencies to the process of ideological lock-in that Holt (2012) identifies as a cultural foundation to many unsustainable consumption practices such as drinking bottled water. Holt defines ideological lock-in as the cultural meanings that shape consumers' taken-for-granted perceptions about the value provided by the consumption practice in question, the corresponding personal habits and cultural routines that embody these ideological meanings, and—last but not least—the institutional infrastructure materially linking these meanings and practices to marketplace and economic structures (i.e., the network of bottling plants, vending machines, and distribution channels that enable bottled water to be a routinized facet of everyday consumer culture and a profit-

This content downloaded from
78.192.100.106 on Mon, 08 May 2023 10:51:25 +00:00
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

generating and employment-producing sector of the economy).

The institutional conditions that produce ideological lock-in are highly contextualized and emerge from confluences of different events, cultural discourses, and institutional actors. Accordingly, strategic efforts to change these conditions need to be contextually nuanced and crafted through an assiduous institutional analysis, rather than relying on the application of abstract consumer value frameworks or other generalized explanations. As Holt (2012, 253) concludes, "the transformation process must aim at specific market ideologies, institutions, and practices, effective strategies must proceed market by market, rather than pursue an overarching shift in consumer society" (Holt 2012). To restate this idea, Holt argues for a logic of analysis in which researchers evaluate particular kinds of structural influences and institutional relations, along with their consequences, without seeking to develop an overarching set of theoretical propositions that would transcend these contextual conditions. Holt's conceptual move parallels Foucault's (1979) famed distinction between an analytics of power and a theory of power. Our proposals are similarly offered as an analytics of ideological containment rather than a nomothetic theory—that is, a perspective that sensitizes researchers to a set of structural influences that might otherwise go unrecognized and that provides a set of orienting concepts for delineating the specific assemblages of marketplace practices, cultural discourses, expert systems, and institutional imperatives that contextualize consumers' risk perceptions.

In terms of more pragmatic policy implications, our analysis of oil spill disaster myths revisits and revitalizes an often overlooked insight provided by Olshavesky and Granbois's (1979) iconoclastic argument that many consumption choices and practices do not involve calculated decisions: "How then does purchasing occur if not as a result of some type of decision process?" Their review identified a number of different paths, as they write, "Purchases can occur out of necessity; they can be derived from culturally-mandated lifestyles or from interlocked purchases; they can reflect preferences acquired in early childhood; they can result from simple conformity to group norms or from imitation of others" (98).

To restate Olshavesky and Granbois's (1979) observations in institutional terms, the prevailing institutional conditions make it far more likely consumers will simply default to certain consumption options or, via the influence of structural imperatives, utilize their interpretive resources and cognitive capacities in ways that ascribe legitimacy to status quo conventions, norms, and related path dependencies. Thus, when consumer researchers seek to explain why consumers fail to embrace sustainable lifestyle practices or to continue in unsustainable ones, we suggest they broaden their assumed loci of responsibility from individual-level preferences and decision-making processes (e.g., Kidwell, Farmer, and Hardesty 2013; White, MacDonnell, and Dahl 2011) to consider the broader ideological and institutional network that facilitates or impedes such consumer choices and practices.

## DATA COLLECTION INFORMATION

This project was initiated by the second author. The first author collected the textual data from the Factiva database with the help of two research assistants at Northwestern University in 2012 and again in 2013. The visual data was collected by the first author from the database of Associated Press photographs. The first author qualitatively analyzed these data and then quantitatively analyzed the data with the help of research assistants to develop and validate the dictionary. The second author acted as a synthesizer of this analysis throughout the process. The final analysis was jointly authored.

## APPENDIX

## NEWSPAPER ARTICLES CITED

*New York Times* (1989), "Unlicensed Mate Was in Charge of Ship That Hit Reef, Exxon Says," March 27, A.

*New York Times* (1989), "New Equipment Enables Alaska to Intensify Cleanup," April 3, A.

*New York Times* (1989), "Oil and Dirty Hands," April 5, A.

*New York Times* (1989), "A Split on the Value of 2-Hull Tankers," May 15, A.

*New York Times* (1990), "Exxon Valdez: The Spill, the Cleanup and the Charges," March 1, D.

*New York Times* (1990), "Legal Ripples of Spill Are Said to Distort Big Picture of Damage," May 1, C.

*New York Times* (1994), "Exxon Is Ordered to Pay $5 Billion for Alaska Spill," September 17, sec. 1, p. 1.

*New York Times* (2010), "Size of Spill in Gulf of Mexico Is Larger than Thought," April 29.

*New York Times* (2010), "Oil Spill's Blow to BP's Image May Eclipse Out-of-Pocket Costs," April 30.

*New York Times* (2010), "Set Aside in Case of Spills, Money May Help Pay Cleanup Costs," May 2, A31.

*New York Times* (2010), "President Warns of Wide Damage from Gulf Spill," May 3, A1.

*New York Times* (2010), "At Issue in Gulf: Who Was in Charge?," June 6.

*New York Times* (2010), "BP Temporarily Removes Containment Cap from Well," June 24, A19.

*New York Times* (2010), "The Latest on the Oil Spill," July 4, A14.

*New York Times* (2010), "Our Life, between Sea and Oil," July 11, Editorial Desk, 9.

*New York Times* (2010), "Day 86: The Latest on the Oil Spill," July 16.

*USA Today* (1989), "Oil Probe: 3rd Mate at Helm," March 27, A1.

*USA Today* (1989), "Topic: Cleaning Up the spill; We're Going to Hold Their Feet to the Fire," April 11, A11.

*USA Today* (1990), "Valdez Hopes for a 'Return to Normal,'" March 13, A1.

*USA Today* (2010), "Let's Keep Oil Spill in the Proper Perspective: As with Katrina, This Is a Serious Disaster; but Media Hype

This content downloaded from
78.192.100.106 on Mon, 08 May 2023 10:51:25 +00:00
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

and an Aversion to Offshore Drilling Shouldn't Skew Reality," May 4.
*USA Today* (2010), "100-Ton Dome Set Aside as BP Considers Its Next Move," May 10, A2.
*USA Today* (2010), "Gulf Residents Awash with Ingenuity; along Oil Spill's Trajectory, Many Frustrated Locals Hatch Own Plans to Save Their Backyard Costs," June 24, A13.
*USA Today* (2010), "Chief of BP Fund Sees Gulf Recovery; Says Future Better than First Expected," December 21, A1.
*Wall Street Journal* (1989), "Exxon Liability for Oil Spill May Grow Due to Crew Behavior, Cleanup Delays," March 28, J.
*Wall Street Journal* (1989), "Coast Guard Says It May Tighten Checks on Background of Licensed Ship Officers," March 29, J.
*Wall Street Journal* (2010), "Missing Workers Feared Dead as Gulf Rig Sinks—One of the Industry's Worst Disasters in Decades Occurred Days before BP Was Going to Disclose Significant Oil Find at Site," April 23.
*Wall Street Journal* (2010), "The Gulf Oil Spill; BP, under Pressure, Woos Congress," May 5, A4.
*Wall Street Journal* (2010), "What BP Is Doing about the Gulf Gusher," June 4, A19.

## REFERENCES

Alliance for Audited Media (2013), "Total Circulation for US Newspapers," http://abcas3.auditedmedia.com/ecirc/newstitlesearchus.asp.
Arnould, Eric J., and Linda L. Price (1993), "River Magic: Extraordinary Experience and the Extended Service Encounter," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 20 (June), 24–45.
Arnould, Eric, Linda L. Price, and Patrick Tierney (1998), "Communicative Staging of the Wilderness Servicescape," *Services Industries Journal*, 18 (July), 90–115.
Arnould, Eric J., and Craig J. Thompson (2005), "Consumer Culture Theory (CCT): Twenty Years of Research," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 31 (March), 868–82.
Arsel, Zeynep, and Craig Thompson (2011), "Demythologizing Consumption Practices: How Consumers Protect their Field-Dependent Capital from Devaluing Marketplace Myths," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 37 (February), 791–806.
Askegaard, Søren, and Jeppe Trolle Linnet (2011), "Towards an Epistemology of Consumer Culture Theory Phenomenology and the Context of Context," *Marketing Theory*, 11 (4), 381–404.
Avery, Jill (2012), "Defending the Markers of Masculinity: Consumer Resistance to Brand Gender-Bending," *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 29 (December), 322–36.
Badiou, Alain (2006), *Being and Event*, trans. Oliver Feltham, London: Continuum.
Bakhtin, Mikhail (1981), *The Dialogical Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, Austin: University of Texas Press.
——— (1984), *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Hélène Iswolsky, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
Barley, Stephen R., and Pamela S. Tolbert (1997), "Institutionalization and Structuration: Studying the Links between Action and Institution," *Organization Studies*, 18 (1), 93–117.
Barthes, Roland (1956), *Mythologies*, Paris: Éditions du Seuil.
Beck, Ulrich (1999), *World Risk Society*, Malden, MA: Blackwell.
——— (2009), *World at Risk*, Malden, MA: Polity.
Beck, Ulrich, Anthony Giddens, and Scott Lash (1994), *Reflexive Modernization: Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order*, Cambridge: Polity.
Behr, Peter (2009), "Three Mile Island Still Haunts U.S. Nuclear Industry," *New York Times*, http://www.nytimes.com/gwire/2009/03/27/27greenwire-three-mile-island-still-haunts-us-reactor-indu-10327.html?pagewanted=all.
Belk, Russell W., and Janeen Arnold Costa (1998), "The Mountain Myth: A Contemporary Consuming Fantasy," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 25 (December), 218–40.
Belk, Russell W., and Richard W. Pollay (1985), "Images of Ourselves: The Good Life in Twentieth Century Advertising," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 11 (March), 887–97.
Bell, Allan (1991), *The Language of News Media*, Oxford: Blackwell.
Bernthal, Matthew J., David Crockett, and Randall L. Rose (2005), "Credit Cards as Lifestyle Facilitators," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 32 (1), 130–45.
Best, Steven, and Douglas Kellner (2001), *The Postmodern Adventure: Science, Technology, and Cultural Studies at the Third Millennium*, New York: Guilford.
Broder, John M. (2011), "Americans Support Offshore Drilling, but Washington Wavers," http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/17/business/energy-environment/17drilling.html.
Canniford, Robin, and Avi Shankar (2013), "Purifying Practices: How Consumers Assemble Romantic Experiences of Nature," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 39 (5), 1051–69.
Celsi, Richard L., Randall L. Rose, and Thomas W. Leigh (1993), "An Exploration of High-Risk Leisure Consumption through Skydiving," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 1–23.
Chandran, Sucharita, and Geeta Menon (2004), "When a Day Means More than a Year: Effects of Temporal Framing on Judgments of Health Risk," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 31 (September), 375–89.
Corbin, Juliet M., and Anselm L. Strauss (2008), *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, Los Angeles: Sage.
Cronon, William (1992), *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West*, New York: Norton.
——— (1996), "The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," *Environmental History*, 1 (1), 7–28.
Deephouse, David L. (2000), "Media Reputation as a Strategic Resource: An Integration of Mass Communication and Resource-Based Theories," *Journal of Management*, 26 (6), 1091–1112.
DeFleur, Melvin L., Lucinda Davenport, Mary Cronin, and Margaret DeFleur (1992), "Audience Recall of News Stories Presented by Newspaper, Computer, Television and Radio," *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 69 (4), 1010–22.
Degeneffe, Dennis (2010), "Gulf Oil Spill Negatively Impacts Consumer Perceptions of the Safety of the U.S. Food Supply" (Consumer Food Safety/Defense Tracking Study), Food Industry Center Food Thought Blog, University of Minnesota, http://blog.lib.umn.edu/tfic/foodthought/2010/06/gulf-oil-spill-negatively-impacts-consumer-perceptions-of-the-safety-of-the-us-food-supply.html.
Devinney, Timothy, Pat Auger, and Giana M. Eckhardt (2010), *The Myth of the Ethical Consumer*, New York: Cambridge University Press.
Dixon, Darius (2012), "Poll: Support Rises for Offshore Drilling," *Politico*, http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0312/74185.html.
Doogan, Kevin (2009), *New Capitalism?: The Transformation of Work*, Malden, MA: Polity.
Douglas, Mary (1966), *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Con-*

This content downloaded from
78.192.100.106 on Mon, 08 May 2023 10:51:25 +00:00
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

*cepts of Pollution and Taboo*, New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Douglas, Mary, and Aaron Wildavsky (1983), *Risk and Culture: An Essay on the Selection of Technological and Environmental Dangers*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

Dreyfus, Herbert L., and Paul Rabinow (1983), *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

DuBois, Shelley (2010), "Update: BP's Advertising Budget during the Spill Neared $100 Million," http://money.cnn.com/2010/09/01/news/companies/BP_spill_advertising_costs.fortune/index.htm.

Earley, Amanda (2014), "Connecting Contexts: A Badiouian Epistemology for Consumer Culture Theory," *Marketing Theory*, 14 (1), 73–96.

*Economist* (2010), "In Deepwater," *Economist*, June 2, 2010, www.economist.com/node/16270972.

Environmental Protection Agency (2014), "Fish Consumption Advisories," http://water.epa.gov/scitech/swguidance/fishshellfish/fishadvisories/.

Ergun, Damla (2014), "Two-Thirds Back Keystone Pipeline; More See Jobs than Environmental Risk," http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/politics/2014/03/two-thirds-back-keystone-pipeline-more-see-jobs-than-environmental-risk/.

Fischer, Eileen, Cele Otnes, and Linda Tuncay (2007), "Pursuing Parenthood: Integrating Cultural and Cognitive Perspectives on Persistent Goal Striving," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 34 (December), 425–40.

Flowers, Rick, and Elaine Swan (2011), "'Eating at Us': Representations of Knowledge in the Activist Documentary Film *Food, Inc*.," *Studies in the Education of Adults*, 43 (2), 234–50.

Folkes, Valerie S. (1988), "The Availability Heuristic and Perceived Risk," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 15 (1), 13–23.

Fors-Andrée, Jeanette (2013), *Ansvar och skuldfrågor i en kris—om Findus och köttskandalen*, http://www.jeanettefors.se/.

Foster, Robert (2008), *Coca-Globalization: Following Soft Drinks from New York to New Guinea*, New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

Foucault, Michel (1977), *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

——— (1979), *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, New York: Vintage.

——— (1980), "Confessions of the Flesh," in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings*, ed. Colin Gordon, New York: Pantheon, 194–228.

Fountain, Henry (2010), "US Says BP Well Is Finally 'Dead,'" *New York Times*, September 19.

Freudenburg, William, and Robert Gramling (2011), *Blowout in the Gulf: The BP Oil Spill Disaster and the Future of Energy in America*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Freund, James, and Erik S. Jacobi (2013), "Revenge of the Brand Monsters: How Goldman Sachs' Doppelgänger Turned Monstrous," *Journal of Marketing Management*, 29 (1–2), 175–94.

Friedman, Thomas (2005), *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century*, New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux.

Fritz, Noah J., and David L. Altheide (1987), "The Mass Media and the Social Construction of the Missing Children Problem," *Sociological Quarterly*, 28 (4), 473–92.

Frosch, Dan, and Janet Roberts (2011), "Pipeline Spills Put Safeguards under Scrutiny," September 10, *New York Times*, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/10/business/energy-environment/agency-struggles-to-safeguard-pipeline-system.html?pagewanted=all.

Gallup (2010), "U.S. Economic Confidence Depressed in June," Gallup Economy, http://www.gallup.com/poll/141026/Economic-Confidence-Depressed-June.aspx.

Gamson, William A. (1992), *Talking Politics*, New York: Cambridge University Press.

Gamson, William A., and Andre Modigliani (1989), "Media Discourse and Public Opinion on Nuclear Power: A Constructionist Approach," *American Journal of Sociology*, 95 (1), 1–37.

Gao, Hongzhi, John G. Knight, Hongxia Zhang, Damien Mather, and Lay Peng Tan (2012), "Consumer Scapegoating during a Systemic Product-Harm Crisis," *Journal of Marketing Management*, 28 (11–12), 1270–90.

Gayle, Damien (2012), "How Attempts to Clear Up the Deepwater Horizon Spill May Have Made It Worse: Dispersant Chemicals Made Oil Penetrate Gulf Coast Beaches More Deeply," *Daily Mail*, November 30, http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-2241093/How-attempts-clear-Deepwater-Horizon-spill-WORSE.html.

Giddens, Anthony (1991), *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

——— (2003), *Runaway World: How Globalization Is Reshaping Our Lives*, New York: Routledge.

Giesler, Markus (2008), "Conflict and Compromise: Drama in Marketplace Evolution," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 34 (April), 739–53.

——— (2012), "How Doppelgänger Brand Images Influence the Market Creation Process: Longitudinal Insights from the Rise of Botox Cosmetic," *Journal of Marketing*, 76 (6), 55–68.

Giesler, Markus, and Ela Veresiu (2014), "Creating the Responsible Consumer: Moralistic Governance Regimes and Consumer Subjectivity," *Journal of Consumer Research*, forthcoming.

Goldin, Ian, and Tiffany Vogel (2010), "Global Governance and Systemic Risk in the 21st Century: Lessons from the Financial Crisis," *Global Policy*, 1 (1), 4–15.

Gordon, Kate, Jeffrey Buchanan, and Phillip Singerman (2011), "Beyond Recovery: Moving the Gulf Coast toward a Sustainable Future," Washington, DC: Oxfam America and the Center for American Progress, http://www.oxfamamerica.org/static/oa3/files/beyond-recovery.pdf

Graham, Bob, William K. Reilly, Frances G. Beinecke, Donald Boesch, Terry D. Garcia, Cherry A. Murray, and Frances Ulmer (National Commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon Spill and Offshore Drilling) (2011), *Deep Water: The Gulf Oil Disaster and the Future of Offshore Drilling—Report to the President*, http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/GPO-OILCOMMISSION/pdf/GPO-OILCOMMISSION.pdf.

Green, Laura (2010), "South Florida Seafood Restaurants Try to Calm Consumer Concerns about Oil Spill," *Palm Beach Post*, http://articles.sun-sentinel.com/2010-06-08/business/fl-oil-spill-seafood-origins-20100608_1_spill-south-florida-seafood-restaurants-oysters.

Griskevicius, Vladas, Joshua M. Tybur, and Bram Van den Bergh (2010), "Going Green to Be Seen: Status, Reputation, and Conspicuous Conservation," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 98 (3), 392–404.

Grondahl, Mika, Haeyoun Park, Graham Roberts, and Archie Tse (2010), "Critical Components in a Complex System," http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2010/06/21/us/20100621-bop.html.

This content downloaded from
78.192.100.106 on Mon, 08 May 2023 10:51:25 +00:00
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

Guthman, Julie (2003), "Fast Food/Organic Food: Reflexive Tastes and the Making of 'Yuppie Chow,'" *Social and Cultural Geography*, 4 (1), 45–58.

——— (2008), "Thinking inside the Neoliberal Box: The Micropolitics of Agro-food Philanthropy," *Geoforum*, 39 (May), 1241–53.

Hagberg, Erik, and Christoffer Hellberg, (2013), "Exploring the Concept of Business Scapegoating," Master's thesis, Lund University.

Haidt, Jonathan (2001), "The Emotional Dog and Its Rational Tail: A Social Intuitionist Approach to Moral Judgment," *Psychological Review*, 108 (4), 814–34.

Hall, Stuart (1980), "Encoding/Decoding," in *Culture, Media, Language*, ed. Stuart Hall, Dorothy Hobson, Andrew Lowe, and Paul Willis, London: Hutchinson, 128–40.

Hanseth, Ole (2007), "Complexity and Risk," in *Risk, Complexity, and ICT*, ed. Ole Hanseth and Claudio Ciborra, Northhampton, MA: Elgar, 75–96.

Harris Interactive (2011), "The 2011 Harris Poll Annual Rq Public Summary Report," April, http://www.rankingthebrands.com/PDF/The%20Reputations%20of%20the%20Most%20Visible%20Companies%202011,%20Harris%20Interactive.pdf.

——— (2013), "The Harris Poll 2013 RQ Summary Report: A Survey of the U.S. General Public Using the Reputation Quotient," February, http://www.harrisinteractive.com/vault/2013%20RQ%20Summary%20Report%20FINAL.pdf.

Hartley, John (1996), *Popular Reality: Journalism, Modernity, Popular Culture*, London: Arnold.

Henrich, Joseph, Steven J. Heine, and Ara Norenzayan (2010), "The Weirdest People in the World," *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 33 (2/3), 61–83.

Hertsgaard, Mark (2013), "What BP Doesn't Want You to Know about the 2010 Gulf Spill," http://www.thedailybeast.com/newsweek/2013/04/22/what-bp-doesn-t-want-you-to-know-about-the-2010-gulf-spill.html.

Holquist, Michael (1990), *Dialogism: Bakhtin and His World*, New York: Routledge.

Holt, Douglas B. (1997), "Poststructuralist Lifestyle Analysis: Conceptualizing the Social Patterning of Consumption," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 23 (March), 326–50.

——— (2002), "Why Do Brands Cause Trouble? A Dialectical Theory of Consumer Culture and Branding," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 29 (1), 70–90.

——— (2004), *How Brands Become Icons: The Principles of Cultural Branding*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

——— (2006), "Jack Daniels America: Iconic Brands as Ideological Parasites and Proselytizers," *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 6 (3), 355–77.

——— (2012), "Constructing Sustainable Consumption: From Ethical Values to the Cultural Transformation of Unsustainable Markets," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 644 (1), 236–55.

——— (2014), "Diffusing Sustainable Economy on Main Street: Strategic Directions," in *Sustainable Lifestyles and the Quest for Plenitude: Case Studies of the New Economy*, ed. Juliet B. Schor and Craig J. Thompson, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 202–32.

Holt, Douglas B., and Douglas Cameron (2010), *Cultural Strategy: Using Innovative Ideologies to Build Breakthrough Brands*, New York: Oxford University Press.

Holt, Douglas B., and Craig J. Thompson (2004), "Man-of-Action Heroes: The Pursuit of Heroic Masculinity in Everyday Consumption," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 31 (September), 425–40.

Horkheimer, Max, and Theodor W. Adorno (1944/1972), *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, New York: Continuum.

Humphreys, Ashlee (2010a), "Megamarketing: The Creation of Markets as a Social Process," *Journal of Marketing*, 74 (March), 1–19.

——— (2010b), "Semiotic Structure and the Legitimation of Consumption Practices: The Case of Casino Gambling," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 37 (October), 490–510.

Humphreys, Ashlee, and Kathryn A. Latour (2013), "Framing the Game: Assessing the Impact of Cultural Representations on Consumer Perceptions of Legitimacy," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 40 (4), 773–95.

Hurd, Dale (2008), "The ANWR Debate: To Drill or Not to Drill," http://www.cbn.com/cbnnews/us/2008/September/The-ANWR-Debate---To-Drill-or-Not-to-Drill-/.

Izberk-Bilgin, Elif (2012), "Infidel Brands: Unveiling Alternative Meanings of Global Brands at the Nexus of Globalization, Consumer Culture, and Islamism," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 39 (December), 663–87.

Jin, Leigh, and Daniel Robey (2008), "Bridging Social and Technical Interfaces in Organizations: An Interpretive Analysis of Time-Space Distanciation," *Information and Organization*, 18 (3), 177–204.

Johnson, Cathryn, Timothy J. Dowd, Cecilia L. Ridgeway, Karen S. Cook, and Douglas S. Massey (2006), "Legitimacy as a Social Process," *Annual Review of Sociology*, 32 (1), 53–79.

Johnston, Josée (2008), "The Citizen-Consumer Hybrid: Ideological Tensions and the Case of Whole Foods Market," *Theory and Society*, 37 (3), 229–70.

Kidwell, Blair, Adam Farmer, and David M. Hardesty (2013), "Getting Liberals and Conservatives to Go Green: Political Ideology and Congruent Appeals, *Journal of Consumer Research*, 40 (2), 350–67.

Kiousis, Spiro (2001), "Public Trust or Mistrust? Perceptions of Media Credibility in the Information Age," *Mass Communication and Society*, 4 (4), 381–403.

Kjeldgaard, Dannie, and Søren Askegaard (2006), "The Glocalization of Youth Culture: The Global Youth Segment as Structures of Common Difference," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 33 (2), 231–47.

Klein, Naomi (1999), *No Logo: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies*, New York: Picador.

Kozinets, Robert V. (2008), "Technology/Ideology: How Ideological Fields Influence Consumers' Technology Narratives," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 34 (April), 865–81.

Kozinets, Robert V., and Jay M. Handelman (2004), "Adversaries of Consumption: Consumer Movements, Activism and Ideology," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 31 (December), 691–704.

Krauss, Clifford, and John M. Broder (2012), "Deepwater Oil Drilling Picks Up Again as BP Disaster Fades," *New York Times*, March 4, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/05/business/deepwater-oil-drilling-accelerates-as-bp-disaster-fades.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0.

Krippendorff, Klaus (2012), *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology*, Sage.

Kristensen, Dorthe Brogaard, Heidi Boye, and Søren Askegaard (2011), "Leaving the Milky Way! The Formation of a Consumer Counter Mythology," *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 11 (July), 195–214.

Landman, Anne (2010), "BP's 'Beyond Petroleum' Campaign Losing

This content downloaded from
78.192.100.106 on Mon, 08 May 2023 10:51:25 +00:00
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

Its Sheen," *PR Watch*, http://www.prwatch.org/news/2010/05/9038/bps-beyond-petroleum-campaign-losing-its-sheen.

Last, Angela (2013), "Negotiating the Inhuman: Bakhtin, Materiality and the Instrumentalization of Climate Change," *Theory, Culture and Society*, 30 (2), 60–83.

Lippmann, Walter (1946), *Public Opinion*, New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

Lipsitz, George (1990), *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Lloyd, Jack, and Jason Stephenson (2013), "E2 (Energy + Environment) National Survey Results," Marketing Strategies International, October, https://www.marketstrategies.com/user_area/content_media/E2-Report-Wave-1-2013.pdf.

Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism (2013), "Louisiana Tourism Forecast, 2013–2016," April, http://www.crt.state.la.us/tourism/research/Documents/2012-13/Louisiana_Tourism_Forecast_Report_13-16.pdf.

Louisiana Office of Tourism (2010), "Effects on Perception/BP Oil Spill Survey Wave 1 Results," May 28, http://gulfseagrant.tamu.edu/oilspill/pdfs/latourismPerception_BPOilWave1.pdf.

Löwy, Michael, and Robert Sayre (2001), *Romanticism against the Tide of Modernity* (*Post-contemporary Interventions*), Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Lucaites, John Louis, and Robert Hariman (2001), "Visual Rhetoric, Photojournalism, and Democratic Public Culture," *Rhetoric Review*, 20 (1/2), 37–42.

Luchs, Michael G., Rebecca Walker Naylor, Julie R. Irwin, and Rajagopal Raghunathan (2010), "The Sustainability Liability: Potential Negative Effects of Ethicality on Product Preference," *Journal of Marketing*, 74 (5), 18–31.

Luedicke, Marius, Craig Thompson, and Markus Giesler (2010), "Consumer Identity Work as Moral Protagonism: How Myth and Ideology Animate a Brand-Mediated Moral Conflict," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 36 (April), 1016–32.

Martinez, Roberto Rico-Martínez, Terry W. Snell, and Tonya L. Shearer (2013), "Synergistic Toxicity of Macondo Crude Oil and Dispersant Corexit 9500A® to the Brachionus Plicatilis Species Complex (Rotifera)," *Environmental Pollution*, 173 (February), 5–10.

McCracken, Grant (1986), "Culture and Consumption: A Theoretical Account of the Structure and Movement of the Cultural Meaning of Consumer Goods," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 13 (June), 71–84.

McDonagh, Pierre, Susan Dobscha, and Andrea Prothero (2012), "Sustainable Consumption and Production: Challenges for Transforming Consumer Research," in *Transformative Consumer Research: For Personal and Collective Well-Being*, ed. David G. Mick, Simone Pettigrew, Cornelia Pechmann, and Julie L. Ozanne, New York: Routledge, 267–82.

McGill, Ann, Laura Peracchio, and Mary Frances Luce (2011), "Solidarity of Purpose: Building an Understanding of Consumers through a Community of Scholars," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 38 (1), ii–viii.

McQuarrie, Edward F., and David Glen Mick (1996), "Figures of Rhetoric in Advertising Language," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 22 (4), 424–38.

——— (1999), "Visual Rhetoric in Advertising: Text-Interpretive, Experimental, and Reader-Response Analyses," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 26 (1), 37–54.

Medina, Jose (2011), "Toward a Foucaultian Epistemology of Resistance: Counter-Memory, Epistemic Friction, and *Guerilla* Pluralism," *Foucault Studies*, 12 (October), 9–35.

Meraz, Sharon (2009), "Is There an Elite Hold? Traditional Media to Social Media Agenda Setting Influence in Blog Networks," *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 14 (3), 682–707.

Moss, Michael (2013), *Salt, Sugar, Fat: How the Food Giants Hooked Us*, New York: Random House.

Muralidharan, Sidharth, Kristie Dillistone, and Jae-Hwa Shin (2011), "The Gulf Coast Oil Spill: Extending the Theory of Image Restoration Discourse to the Realm of Social Media and beyond Petroleum," *Public Relations Review*, 11 (3), 226–32.

New York Stock Exchange (2013), "BP Historical Prices," Google Finance, http://bit.ly/1hCujDH.

O'Guinn, Thomas C., and Lawrence J. Shrum (1997), "The Role of Television in the Construction of Consumer Reality," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 23 (4), 278–94.

Olshavsky, Richard W., and Donald H. Granbois (1979), "Consumer Decision Making—Fact or Fiction?," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 6 (2), 93–100.

Peñaloza, Lisa, and Michelle Barnhart (2011), "Living U.S. Capitalism: The Normalization of Credit/Debt," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 38 (December), 743–62.

Pennebaker, James W., Cindy K. Chung, Molly Ireland, Amy Gonzales, and Roger J. Booth (2007), "The Development and Psychometric Properties of Liwc2007," software manual, LIWC.Net, Austin, TX, http://www.liwc.net/LIWC2007LanguageManual.pdf

Pettit, David (2012), "New Lawsuit Fights Oil Spill Amnesia," http://switchboard.nrdc.org/blogs/dpettit/new_lawsuit_fights_oil_spill_a.html.

Pew Research Center (2011), "Offshore Drilling Support One Year after Gulf Oil Spill," http://www.pewresearch.org/daily-number/offshore-drilling-support-one-year-after-gulf-oil-spill/.

——— (2012), "As Gas Prices Pinch, Support for Oil and Gas Production Grows," http://www.people-press.org/2012/03/19/as-gas-prices-pinch-support-for-oil-and-gas-production-grows/.

Poladian, Charles (2014), "Fukushima Radiation Reaches Waters off the Coast of Canada, Expected to Reach U.S. in April," *International Business Times*, http://www.ibtimes.com/fukushima-radiation-reaches-waters-coast-canada-expected-reach-us-april-1557857.

Pollan, Michael (2008), *In Defense of Food: An Eater's Manifesto*, New York: Penguin.

Rawls, John (1999), *A Theory of Justice*, Cambridge, MA: Belknap.

Rose, Nikolas (1999), *Powers of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Saad, Lydia (2011), "U.S. Oil Drilling Gains Favor with Americans," Gallup, March 14, http://www.gallup.com/poll/146615/oil-drilling-gains-favor-americans.aspx.

Scaraboto, Daiane, and Eileen Fischer (2013), "Frustrated Fatshionistas: An Institutional Theory Perspective on Consumer Quests for Greater Choice in Mainstream Markets," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 39 (April), 1234–57.

Schlosser, Eric (2001), *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal*, New York: Houghton Mifflin.

——— (2012), "Afterword," in *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal*, 2nd ed., New York: Mariner Books, 271–78.

Schor, Juliet B. (1998), *The Overspent American: Upscaling, Downshifting and the New Consumer*, New York: Basic Books.

This content downloaded from
78.192.100.106 on Mon, 08 May 2023 10:51:25 +00:00
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

——— (2010), *Plenitude: The New Economics of True Wealth*, New York: Penguin.

Schor, Juliet B., and Craig J. Thompson (2014), *Sustainable Lifestyles and the Quest for Plenitude: Case Studies of the New Economy*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Schudson, Michael (1984), "Advertising as Capitalist Realism," in *Advertising, the Uneasy Persuasion: Its Dubious Impact on American Society*, New York: Basic Books, 209–33.

——— (1989), "How Culture Works," *Theory and Society*, 18 (2), 153–80.

Scott, Linda M. (1994a), "The Bridge from Text to Mind: Adapting Reader-Response Theory to Consumer Research," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 21 (3), 461–80.

——— (1994b), "Images in Advertising: The Need for a Theory of Visual Rhetoric," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 21 (2), 252–73.

Shrum, L. J., James E. Burroughs, and Aric Rindfleisch (2005), "Television's Cultivation of Material Values," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 32 (3), 473–79.

Simon, Bryant (2010), "Not Going to Starbucks: Boycotts and the Out-sourcing of Politics in the Branded World," *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 11 (2), 145–67.

Skinner, Lara, and Sean Sweeney (2012), "The Impact of Tar Sands Pipeline Spills on Employment and the Economy: A Report by Cornell University Global Labor Institute," Cornell University, Ithaca, NY, http://www.ilr.cornell.edu/globallaborinstitute/research/upload/GLI_Impact-of-Tar-Sands-Pipeline-Spills.pdf.

Snow, David A., and Robert D. Benford (1988), "Ideology, Frame Resonance, and Participant Mobilization," in *International Social Movement Research: From Structure to Action*, ed. Hanspeter Kriesi, Bert Klandermans, and Sidney Tarrow, Greenwich, CT: JAI, 464–81.

Soechtig, Stephanie (2014), *Fed Up*, Santa Monica, CA: Atlas Films.

Stuart, E. Kathy (2006), "Energizing the Island Community: A Review of Policy Standpoints for Energy in Small Island States and Territories," *Sustainable Development*, 14 (2), 139–47.

Sutton, Chavon (2010), "BP Stock Punished, Hits New Low," *CNN Money*, http://money.cnn.com/2010/06/24/news/companies/BP_stock_price/index.htm.

Swidler, Ann (2001), *Talk of Love: How Culture Matters*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Tavris, Carol, and Elliot Aronson (2007), *Mistakes Were Made (but Not by Me): Why We Justify Foolish Beliefs, Bad Decisions, and Hurtful Acts*, New York: Harcourt.

Thompson, Craig J. (2004), "Marketplace Mythology and Discourses of Power," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 31 (June), 162–80.

——— (2005), "Consumer Risk Perceptions in a Community of Reflexive Doubt," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 32 (September), 235–48.

——— (2007), "A Carnivalesque Approach to the Politics of Consumption," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 408 (May), 112–25.

Thompson, Craig J., and Gokcen Coskuner-Balli (2007), "Countervailing Market Responses to Corporate Co-optation and the Ideological Recruitment of Consumption Communities," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 34 (2), 135–52.

Thompson, Craig J., and Diana L. Haytko (1997), "Speaking of Fashion: Consumers' Uses of Fashion Discourses and the Appropriation of Countervailing Cultural Meanings," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 24 (June), 15–42.

Thompson, Craig J., Aric Rindfleisch, and Zeynep Arsel (2006), "Emotional Branding and the Strategic Value of the Doppelgänger Brand Image," *Journal of Marketing*, 70 (January), 50–64.

Thompson, Craig J., and Kelly Tian (2008), "Reconstructing the South: How Commercial Myths Compete for Identity Value through the Ideological Shaping of Popular Memories and Countermemories," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 34 (5), 595–613.

Thompson, Richard (2012), "Two Years after Moratorium Lifted, Many Expect Gulf Oil Production to Soon Exceed Pre-spill Levels," *New Orleans Times Picayune*, October 23, http://www.nola.com/business/index.ssf/2012/10/many_expect_gulf_oil_productio.html.

Tuchman, Gaye (1978), *Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality*, New York: Free Press.

Tulloch, John, and Deborah Lupton (2002), "Consuming Risk, Consuming Science: The Case of GM Foods," *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 2 (3), 363–83.

Turner, Victor Witter (1988), *The Anthropology of Performance*, New York: PAJ.

Tversky, Amos, and Daniel Kahneman (1973), "Availability: A Heuristic for Judging Frequency and Probability," *Cognitive Psychology*, 5 (2), 207–32.

Ulver-Sneistrup, Sofia, Søren Askegaard, and Dorthe Brogård Kristensen (2011), "The New Work Ethics of Consumption and the Paradox of Mundane Brand Resistance," *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 11 (July), 215–38.

United Press International (2010), "U.S. Oil Spills Quadrupled since 2000," http://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2010/06/08/US-oil-spills-quadrupled-since-2000/UPI-49761276004328/#ixzz2vIZsql7F.

Upton, Harold F. (2011), *The Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and the Gulf of Mexico Fishing Industry*, congressional report, Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service.

Van Laer, Tom, Ko de Ruyter, Luca M. Visconti, and Martin Wetzels (2014), "The Extended Transportation-Imagery Model: A Meta-Analysis of the Antecedents and Consequences of Consumers' Narrative Transportation," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 40 (5), 797–817.

Wayne, Ron (2010), "Economic Effects of Oil Spill Cut Florida's Consumer Confidence," *University of Florida News*, June 29.

Weart, Spencer (1988), *Nuclear Fear: A History of Images*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Weber, Karl, ed. (2009), *Food Inc.: A Participant Guide: How Industrial Food Is Making Us Sicker, Fatter, and Poorer—and What You Can Do about It*, New York: Public Affairs.

Weber, Klaus, Kathryn L. Heinze, and Michaela DeSoucey (2008), "Forage for Thought: Mobilizing Codes in the Movement for Grass-Fed Meat and Dairy Products," *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 53 (3), 529–67.

Weber, Matthew S., and Peter Monge (2011), "The Flow of Digital News in a Network of Sources, Authorities, and Hubs," *Journal of Communication*, 61 (6), 1062–81.

Weber, Max (1922/1978), *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

White, Katherine, Rhiannon MacDonnell, and Darren W. Dahl (2011), "It's the Mindset That Matters: The Role of Construal Level and Message Framing in Influencing Consumer Effi-

This content downloaded from
78.192.100.106 on Mon, 08 May 2023 10:51:25 +00:00
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

cacy and Conservation Behaviors," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 48 (3), 472–85.

Wilk, Richard (2006), "Bottled Water: The Pure Commodity in the Age of Branding," *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 6 (3), 303–25.

Wilson, Andrew E., and Peter R. Darke (2012), "The Optimistic Trust Effect: Use of Belief in a Just World to Cope with Decision-Generated Threat," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 39 (October), 615–28.

Zwick, Detlev, Sammy Bonsu, and Aron Darmody (2008), "Putting Consumers to Work: Co-creation and New Marketing Governmentality," *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 8 (2), 163–96.

This content downloaded from
78.192.100.106 on Mon, 08 May 2023 10:51:25 +00:00
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms