Organizational Crisis Communication Studies:
A State of the Discipline Review

A Thesis
presented to
the Faculty of the Communication Department
at Southern Utah University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirement for the Degree

Master of Arts in Professional Communication

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April 2010

APPROVAL PAGE

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A STATE OF THE DISCIPLINE REVIEW

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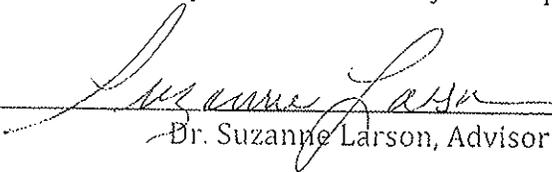
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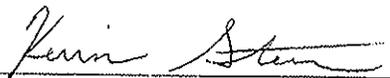
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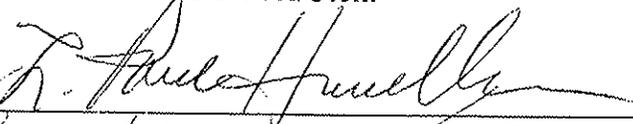
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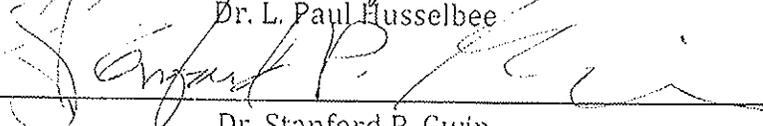
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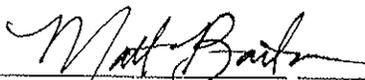
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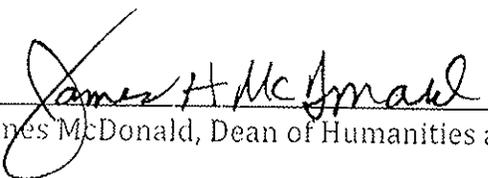
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Dedication

For my children. I dedicate this milestone to you because knowledge is one of the most important things in life. I want you to have tangible evidence of the education of your mother. I want you to know I will continue to learn and grow in order to be better for each of you. Learn and love, because knowledge and family are eternal. I love you.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my appreciation to my Thesis committee: Dr. Suzanne Larson, Dr. Paul Husselbee, and Dr. Kevin Stein for their dedication to my success and their desire to challenge me academically. Dr. Larson, as my thesis advisor, aided in the conceptualization of the project and nurtured me through its completion. Dr. Stein and Dr. Husselbee provided invaluable substantive and editorial assistance. I would also like to thank Brittany, Allyson, Melissa, Casse, Rachel, and many family members for their inexhaustible desire to compile research, make copies, and watch my children throughout this process. To my husband, Jeremy, whose patience, love, and willingness to listen to crisis management jabber made all of this possible. Finally, I would like to express my never-ending admiration to my father, Dr. Stanford Gwin, who has supported me, driven me, challenged me, prepared me, and loved me through all of my academic as well as personal endeavors.

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Abstract

This evaluation creates the first systematic cataloging of the theory base in crisis communication. The general body of books and articles relevant to crisis communication were collected for the past ten years. Classic works and important theoretical statements prior to that period were consulted in the development of the historical base of crisis communication research. A thorough compilation and codification of current crisis theory and practice resulted. Three problems were examined in current theory: 1. The case based literature exhibits incomplete inductions; 2. Foundational public relations are not addressed adequately; 3. The literature is not theoretically systematic or thorough. Each of these weaknesses was examined in the three phases of crisis management: preparation, response, and recovery. Researchers predominantly use case studies as the method of crisis research. While case studies are essential to the understanding of crisis, especially the response phase, compilation of applied theory generated by case studies is often not drawn. Theoretical literature significantly was weaker and less comprehensive in the recovery phase. While some theory clearly exists, especially in recent publications, it needs organizing and consolidating. This evaluation begins that process. Significant gaps also exist in some areas of research, especially the recovery phase. Many of the areas where significant new theoretical development is needed are specified in the conclusion of this thesis.

Chapter 1

Introduction

As 2008 turned to 2009, and the Bush administration changed into the Obama

administration, a declining economy pushed Countrywide, AIG, Bear-stearns, and similar

organizations to the brink of collapse. Crisis rhetoric founded on the experiences of Tylenol,

Exxon, two space shuttle explosions, and assorted mine cave-ins was inadequate to suggest a

requisite course of action. To the researcher reviewing crisis management literature from 1935 to

the present, this inadequacy seems eerily repetitious of the opening lines of article after article

and book after book. Many scholars state the same inadequacy with crisis management research.

The crisis communication student discovers, once these materials have been reviewed, that past

and present generalized theoretical foundations leave state-of-the-art of crisis-management

theory incomplete every time a new crisis emerges.

Organizations facing corporation-altering crises cannot easily access crisis management

information. On October 3, 2008, a bill was passed to provide $700 billion in bailout funds for

the U.S. economic system. This bill was the largest proposed bailout in history. Organizations

like Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, Citibank, and Washington Mutual would be aided by these funds

to prevent bankruptcy -- and a global economic meltdown. These organizations now face a

critical situation after the publicized bailout: loss of public support. The American public now

views them as risky and poorly managed. Their executives have acquired reputations as money-

hungry, spoiled, and expecting the American public to underwrite their extravagant lifestyles.

American conservative public voices like Sean Hannity, Rush Limbaugh, and Glen Beck have

accused these organizations of being at least partially to blame for the economic crisis. Crisis of

business failure and crisis of public credibility to such an extent are new to crisis communication and not fully addressed in current literature.

Organizations like Enron and World Com dealt with similar disasters. These two organizations faced high profile bankruptcy, but the economy of the United States did not depend on them. No one bailed them out; they were shut down. Although, Enron and World Com were scrutinized in a manner similar to the organizations involved in the 2008 bailout; they disappeared after their assets were liquidated, and the crisis disappeared with them. The organizations involved in the 2008 bailout do not have that option. These companies are faced with a crisis unlike any previous public relations disaster. Inadequacies in past research and development in corporate crisis management prevents organizations like Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac from easily obtaining the information necessary to deal adequately with a corporate crisis of such magnitude.

Eight specific areas complicate crisis-management literature and prevent organizations from easily obtaining beneficial information to deal with crises. They include the following:

1.   New kinds of crises are emerging regularly. Corporate executives and crisis managers cannot possibly keep track of every type of crisis that has ever occurred or every type of crisis that could potentially occur. A thorough review of the literature in one source will provide access to previous crises and aid in the development of theory to handle future crises.

2.   Crisis managers do not have sound risk assessment models. Organizations need tools to identify areas of potential risk in order to prepare adequately for a crisis. While crisis audit theory specifies strength and weakness, analysis methods of determining thorough and systematic lists of weaknesses that could

produce a crisis are unclear (Littlejohn, 1983). Robert Littlejohn (1983) does direct crisis planners to gather information, determine impact, determine probability, and establish priorities, but complete lists of potential crises for a given company are wholly dependent on the creative capability of the planning team. One source that analyzes current literature will provide a means to aid in the development of risk assessment models from past case studies and theory. These assessment models will be most beneficial to organizations needing to identify all potential risks and prepare for prospective crises.

3.   Often, case studies in the literature are not followed by inductive procedures that lead to generalizable theory. Information resulting from a case study is specific to that particular crisis and organization, and may not be applicable across multiple cases. Analyzing multiple cases across the art of crisis management will allow for a comparison of tactics used in similar cases and provide a more accurate view of theory that can be generalized to specific organizations.

4.   Every new type of crisis requires addressing new audiences with different media. Aristotle taught the need to understand audiences. Those same rhetorical principles underlie communication management theory. The basic communication model becomes pertinent to understanding audiences (Appendix I). The communication model illustrates all of the internal and external parts of sending and receiving messages and areas that may hinder correct interpretation of crisis messages. The communication model can be altered to reflect the parts surrounding sending and receiving of messages in

organizational crisis (Appendix II). Current crisis literature does not address systematically all parts of the communication model. Determining which aspects of the communication model are covered and which features are absent will require an analysis of the literature.

5.   Recommendations for crisis communication generally are not two-way symmetrical communication (Hunt & Grunig, 1994), meaning there is no communication exchange that includes organizational communication to the public and public communication to the organization. Analysis of current literature's lack of two-way symmetrical communication in crisis management will aid in future development of theory for creating efficient two-way symmetrical communication between organizations and the public.

6.   No single source or group of sources organizes everything we know about crisis management. Corporate executives and crisis managers need a source that gathers all current theory in the field of crisis management in order to adequately prepare for, respond to, and recover from a crisis. Bits and pieces of information are pulled from a variety of locations anytime crises are systematically examined. Corporate executives do not have access to those bits and pieces so they hire a crisis expert who may or may not have access to all the information. These experts typically have their own ways of dealing with crisis management developed from experience and common sense but not necessarily from holistic theory. A vast analysis of current literature will provide a foundation for the development of a single source for crisis-management theory.

7.   Literature reviews are generally specific to the case or cases addressed. Reviews do not typically include an overview of all crisis-management tactics; they only include tactics that specifically cater to the crisis and organization reviewed in the study. A review of current crisis literature covering all aspects of the crisis management process will provide a source that applies to many different types of organizations and crises.

8.   The classification of crises is inconsistent from source to source. There is no generally accepted classification for crises. Scholars provide their own interpretation of how crises should be classified. Some believe the categories for classification should be broad in order to encompass all potential problems. Other crisis experts express the need for more specific classifications in order to better prepare for crises. An organization cannot possibly prepare for a crisis that no one knows exists, and no one can predict what new type of crisis may develop in the future. Reviewing past research, more specifically past cases of organizational crisis, can lead to a comprehensive list of potential organizational crises that would be updated as new problems occur.

These eight complications can be summarized into three primary problems. This study reviews the available literature and describes the content and limitations of the crisis-management practice. The field of crisis communication should provide organizations with a strategic and flexible plan for adequate preparation for, response to, and recovery from all types of potential risks. Although good theoretical studies exist, a plethora of case analyses are present and trade publications address the subject of crisis communication, theoretically systematic and complete instruction to crisis communicators must be pieced together from hundreds of different

sources that are not readily available to the American public. While the literature reports on numerous case studies, there is no systematic way to link crisis information. Case studies are essential to the development of effective crisis-management tactics. These studies provide the foundation for understanding crisis management. Organizations would have no understanding of how to deal with crisis without the benefit of learning from other organizations' experiences. Case studies, by nature, do not build theory. However, crisis case studies provide a means for future research to develop theoretical observations based on past experiences. Detailing the nature of that problem requires a thorough review of the literature. This review will look at literature related to each of the three phases of crisis communication: preparation, response, and recovery. The following three problem areas will detail the deficiencies in the literature relevant to each of the three phases and lead to future development of a strategic plan for organizational crisis management that is both flexible for varying crises and built upon solid foundational theory:

1. The case based literature exhibits incomplete inductions – Case analysis does not end with theory easily applied to other crises and/or other organizations.

2. Foundational public relations are not addressed adequately – The literature does not take into consideration the importance of message development and dissemination from organization to public as well as from public to organization.

3. The literature is not theoretically systematic or thorough – the information fails to look at all elements of the communication model (Appendix II).

Crisis-management research is filled with essential tools provided by case studies and theoretical analysis. That research does not always provide organizations with the information they need to prepare for crises. Organizations like Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, who are facing

crises unlike any seen before, need easily accessible information that prepares them for these

obstacles. The purpose of this collection of literature is to begin the process of finding holes in

the research, determining how to fill those holes, and collecting essential information to make

available to these organizations.

Chapter 2

Compilation Procedures

Academic Search Premier, Communication and Mass Media Complete, Sage

Publications, The Business Index, and JSTOR combined with trade publication sources such as

the library and Amazon.com were used to compile a list of crisis literature over the last ten years.

Older research is used commonly as reference material and building blocks for newer research,

so was excluded from the evaluation. The key words "crisis management," "crisis

communication," "organizational crisis," "crisis planning," as well as varying combinations of

those words were used to find all available research articles in organizational crisis management.

The full text of each article was used in the evaluation of research. If search engines could not

provide the full text, then other means, such as various academic libraries, were used to obtain

the entire text. The reference sections of all sources were searched for additional sources, which

were obtained in full text. Those sources will be represented as common concepts in the field of

crisis management.

The reference sections of the scholarly articles were searched for crisis management

books from the past ten years. A list of books commonly cited by scholarly researchers was

created and used, in addition to the literature found in journals and trade publications. The thirty-

seven books were acquired through library sources.

Chapter 1 identified three problems with crisis-management research:

1. The case-based literature exhibits incomplete inductions.

2. Foundational public relations are not addressed adequately.

3. The literature is not theoretically systematic or thorough.

These problems were separated into the three phases of crisis management: planning, response, and recovery. Some areas of corporate communication research benefit crisis management, as well as other aspects of organizations. These areas -- such as corporate *apologia*, message development, message dissemination, message control, and developing and maintaining corporate credibility – were included in the evaluation of the literature in a format that would best suit the needs of the typical crisis manager.

Pertinent the trade publications were searched for concepts that illustrate the three problems while applying specifically related to tactical areas of planning, response, and recovery. Similar concepts from each publication were reported as one as information was assembled.

Only information dealing directly with how organizations plan, respond, and recover from crises was reviewed. Information concerning how medical facilities deal with natural disasters, public emergency response methods or natural disaster relief does not address organizations in trouble and deals mostly with effective information dissemination and will not be included in the assessment. International crises were also excluded in order to narrow the field of study and prevent research congestion.

Scholarly research and trade publications more than five years old were briefly reviewed with a close examination of reading lists and topics addressed. Literature within the past five years was examined closely with specific attention focused on theory available in those documents, their relevance to current crises, and the usefulness to public relations practitioners when confronted by crises of any kind. (Subsequently in this thesis, speculative theory-building designed to address process gaps will be cited as justification for future research and writing.)

This evaluation will include a brief history of the evolution of crisis-management research leading to the current decade of research. The history will include research with significant impact before the last decade. The analysis of current research will be separated into the three common phases of crisis-management theory: preparation, response and recovery. Each phase will be separated into three parts coinciding with the three problems identified earlier: First, the case based literature exhibits incomplete inductions; second, foundational public relations are not addressed adequately; and third, the literature is not theoretically systematic or thorough.

The literature will be placed in the category or categories that best fit the findings and development of the text. The analysis will be followed by further discussion of the findings evolving from categorization of the literature and theoretical instruction to crisis communicators on how to best fill the research gaps illustrated in the eight complications listed.

Chapter 3

History of Crisis Management Research

A brief history of crisis-management research illustrates how information has developed over time and leads to the evaluation of research over the last ten years. Commentators on the human state have always addressed crises. Plato talked about the crisis of government in Athens. Augustine and Aquinas were concerned about theological changes in the Catholic Church. Martin Luther addressed the same crises approximately 250 years later. Obviously, the American founding fathers were concerned about crisis in government. However, the science of dealing with specific organizational crisis did not become a concern for public relations practitioners until after WWII.

Crisis management, in the current sense of the phrase, began as studies in military operations during wartime. Military experts like Francis J. Lippitt (1865) wrote about preparations for attack, defense, and tactical operations. Government preparations for war were also common topics as well as government's handling of financial crises, party conflicts, and other crises of state (Editorial paragraphs, 1931; Niebuhr, 1930; The Rumors of War, 1885). The Saturday Evening Post (Minute Men of Mercy, 1934) reported on crisis preparations of the American Red Cross to aid victims of disasters not only in wartime or after natural disasters, but also on a continual basis.

Marjorie Van De Water (1942) revealed the first glimpses of information about crisis communication and crisis teams. She wrote an article detailing the need for volunteer forces in the military to learn to deliver crisis messages by signals or pigeons. This article detailed the means of sending messages to planes unable to land by creating a cotton panel to signal planes in the air and detailed the method of training carrier pigeons.

Crisis management research moved away from governmental/military crisis and into private organizational crisis after World War II. Hermann (1963) addressed how external organizational crises can affect internal behavior and in turn hinder an organization's ability to respond effectively to a crisis. He also developed a rugged explanation of a crisis separating it from other similar terms like anxiety or panic and defining it as a "device of change – change that may be associated with extreme behavior" (p. 63). Hermann's definition of crisis was based on three dimensions: "(1) threatens high-priority values of the organization, (2) presents a restricted amount of time in which a response can be made and (3) is unexpected or unanticipated by the organization" (p. 64).

Hermann provided the most critical information on the characteristics of crisis until Billings, Milburn, and Schaalman (1980) developed a new model of crisis perception. They included five elements in their new model of perceiving a crisis: a triggering event, defining a problem as a crisis, value of possible loss, probability of loss, and time pressure (pp. 302-306).

Crisis-management research then advanced to crisis-management teams. Littlejohn (1983) gave the field the first thorough look at a team approach to crisis management. His literature described a means of taking key people throughout an organization and placing them on a crisis-management team. This team's job was to determine all potential crises that could affect the organization and how administrating a crisis audit would impact the organization. The information from the audit was used to create contingency plans and prepare the organization for each potential crisis. Littlejohn's strategy for a team approach to crisis preparation is still widely used as a starting point for organizations today.

The 1980s also became the era of crisis planning, case studies, and theory development, as the definition of a crisis continued to develop. Fink (1986) said, "A crisis is an unstable time

or state of affairs in which a decisive change is impending—either one with the distinct

possibility of a highly undesirable outcome or one with the distinct possibility of a highly

desirable… outcome" (p. 15). After the Three Mile Island nuclear power accident in 1979, the

Tylenol cyanide contamination in 1982, and the break-up of the space shuttle Challenger in

1986, scholars began to study more closely how to prepare for or even prevent crises. Crisis

researchers developed specific definitions for crisis, explored ways to prepare for and prevent

crises, and strived to develop ways to help organizations protect positive reputations in the event

of a crisis.

In 1986 Meyers and Holusha identified nine types of crises to help organizations better

develop crisis-management plans: public perception, sudden market shift, product failure, top

management succession, cash crises, industrial relations, hostile takeover, adverse international

events, and regulation-deregulation. Mitroff, Shrivastava, and Udwadia (1987) wrote, "While no

one can pre-vent all disasters-let alone predict how, when, and where they will occur-

organizations can adopt a systematic and comprehensive perspective for managing them more

effectively" (p. 283). They developed a model of crisis management that illustrated the three

main phases of crisis management: preparation, response, and recovery.

Then, as organizational crises continued with the Exxon Valdez oil spill in 1989, the

cellular phone cancer scare of 1993, the Texas A&M bonfire collapse in 1999, and the Sago and

Crandall Canyon mine collapses in 2006 and 2007, respectively, researchers continued

developing preparation for crisis, but they also discussed how to protect an organization's

reputation during an ongoing crisis. For example, in 1990, Harrald, Marcus and Wallace used the

Exxon Valdez oil spill to analyze the use of contingency planning and risk reduction. Pearson

and Mitroff (1993) isolated four major crisis-management variables:

1.   Types- what types of crises should and organization prepare for, the scope of

the crisis plan, neglect able crises, and the rationale for including or excluding a

crisis.

2.   Phases – time phases through which crises move, activities of each phase,

phase management, and does the organization need to be proactive.

3.   Systems – systems causing or preventing a crisis, understanding of systems,

and management of systems and system interactions.

4.   Stakeholders – which affect crisis management, which are affected by crisis

management, and systematic analysis and anticipation of stakeholders in

reference to crisis (p. 50).

The definition of a crisis continued to evolve in the 1990s. Lerbinger (1997) wrote that

crisis is "an event that brings, or has the potential for bringing, an organization into disrepute and

imperils its future profitability, growth, and, possible, it's very survival" (p. 4). Seeger, Sellnow,

and Ulmer (1998) described crisis as " a specific, unexpected and non-routine organizationally

based event or series of events which creates high levels of uncertainty and threat or perceived

threat to an organization's high priority goals" (p. 233). Researchers, despite the ever-changing

definition of crisis, agree on one organizational crisis trait, the potential for a crisis to be either

negative or positive to an organization.

Scholars began to focus specifically on organizational response to crises as research

moved into the current decade. Media relations, message dissemination, and image restoration

were common topics in crisis-management research in the 1990s and into the 21st century

(Benoit, 1995; Caponigra, 1998; Lerbinger, 1997). In 1995, for example, Benoit proposed his

five image restoration strategies commonly used today: denial, evading responsibility, reducing

offensiveness, corrective action, and mortification. This research illustrated the move from a

preparation-focused field of literature to an emphasis on the response phase of crisis.

Also in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, a new aspect of crisis management – risk --

came to the forefront. Crisis managers now deal with any issue that affects the physical or

reputational wellbeing of an organization. Wilcox, Cameron, Ault, and Agee (2003) define risk

communication as "any verbal or written exchange that attempts to communicate information

regarding risk to public health and safety and the environment" (p. 187). Risk managers have

become more involved in the planning and execution of crisis response strategies. Vernier (2008)

wrote, "The risk manager's main mission is to identify and reduce the impact that a random

business risk could have on a company's finances and future development" (p. 187). The risk

manager is also involved with issues related to financial risks and insurance matters like product

recalls (Vernier, 2008, p.188). Risk communication involves educating the public on potential

risks like living next to a nuclear power plant, or informing the public about things that have

already occurred that may negatively affect them (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention,

2002, p. 6). Heath and O'Hair (2009) consider crisis to be "risks that are manifested" (p.1). In

other words, risk is the pre-cursor to crisis. The risk manager works with crisis managers to

develop positive reputation and control issues involving the financial status and insurance

matters. "Crisis and emergency risk communication represents an expert opinion provided in the

hope that it benefits its receivers and advances a behavior or an action that allows for rapid and

efficient recovery from the event" (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2002, p. 6).

In summary, ideas on organizational crisis management have only developed over the last

sixty years. Lessons learned from government war tactics are still a strong basis for the

knowledge of preparation, response, and recovery, which is the foundation of crisis research

today. The timeline of crisis management illustrates how crises have developed over time. In the 1930s, no organization would have been able to comprehend a nuclear power accident. In 1979, organizations would not have suspected a future terrorist attack. In 2001, few would have suspected a potential bankruptcy of the U.S. financial system. The continual evolution of crisis requires a constant assessment of crisis research in order to look to the needs of the future.

This brief history of crisis management leads to the evaluation of the last ten years of research. The field of crisis management provides ample knowledge for organizations and crisis managers in the areas of preparation, response, and recovery. The research has provided businesses with the ability to alert employees to potential problems and prevent or deal with crises effectively. However, some problems still exist with the information. The following chapters will review the research and show how the essential information provided by past scholars can be extended to be more effective to organizations and crisis managers in the future.

Chapter 4

Preparation Phase

The preparation phase of crisis management includes all areas of planning, prevention, and assessment. The initial development of a crisis plan including -- crisis team development, risk evaluation, contingency planning, and training drills -- are part of the preparation stage. This phase also includes the development of key messages based on the foundation of the mission of the organization and reputation building with internal and external publics from employees, to stakeholders, and to the general public.

Preparation research has a solid base built on the foundations of Hermann (1963), Littlejohn (1983), and Pearson and Mitroff (1993). However, as organizational crises have become more devastating to the reputations of companies, the literature focus has moved to response tactics. Researchers search for ways to diminish the shock of the unexpected and reputational damage during a crisis, so they explore more tactics in the area of response. This shift in focus has led to a decline of research in the preparation phase over the last 15 years. The literature in this area of crisis management makes up approximately 25% of the information gathered for this study. Preparation phase research over the last ten years continues to improve on crisis teams (Littlejohn, 1983), a finer definition of crisis evolved from Hermann (1963), and other crisis-management variables. The information available in Preparation also illustrates the three problems previously mentioned:

1. The case-based literature exhibits incomplete inductions – Case analysis does not end with theory easily applied to other crises and/or other organizations.

2. Foundational public relations are not addressed adequately – The literature does not take into consideration the importance of message development and dissemination from organization to public as well as from public to organization.

3. The literature is not theoretically systematic or thorough – The information fails to look at all elements of the communication model (Appendix II).

Problem 1 – The case based literature exhibits incomplete inductions.

Case-based literature is an important part of scholarly research. The anecdotal descriptions of past organizational crises illustrate previous crisis-management thinking by detailing steps taken by the organization to control negative ramifications. However, often researchers do not use the lessons learned from cases adequately to induce a generalized lesson used across the field. Case studies themselves do not provide the induction necessary for widespread tactics, so further research is needed to compare case study tactics to determine generalizability. Case study research in the field of crisis management would benefit from applying findings to different types of organizations and crises to determine if the same tactics are successful or unsuccessful in other situations. This type of analysis will give crisis managers information more beneficial to their particular organization.

Sriraj & Khisty (1999) studied the Union Carbide gas leak in Bhopal, India in 1984. The study included the use of important tools like Checkland's Soft System methodologies that allowed researchers to study crises from a post-crisis perspective and the CATWOE mnemonic used to develop conceptual models of the systems involved in the crisis (Checkland and Tsouvallis, 1996). Sriraj & Khisty illustrated the point behind the need for complete inductions when they wrote, "The process (of crisis management) should be further explored, using a variety of scenarios and methodologies to arrive at a template of tasks that organizations and

their stakeholders need to perform in order to be crisis-prepared" (p. 132). The "template of

tasks" is a weak point of case-study research because the majority of case studies only provide a

template for one type of crisis or organization. Sriraj & Khisty suggested that case-study findings

need to be applied to multiple crises and organizations in order to make the findings more

beneficial to all organizations.

Hendin, de Cassina, and Walsh (2008) express the need to deal with accidents through

planning. They use the cases of airplane crash, Alaska Airlines flight 261 in January 2000, and

fires in Irish supermarket chain Superquinn in September 1985 and 1986. Planning is essential to

successful crisis recovery. However, these illustrations do little to aid organizations of other

types or organizations facing other types of crisis to understand crisis planning.

Fearn-Banks (2002) proposes a description of basic crisis preparation techniques and

follows with extensive case studies. The generalized tactical portion of the work only brushes the

surface of crisis preparation. The case portion of the work is not constructed into guidelines

applicable across multiple situations and organizations.

Massey and Larsen (2006) discuss the role of crisis-management plans and crisis-

management teams in aiding a company to prepare for a crisis, specifically Southern California's

Metrolink crash on April 23, 2002. The information provided on the success of the preparation

tactics are based solely on the victories or failures during Metrolink's crisis and do not include

potential differences between organizations. The same concepts apply to Sapriel's (2007a) article

interviewing the public affairs manager for SWIFT, a standardized financial messaging

company, and Meszeros' (1999) examination of six chemical firm accidents to reduce chances of

future catastrophic events. Similarly, Wray, Kreuter, Jacobsen, Clements, and Evans (2004)

evaluated crisis preparedness in the public-health sector based solely on the experience of the

2001 anthrax terrorist attacks. They found that treating the news media as equal partners, understanding and responding to audiences, and treating government agencies interdependently in the creation and distribution of messages were crucial to successful crisis management. This theoretical analysis for developing communication strategies in preparation for a terrorist attack in the public-health sector provided excellent guidelines for government entities planning for potential terrorist attacks.

Roux-Dufort and Metais's (1999) evaluation of the French electric company EDF illustrated again the lack of applying research to multiple types of organizations. This company learned from past nuclear crises like Three Mile Island and Chernobyl to enrich its crisis plan. The conclusions of this research are based on the nuclear culture that EDF, Three Mile Island, and Chernobyl all have in common. The information is not easily transferrable across organizational boundaries. The case studies are beneficial in aiding organizations facing nuclear crisis. However, scholars could extend their research findings to other types of organizations to help expand the tactical understanding of crisis planning and determine if the same concepts apply cross-organizationally. Also, Veil, Reynolds, Sellnow, and Seeger's (2008) analysis of the Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication (CERC) model developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for public-health professionals to use during emergency situations does not apply across fields. The tool does not help other types of organizations to educate professionals on proper crisis communication tactics. Slightly altering CERC to create similar models for other types of organizations may provide an exceptional tool for educating professionals in multiple fields on proper crisis communication tools.

Zdziarski, Dunkel, Rollo, and Associates (2007) discuss crisis planning in the University arena. They include details on creating crisis-management teams, crisis plans, and understanding

how to communicate with target audiences. The information caters specifically to universities and schools. The tactics are meant to aid only organizations in that genre. Other types of organizations cannot know if the information is beneficial to their case without further research to determine cross-organizational compatibility.

Many trade publications are industry-specific, so the crisis-management information caters to the industry and is not transferrable across organizations. Eweek (Carlson, 2004) and Professional Safety (Spectrarep issues white paper, 2007) both published articles based on the concept of creating mass technological alert systems for school and university crisis plans. The Society for Healthcare Strategy and Market Development of the American Hospital Association (2002) published a book based on preparing for crisis in the healthcare industry. Pennino (2006) addressed the need for refiner, gas processors, and petrochemical producers to prepare for crises. Similarly, Rural Cooperatives (Dumont & Abernathy, 2005) published an article illustrating the top ten preparation tactics for cooperatives, and Rike (2003) addressed how records and information management professionals prepare for disasters. Also, Jordan (2003) discussed the importance of a communication plan in the gold industry. These industry-centered articles are important for organizations of that type to see how the crisis-management findings can work for them. However, other types of organizations will not know of the theoretical applicability to their case without further comparison of results to other genres of organizations.

Culture becomes a factor in making effective inductions from case related material. Sriraj & Khisty's (1999) analysis of Union Carbide's gas leak in Bhopal, India and Roux-Dufort and Metais' (1999) evaluation of France based EDF have difficulty applying cross-organizationally as well as cross-culturally. The public in different cultures may react differently to a crisis. The government may react differently, and the media may react differently. Scholars cannot know

how different cultures may react to the same circumstances without presenting case-study

findings in other cultures and measuring reactions. Tanifuji (2000) studied crisis preparation

tactics by Japanese local governments. Communication World published an article by French

communications expert Cordonnier (2006). He related all the tactics addressed in his article to

cases involving the French government and French industry.

Similarly, Helsloot (2005) published an article evaluating the Netherlands crisis

management simulation named "Bonfire." This simulation was based on an actual terrorist attack

in Amsterdam. The simulation was unique to the Netherlands, based on its own attack with its

own crisis management organizations involved. The conclusions concerning the evaluation of the

Bonfire simulation may not apply to other countries because of the differences in crisis

experience and crisis management organizations.

Several crisis-management researchers analyze preparation based on the type of crisis

(Wallace, 2008; Xenou & Sanchez, 2008; Oltmanns, 2008). While studying crisis by type is

beneficial to the fine-tuning of crisis plans, information for each crisis type does not necessarily

work in other types of crises. Organizations cannot assume that what may work for a financial

crisis will also work for other types of crises without further research determining tactical

compatibility between crises.

Sriraj & Khisty suggested that case studies needed to be further explored to provide a

"template of tasks" for organizations to have to adequately prepare for crisis. Case-study

research presents an inadequate generalizable template for organizations to use to prepare for

crises. The case studies present tactics and guidelines applicable only in particular situations with

specific genres of organizations. Scholars need to expand this important research to include

varying types of organizations and crises. Organizations may better benefit from preparation

guidelines tested across multiple organizations and situations that better reflect their own

circumstances. These guidelines would provide a more stable means of applicable theory.

Problem 2 – Foundational Public Relations are not addressed

Public relations is the foundation of crisis management. The public's opinion about an

organization drives the survival tactics in a crisis. A positive relationship with the public can

make or break an organization during a crisis, no matter how big or small the tragedy.

Developing two-way symmetric communication with the public is essential to every crisis

communication plan. Sutcliffe (2001) said, "It is more often the case that organizations fail to

communicate with stakeholders until after a scandal or crisis occurs" (p. 217). Organizations

must provide a way for messages to get to and from the public before, during, and after a crisis,

which means two-way symmetric communication should be continual.

In the planning stage, organizations need feedback from key publics to understand how to

strengthen their relationships. Strong relationships with stakeholders will make recovery from a

crisis easier. Gable (2008) explains how organizational image is an important part of crisis

strategy. He explains developing core messages to deliver to all potential audiences. He fails to

include the importance of receiving reciprocal messages from those publics in order to adjust and

create better message campaigns. Coombs (2007) also supports positive organizational image as

a step in proper crisis preparation. He emphasizes spokesperson training and message

development as part of a crisis-management plan. However, Coombs, like Gable, neglects to

emphasize the importance of two-way symmetric communication before a crisis develops.

Weick and Sutcliffe (2007) use examples of high reliability organizations to illustrate

effective ways to prepare for and prevent crises. They explain that even small kinks in an

organization's system can cause big problems later. The key is to stop the small kinks before a

crisis can develop. They emphasize the need to prepare for the unexpected and not get too

comfortable with a routine to prevent mistakes. The information focuses on ways to control crisis

risk, but does not include any communication aspects with the public in that control. Weick and

Sutcliffe neglect the most essential part of successful crisis management. Two-way symmetric

communication with key publics, including stakeholders, stockholders, employees, customers,

and the community is indispensable to successful crisis preparation. This communication

provides knowledge of public opinion, worries, and expectations and provides broader insight

into potential problems.

Smith (2004) discusses crisis-management teams and the importance of crisis

simulations. He addresses the effect contingency plans have on management by developing their

skills in coping with crisis, learning from failure within the organization, auditing vulnerabilities

within the organization, and crisis teams and their ability to mold and shape crisis preparation

within an organization. Smith fails to address the importance of including external two-way

communication in contingency planning and in the development of crisis-management teams.

In the same way, Hensgen, Desouza, and Kraft (2003) take in hand several different

aspects of preparing for a crisis based on game theory and signal detection. They described crisis

preparation using four "C" words: chaos, complexity, calamity, and creativity (p.70). Each of

these areas focused on signal detection and prevention of crisis -- none of which included the

importance of communication during a crisis, specifically two-way symmetric communication

with publics.

Fowler, Kling, and Larson (2007) tested organizations' perceived crisis preparedness

based on managers, population, public or nonprofit, and number of employees. The study did not

include stakeholder perception of crisis preparedness or public perception of crisis preparedness.

Communicating internally with employees and understanding inner-perceived crisis preparation is essential to success in training for a crisis. However, keeping the public informed and understanding their perception of an organization's crisis preparedness is key to pulling through a crisis when one does occur.

In many cases, the key to communication in crisis management is to have two-way symmetric communication with publics. For example, *Engineering & Mining Journal* published an excerpt titled "Planning for the Worst" (2007). This information provided a systematic plan to preparing for a crisis. The plan did include some means of communicating with key publics including employees, stakeholders, and the general public, but did not include ways to receive information from those groups. Also, Ogrizek & Guillery (1999) express how to prepare for crisis through setting up a crisis unit (crisis-management team), running simulation exercises, and developing a risk audit for the organization. These tactics are essential to effective crisis management, but they must be combined with two-way reputation developing communication with key publics.

Two-way communication is essential for organizational leaders to develop positive reputations with internal and external publics. Mitroff (2004) explains the importance of strong leadership in crisis planning and the role of organizational leaders during troubling times. He discusses the need for organizational leaders to understand different types of crises and the affect those events could have on the organization. He also includes the need for productive conflict and spirituality to build organizational leadership and prepare for crisis. Mitroff neglects to develop the need for two-way communication between organizational leaders and employees, stakeholders, and the public. This type of communication is essential for prolific organizational leadership development.

Cagle (2006) and Jacobs (2009) discuss the importance of internal communication to employees or "esprit de corps" (Jacobs, 2009, p. 24), but fail to address two-way symmetric communication with the public. Additionally, Sapriel (2007b) identifies the need to define crisis communication strategies, but fails to emphasize the need for two-way symmetric communication with both internal and external publics. Organizations must let publics know their opinions and observations are necessary for success, so that a strong positive relationship is developed before a crisis takes place.

Seeger, Sellnow, and Ulmer (2003) explain communication tactics for organizations in the pre-crisis phase of crisis management or the preparation phase. They indicate the need to acknowledge each series of minor events and accurately interpret threat signals to prevent a major crisis. The information also details crisis plans, crisis teams, spokesperson training, and other steps in creating a crisis-management plan. The authors fail to express in detail the need for two-way symmetric communication with key publics, and they do not include details on how those messages should be developed, dispensed and received.

Haywood (2002) describes the need for organizations to develop and protect positive reputations in all phases of crisis management. In the preparation phase, organizations need to understand and participate in corporate social responsibility and control the issues that surround them. Haywood also details the need to understand potential issues that face the organization and administer an audit to help identify and prepare for those issues. The information, once again, does not express the need for two-way symmetric communication with key publics. An audit or survey is structured communication that can limit responses. Open communication with those publics can provide more insight into potential issues.

Two-way symmetric communication with key publics (stakeholders, stockholders, employees, customers, and community) is essential in the planning stage for positive reputation development. The best way to prevent negative reputation affects during a crisis is to have pre-established strong relationships of respect with key publics. When the public trusts an organization then they will support that organization despite the negative ramification of a crisis.

Problem 3 - The literature is not theoretically systematic or thorough – the information fails to look at all elements of the communication model.

There are several reasons literature could be considered not theoretically systematic or thorough, but inadequacies in relation to the communication model will be used for the purpose of this study. Claude E. Shannon and Warren Weaver (1949) developed the first communication model as a means to describe problems with telephone communication. This linear model later became a way to describe interpersonal communication. Scholars developed many communication models in the years since Shannon and Weaver's model. The communication model used for this analysis includes the following: source/sender/receiver, message, feedback, channel, field of experience, environment/context, and noise (Appendix I). After the analysis, the crisis communication model was developed to incorporate aspects of crisis management into the communication model (Appendix II). Organizations need to contemplate all aspects of the communication model during preparation for crisis. These considerations will help to predict needed tactics and outcomes to deal with problems. Each aspect of the communication model can have a drastic affect on the interpretation of messages sent to and from an organization during a crisis. Miscommunication can cause detrimental problems for the reputation of an organization. The communication model provides a guide for crisis managers to use to prevent

miscommunication to key publics, so attention to all aspects of the model is beneficial to communication success.

Smith (2006) is an example of the need to look at all aspects of the communication model in crisis communication research. He examined how organizational culture affects crisis management. He claimed analyzing an organization's culture might be the most effective way to prevent crisis and set up a brief model of crisis management. Smith neglects to include the importance of all aspects of the communication model within an organization as well as in external communications. The message, feedback, field of experience of each participant, and noise inhibitions require careful consideration to make crisis communication flow smoothly even within a specific culture.

Longstaff and Yang (2008) discuss how trust between an organization and internal and external publics affects crisis preparedness. They include in their study several aspects of the communication model: the message of trust, the sender and receiver of communication (the organization and its publics), and the channel of the media as carrier of the message. The study included seven types of crises: environmental, fiscal, natural disaster, legal, military, political, and technological. They mentioned in the review of the literature that culture (context) makes a difference, but failed to include that aspect in their study. The culture or context of a communication situation can have a drastic affect on the way messages are perceived. They also did not include how noise can disrupt the message of trust. Noise can be anything that can hinder a message from being encoded or decoded effectively. For example, in this situation, noise could be negative rumors about an organization, a breakdown in lines of communication (email, postal service, telephone, texting, etc.), or even fear. Noise exists in every communication transaction and can cause channel disruption and misunderstandings in the interpretations of key messages

and in the organizations attempts at relational development with key publics. Organizations must combat noise so that the true meaning of their messages to be understood.

Leighton and Shelton (2008) discuss the importance of planning for a crisis. They describe why a plan never fully prepares an organization for a crisis, but without a plan the media take control of the situation. The media will tell the story through opinion and comments not facts from the organization. The information includes the need for a strong crisis-management team including a spokesperson and a media contact team. Leighton and Shelton also discuss the importance of the message and whom the message should reach. However, the channel for message delivery focuses mainly on mainstream media. They do not include other options for message channels, nor do they include changing the message to cater to different cultures or individuals with different life experiences (uneducated vs. educated, married vs. single, employed vs. unemployed, etc.).

Cloudman and Hallahan (2006) studied organization's levels of crisis preparedness. They surveyed U.S. public relations practitioners and found that three-quarters of their employers had crisis communications plans. The survey included spokesperson training and maintenance of contact lists, but did not include establishment of plans to handle problems with other aspects of the communication model. For example, there was no information in the surveys to determine methods used to measure feedback from key publics, channels used to deliver messages, and control of environmental/contextual issues or noise/distraction issues.

Fowler, Kling, and Larson (2007) studied perceived crisis preparedness in organizations. The results found that top-level and mid-level managers felt their organization was more prepared for a crisis than did the employees. These results included aspects of communication such as how family members get information after a crisis and how to communicate with other

employees after a crisis, but no other plans concerning preparation for crisis communication were addressed. The survey used did not include questions about understanding of delivering messages to the media or to the public. An organizational plan should include message training for all employees so when media representatives interview those employees, the organizational message is consistent.

Hensgen, Desouza, and Kraft (2003) use Game Theory as a means of developing a system to predict when an organizational crisis will occur and create a "game" strategy to deal with a crisis. The unsystematic layout of the article provides little insight on predicting and preparing for future crises. The authors do not address the importance of communication during crisis preparation much less involve all aspects of the communication model. The focus is on providing organizations a way to predict the future, but ignores the important steps involved in preparing for that future.

Olaniran and Williams (2001) developed an anticipatory model of crisis management that caters to the prevention of technological crises. Technological crisis is only one type of context/environment that could potentially surround the communication model. Olaniran and Williams' model is only useful in the technological context/environment of crisis management. The anticipatory model is not designed to be useful in non-technological crisis preparation. Multiple contexts could surround crisis communication transactions and hinder the productivity of messages during a crisis.

Space limitations prevent adequate coverage of all aspects of the communication model in trade publications or short articles. For example, Murphy (2009) spoke on the importance of preparing your organization for crisis and maintaining a positive reputation during turbulent economic times. He discusses the messages of focus, resilience, and calm that needs to be

presented to key publics in order to maintain a positive reputation. He does not address the

channels used, changes in the message to account for environmental/contextual differences, field

of experience of the individuals, or noise interference.

Similarly, Ritter and Ritter (2007) discuss preparing an organization to deliver important

messages during a crisis. They include the message, the time and channel for the message, and

the sender of the message, but do not include dealing with distractions to the message (noise),

challenges based on the environment or field of experience of the individual, or opportunities for

feedback to the message.

Weiss (2002) reported on the importance of effective leadership during the troubling

times of a crisis. She includes the need for a message and noise that could affect the message, but

perhaps due to a lack of space, leaves out the channel for the message, feedback, context, and

content of the message. In addition, Stothart (2008) and Mitroff, Diamond, and Alpaslan (2006)

discuss the need for university crisis plans. Both articles include the sender and receiver of the

message and the need for the message but do not address any other aspects of the communication

model.

Kennedy (1999) also addressed the need for crisis communication plans on campuses. He

included the importance of internet and other technological channels to disseminate messages

about crises as quickly as possible, and catering the plan to fit the specifics of the university.

However, he did not include specifics about the content of messages or issues that could prevent

students from receiving important information. These aspects of crisis communication are

necessary for institutions to create an effective plan.

Other trade publications and short articles with similar issues include the following:

Roach's (2004) article describing the need for open communication as part of a crisis plan,

Lemmon's (2008) report on preparing channels for message delivery during a crisis in school settings, McCartney's (2004) plan for legislature crisis preparedness, and Braud's (2009) discussion about using new trends in social media to deliver messages. These articles express the need for messages during a crisis and even discuss the channels needed for those messages. However, they are missing other critical elements of the communication model.

Organizations need a pre-emptive understanding of message content, distribution channels, noise, the environment surrounding a crisis, and the field of experience of the people involved. This knowledge helps to create an effective plan that prevents misunderstanding or abortion of messages during a crisis. Two-way symmetric communication with key publics (stakeholders, stockholders, employees, customers, and community) also works with all aspects of the communication model for positive reputation development in the planning stage. The best way to prevent negative reputation effects during a crisis is to have developed clear, pre-established messages of respect with key publics. Organizations need an understanding of the communication model, two-way symmetric reputational building communication with key publics, and a template of tactics in order to set up the best possible plan for pending crises. There is no way to predict everything that could potentially happen in a crisis, but with knowledge of these three areas, an organizational crisis plan could mold to fit unexpected developments.

The preparation phase is essential for crisis-management success. Organizations use this phase to prepare themselves for the worst and learn how to think quickly to minimize physical and reputational damage. Case studies are essential to understanding how tactics work in real crisis scenarios. Unfortunately, without continued research to expand case-study findings to other types of organizations crisis managers cannot know if successful tactics found in case-

study research would be beneficial to their organization. Organizations also prepare their

communication plans during the preparation phase. All the past reviewed research includes

important information about how to communicate during a crisis, but neglecting two-way

symmetrical communication leaves a void. Organizations may be sending out information, but

not receiving it or they are receiving information but not sending it. Organizations need to

prepare for both sending and receiving of messages during a crisis to communicate with key

publics successfully. In addition, to communicate successfully organizations must be aware of all

aspects of the communication model. Many things can interfere with accurate sending and

interpreting of messages to and from key publics. Preparing to counteract those interferences

ahead of time can prevent confusion with publics during a crisis. These same problems found in

the preparation phase of research are reviewed in the response phase of crisis management in the

next chapter.

Chapter 5

Response Phase

The response phase includes all activities during and immediately after a crisis. The preparation phase and the response phase are interdependent. The response phase could not be effective without the preparation phase; without the response phase, there would be no need for the preparation phase. The organization implements the planning from the preparation phase in the response phase and strives to manage positive outcome messages from the instability resulting from the crisis. This phase is where organizations take control of a crisis and the messages surrounding and emanating from a crisis, and seek to maintain a positive reputation during the control process.

Response research has increased dramatically in the last 20 years. Benoit's (1995) theories of *apologia* and Lerbinger's (1997) media messages and spokesperson training are two examples of response theory in the 1990s. Research in response phase has increased significantly since the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. Almost 75% of the literature reviewed falls in the response phase. However, the literature stills falls into the three problems previously discussed: 1. The case based literature exhibits incomplete inductions 2. Foundational public relations are not addressed adequately 3. The literature is not theoretically systematic or thorough

Problem 1 – The case based literature exhibits incomplete inductions.

Case-focused literature in the response phase has the same problem as case-based research in the preparation phase. The studies are essential to improving organizations' understanding of crisis, but the findings are difficult to apply to different types organizations. Coombs and Schmidt (2000) described limitations of image-restoration, case-based research in

their article analyzing Texaco's use of image restoration strategies after a racism accusation. The

authors wrote,

> There is nothing wrong with case studies or using image restoration theory. Such
>
> analyses can discover interesting phenomena and suggest directions for future
>
> study. However, we must be cautious when interpreting the results of image
>
> restoration case studies. The theory is primarily descriptive; it is a tool for
>
> identifying which strategies were used in a given situation. Assumptions about the
>
> success of the strategies become dubious without hard evidence.

This evaluation applies to all kinds of case studies. Experimental data provides hard evidence

concerning effective strategies and tactics. Case studies are important and are a stepping-stone in

the process towards generalizable theory. Case studies often unveil tactics, which can be tested to

determine their effectiveness in other situations.

Brinson and Benoit (1999) further discuss the situation surrounding Texaco's response to

racism allegations. The authors found four image restoration strategies used by Peter I. Bijur

(Texaco Chair) to combat negative press and legal action. Bijur used bolstering (stressing the

organizations good traits in the crisis), corrective action (prevent problem from happening

again), mortification (apologize), and shifting the blame (blame another for the act) and rapidly

cleared the frenzy. Brinson and Benoit note that typically, in blame-shifting circumstances, the

business places the blame outside of the organization. However, in the case of Texaco, the blame

was placed internally on the executives who made the racial comments.

Reber and Gower (2006) studied the internal fault cases of Enron and WorldCom. They

found the lines between legal and public-relations professionals were beginning to blur, and no

specific organizational communication strategy was used except to deflect the negative publicity

(pp. 234-235). The media accurately transmitted dominant organizational messages during the financial crises but included investigative reporting that revealed some details of the internal fault of each organization. (pp. 234-235). Enron was not open with the media and previously had a negative relationship with reporters, so the crisis coverage was negative. WorldCom's media coverage was not all positive, but the company benefitted from disclosing information promptly to the public (p. 236). These findings are specific to the cases of WorldCom and Enron. These findings probably would be beneficial in other situations similar to Enron and WorldCom. Organizations may benefit more from these findings if the article attempted to apply them to other types of organizations to determine how they could benefit from these past mistakes. Reber and Gower supported this need by suggesting the need to investigate messages of other types of crises to determine if the findings are consistent (p. 236).

Crisis media interactions often involve image-restoration tactics. Pompper and Higgins (2007) studied two image restoration techniques -- corrective action and defiance/attacking the accuser -- in coordination with two negative documentary films about McDonald's and Wal-Mart. McDonald's participated in corrective action in anticipation of the release of the film *Supersize Me* in 2004. Wal-Mart used defiance/attacking the accuser in response to the film *Wal-Mart: The High Cost of Low Price* released in 2005. The films did not receive excessive news coverage and the corporations were not significantly affected by the negative publicity. The effectiveness of the crisis-response strategies worked in the cases of McDonald's and Wal-Mart, but the strategies cannot be applied in all similar situations. Both corporations used drastically different methods for rebutting the negative publicity and each tactic was successful.

Cigarette companies have been fighting crisis for decades since the Surgeon General required a cancer warning placed on cigarette cartons. Svensson (2009) looked at the response of

a Swedish tobacco firm, Swedish Match, in its attempt to respond to a lawsuit filed by an anti-smoking organization in 1997. The company used messages of collectivism and combating messages of individualism to play to the current divisions in Sweden at that time. Organizations in other cultures might not be able to use the same strategy as Swedish Match to forge a successful recovery.

Adequate crisis preparation effects crisis response. Ulmer (2001) studied the fire that destroyed the Malden Mills textile mill in Massachusetts. CEO Aaron Feuerstein previously developed strong positive relationships with the community and local media. After the fire, he immediately released messages to stakeholders, emphasizing his loyalty to the town and to his employees (pp. 603-604). Feuerstein reassured the city of Lawrence and his employees that the mill would not permanently close. He provided his hourly employees their full salaries for 90 days. After the 90 days, those employees still out of work would receive full health insurance for an additional 90 days (p. 605). The previously developed relationship with the community led to reinforcements for Malden Mills in response to the crisis. The case of Malden Mills illustrates a positive outcome after a crisis supported by previously developed community relationships. However, the same tactics may not work for other types of organizations who are part of larger cities where the economy of that community is not devastated by the close of the organization. While hourly employees will most likely be thrilled in any situation to continue to receive their salary after a fire, in other situations organizations may not receive the same kind of support from the local community.

Ulmer and Sellnow (2000) studied the behavior of Jack in the Box fast food chain in response to E. Coli poisoning after customers ate hamburgers from various chain establishments. The authors considered the fast-food chain's responses unethical due to the obvious elevation of

the stockholders' and employees' needs over the needs of victims (p. 150). Jack in the Box assigned blame to federal beef inspection and the beef supplier, and managed to maintain a profitable reputation despite its undervalued stance on the damaged caused by contaminated meat. This lack of ethical behavior in other situations may not produce the same salvaging effect.

Stevens (1999) discussed the normative ethics of Prudential Insurance Company in conjunction with lawsuits for misleading sales practices in 1996. Prudential created an Enterprise Ethics office that dealt with ethical questions and violations as soon as accusations started and before the crisis reached its peak. The CEO, Arthur F. Ryan, submitted a letter to the *New York Times* apologizing to misled customers and educating them on the ethics office and hotline. Also, evidence showed an increase in open communication with employees, customers, and stakeholders through Web site changes and calls for employee feedback in the company's newsletter.

Other ethics studies in crisis response are Seeger and Ulmer's (2001) and Seeger and Ulmer's (2002) studies of the reaction of Feuerstein at Malden Mills and Cole Hardwood CEO Milt Cole following a fire in 1998. The CEOs immediacy of response, supportiveness of victims, and desire to rebuild and renew following the disasters classified the crisis reaction as virtuous (2001, p. 369). These responses may not be feasible for other types of organizations. Seeger and Ulmer (2001) wrote, "Both (corporations) were owner operated firms. Neither Cole nor Feuerstein, therefore, were constrained by the financial interests of stock holders and needed only to consult their families and management staffs regarding their decisions to continue to pay workers and rebuild" (2001, p. 374). Seeger and Ulmer (2002) saw the stakeholder commitment, rebuilding efforts, and renewal efforts as an alternative response tactic to *apologia*. However,

because the organizations were owner-operated firms those tactics would not necessarily be as successful with other corporate crises.

Knight and Greenberg (2002) and McHale, Zompetti, and Moffitt (2007) studied the Nike corporation's sweatshop labor criticism and the response to that criticism. They describe Nike's response as reactive and defensive (Knight & Greenberg, 2002, p. 544). Nike created philanthropic initiatives such as environmental projects, support for local entrepreneurs, and educational and fitness programs around the world (Knight & Greenberg, 2002, p. 559). The company developed a code of conduct (McHale, et.al, 2007, p. 398). The organization also attempted to criticize anti-sweatshop activists and created advertising campaigns that embraced the activists or attempted to make fun of them (Knight and Greenberg, 2002, p.560). Legal ramifications suggested that organizational responses to allegations are considered commercial speech not free speech (McHale, et.al, 2007, p. 398). Organizations not as wealthy or well known as Nike would have difficulty using similar tactics to address an ethical crisis.

Venette, Sellnow, and Lang (2003) used the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's involvement in the Ford/Firestone tire crisis to illustrate the "Metanarration of Crisis Model that describes the means by which organizations can resolve a crisis through secondary narration (the use of an outside organizations involvement to downplay the initial company's faulty in the crisis)" (p. 224). They described how the NHTSA admitted to failure and regret, assigned blame to inappropriate policies, and claimed to be prepared to investigate and change those policies. These tactics produced a more favorable image for the NHTSA with Congress and resulted in budget increases to implement the testing and changes that needed to take place. The Metanarration of Crisis Model should be compared to other cases in order to determine its effectiveness across organizations and across different crises.

Blaney, Benoit, and Brazeal (2002) also looked at the Ford/Firestone case and Firestone's attempt to blame Ford. The authors concluded that Firestone's use of denial was inappropriate and caused more deaths than if the organization had taken corrective action. The conclusions from many case studies are difficult to generalize to other cases without further testing and comparison to know whether similar tactics would work in other situations.

Similarly, Ihlen (2002) studied the crisis response tactics after the overturning of the Mercedes-Benz A-Class during road testing in Sweden. Mercedes denied safety problems, attacked the drivers of the test, made excuses that the tires were inappropriate, and used corrective action to fix the problem. In the case of Mercedes-Benz, this collection of tactics was not beneficial in protecting the company from public scrutiny. Ihlen mentioned that pairing denial with corrective action is inappropriate because corrective action indicates fault (p.197). However, that statement is not always the case. Organizations can increase positive reputation in response to a crisis that is not the organizations fault by aiding in corrective action to help their stakeholders.

NASA illustrated seven ways to avoid negative repercussions from crisis response as reported by Gustin (2003). The following seven tactics were used by NASA in response to the 1986 explosion of the Challenger shuttle: prepared to communicate, management was not absent, understood its priorities, open to the public, stayed in the public eye, truthful, dealt with the situation realistically (p. 6).

Tompkins (2005) extensively studied NASA's crisis-response strategies in regards to the Columbia accident, the Challenger accident, and the Apollo program. His book provides information specifically designed for the resolution of NASA's problems and failures. Kauffman (1999) studied NASA's crisis response strategies by illustrating the poor communications after

the flash fire on Apollo 1 in January 1967, and again by analyzing the successful crisis response

after the Apollo 13 explosion (Kauffman, 2001). Also, Martin and Boynton (2005) studied the

differences in NASA's communication after The Challenger and Columbia tragedies. Other

organizations may be able to learn from NASA's mistakes, but without further research there is

no way to know whether the information would benefit them the same way it benefited the space

program.

Fishman (1999) studied another type of air transportation crisis, the crash of ValuJet

flight 592 into the Florida Everglades. CEO Lewis Jordan responded to the accident initially with

mortification at the loss of human life and busied himself aiding and consoling families of loved

ones. He then launched a campaign of bolstering, denial, and minimization as he emphasized the

company's low cost, compliance with the FAA, and postponement of answering charges because

of the emotion surrounding the disaster (p. 358). Eventually, Jordan used corrective action to

assuage the hits on ValuJet's safety standards. The company is still fighting the effects of the

accident and challenges concerning safety regulations. Other organizations could have used the

same tactics and seen better success due to the unusual circumstances surrounding ValuJet.

Cowden and Sellnow (2002) studied crisis advertising based on the campaign used by

Northwest Airlines (NWA) to gain public support during the 1998 pilot strike. NWA

dangerously shifted blame to an internal stakeholder through advertising. NWA conceded to a

12% pay raise after President Clinton assigned federal mediators to the case, and the pilots

returned to work. NWA lost millions of dollars because of the strike, and the issues advertising

was not successful to the fullest extent. Issues advertising might be more successful in

circumstances where an internal stakeholder is not attacked. The advertising could provide

organizations a unique way to increase public support and present their respective sides of a

story during a crisis.

Ray (1999) used cases from the airline industry as the base for her book *Strategic*

Communication in Crisis Management. Ray discussed the tactics used and supported by airlines

dealing with crises. The airline and similar industries can benefit from past successes and

failures, but the information may not easily transfer for use in other types of organizations

without further research to determine effectiveness for those organizations.

The Mosaic-Esterhazy mining disaster in January 2006 provides another example of

cases used for crisis-response study. Elliot and Charlebois (2007) studied the potash mines

successful response following a fire that trapped 72 mineworkers. They praised Mosaic's two-

way dialogue with key publics, the mine risk educational materials provided for media, the

speedy response to the crisis, and fast, frequent factual information provided by the organization

(p. 323). Mosaic-Esterhazy did not have a formal crisis-response plan, but this incident is still

viewed as a nearly faultless response. However, no miners died and the crisis occurred just 27

days after the Sago Mine collapse in West Virginia where 12 men died. The relief of not facing

an incident similar to the tragedy in West Virginia may have made the tactics more effective than

in other situations.

The most drastic occurrence in the past ten years available for crisis response research is

the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001(9/11). Case studies of airline response as well as the

response of organizations housed in the Twin Towers cover a large portion of current crisis

research. Massey (2005) studied nine U.S. airlines' responses of reassurance, suffering,

mortification, and ingratiation as attempts to restore consumer confidence after the 9/11 attacks.

The unique nature of the terrorist attacks opened a fresh field of research in crisis

communication. Massey called for a need for more research in terrorist-attack crisis response and in how a crisis in one part of a system can affect all parts of the system (p. 112). He suggested that more research was needed for findings to be beneficial to all systems, but did not attempt to generalize his own findings in the manner he suggested.

Similarly, Argenti (2002) reported five tactics for organizational crisis response during the aftermath of 9/11: get on the scene, choose your channels carefully, stay focused on the business, have a plan in place, and improvise, but from a strong foundation. In addition, Barnett (2003) reported on tactics used by three organizations during 9/11: American Airlines, the Air Force, and CBS. Public relations professionals from those organizations suggested these measures: build relationships with credible outside experts, be resourceful when you cannot respond to damaging news, prioritize media calls but give media the highest priority, keep crisis communication experts on hand, and anticipate the needs of the media (p.15). Barnett reported other key tactics such as expect people to fall apart, have backups, communicate regularly with key publics, make sure the communication team meets several times a day, be truthful, and make sure people dealing with the crisis are taken care of physically and mentally (p. 16). Also, Greer and Moreland (2003) analyzed United Airlines and American Airlines use of the Internet during the 9/11 attacks. These tactics are beneficial to understanding crisis response, but the authors described each one in coordination with the details of 9/11.

Kiger (2001) illustrated the web-based response to 9/11 used by the Aon Corporation. Aon used its Web page as the primary source of relaying information in response to the terrorist attacks. Updating Web pages during a crisis is an important and essential tool in a technology-driven society, but it should not be the sole source of information during a crisis. People may not have access to the Internet, especially during times of crisis. In addition, not all organizations

have web pages to use as an information source. Although web pages are currently an effective

resource and every organization should develop one as an information source for key publics.

September 11th case studies create educational exercises to help students learn how

corporations communicate during and after a crisis. Strother (2004) developed a student crisis-

management exercise based on the first 24 hours' responses of American Airlines and United

Airlines. Using case studies to illustrate technique is an important part of teaching, but the tactics

used in these two cases cannot easily apply to organizations outside the airline industry or

outside terrorist attacks. Several types of crises in several different types of organizations should

be applied to the curriculum to represent the effectiveness of tactics in all areas of crisis

response.

The anthrax attacks closely followed the terror of 9/11. Mullin (2003) briefly discussed

the communication strategies that helped New York cope with the devastation of the anthrax

attacks on top of 9/11, specifically the "Giuliani Press Conference Model" (one or two press

conferences a day after meetings with key recovery officials) (p. 15). This model was beneficial

to the positive recovery of New York City and the U.S. after the terrorist attacks, but the same

model may not be possible in other situations or for other organizations.

Wise (2003) also studied the anthrax crisis in relation to Griffin Hospital in Derby,

Connecticut. The hospital was praised for its response to a possible bioterrorism attack. Wise

claims the established open-communication culture of the hospital dominated the success

strategies used. Hospital administrators enacted a previously established bioterrorism crisis-plan

and maintained open communication with employees concerning the incident. The small size of

Griffin Hospital affected the type of relationship administrators had with employees. In a larger

or even global-size organization, that same culture would be difficult to replicate. The tactics

used by Griffin Hospital and other organization involved in the anthrax attacks and the 9/11 case

studies may not apply easily to crises in other organizations. Organizations, again, cannot know

whether these same tactics would be as effective for them without further research viewing the

tactics in other situations.

Seeger, Sellnow, and Ulmer (2008) provide a collection of information catered to crises

in public health, specifically bioterrorism, food-borne illness, and infectious disease outbreaks.

The articles provide important information for public health and safety. The information is based

on the anthrax attacks, AIDS in India, the breakout of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome

(SARS) in China, and Chi-Chi's Hepatitis A outbreak (Ballard-Reisch, Jenkins, Pruitt, Clements-

Nolle, Sacks, & Leathers, 2008; Coombs, 2008; Gorsline, 2008; Heath, Li, Bowen, & Lee,

2008; Hearit, 2008; Liu, McIntyre, & Sellnow, 2008; Lewis, 2008; Novak & Barrett, 2008;

Venette, Lyonga, Naganje, & Sellnow, 2008; Quinn, Thomas, & McAllister, 2008; Seeger &

Reynolds, 2008; Thombre, 2008; Ulmer, Alvey, & Kordsmeier, 2008). The specific nature of

each section limits its usefulness across organizations and does not allow for ease of generalizing

tactics.

Schools and universities are specific organizations that need quality response tactics

during and after a crisis. Families, communities, and university personnel need to know details

concerning the crisis quickly in order to maintain student safety and a positive reputation for the

school. For example, Barnett (2007) reported several tactics used surrounding the Virginia Tech

shootings. He included general response tactics for universities to help guide them through

tragedies similar to the shootings. Also, McGuire (2007) offered suggested response tactics

based on Virginia Tech, a murder at Eastern Michigan University, and her own experiences as

president of Trinity University. These guidelines set the response stage for university crisis.

Tracy (2007) analyzed the discourse of St. Vrain Valley School District board meetings after a multi-million dollar budget error. The public meetings were analyzed using an organizational crisis-management lens. Tracy illustrated the need to look at organizational discourse to see how a crisis builds from that information and the importance of understanding the differences between local governing bodies and typical organizations. She explains that crisis management for governing bodies such as school boards is more complicated because of the requirement of regular public meetings (p. 436). The differences between educational facilities and typical organizations make generalization of findings from case studies difficult to transfer for use with other types of organizations. However, further research that applies the findings from school-crisis case studies to other organizational crises may be beneficial in determining whether similar tactics would work for both types of organizations.

Also, Dysart (2008) reported on the benefits of using text messaging to communicate with parents during a school crisis, and Herrmann (2008) and Yuan, Dade, and Prada (2007) explained new messaging systems used by universities to deliver emergency messages via a variety of technological devices. The use of text messaging may not easily apply to other types of corporations. Cell phones often are erratic in the receipt and distribution of messages. Also, the signals used to provide quality cell service are sometimes unstable and affected by buildings, power lines, elevation changes, etc. Texting may not be the most convenient or fastest way for an organization to relay necessary details to employees during a fire or financial crisis. Kennedy (2009) said schools should not only use texting services, but also e-mail, sirens, bells, strobe lights, Web pages, visual electronic displays, TV and radio announcements, and any other communication means necessary to make sure every individual is aware of the situation. Schools

and universities often must implement these strategies regardless of the cost, but applying this strategy to all types of organizations, especially small companies, may not be financially viable.

Teacher strikes also plague schools and universities. Vielhaber and Waltman (2008) studied the responses of the 2006 faculty strike at Eastern Michigan University and the faculty union. Both parties engaged in defensive and ingratiation strategies, and used technology as a means of promoting and supporting their cause. Vielhaber and Waltman discussed how technology expands a corporation's communication opportunities during a crisis, but they neglected to address the differences in an academic audience response to technology and a corporate audience response to technology. University students and faculty regularly use email, Web pages, blogs, etc., whereas general audiences may not have the same access to those technologies.

Natural disasters provide a canvas for crisis case studies unlike other types of crises. Each natural disaster is different, each response is different, and the ramifications are unpredictable. Brown (2003) discussed his experiences as Director of Corporate Communications of the energy company Conectiv following Hurricane Isabel. He illustrates five key crisis-communication tactics used in the aftermath of the hurricane: Anticipate criticism, step back and take time to think, change the way you think about media relations, keep internal communication needs in view, and focus on people. Brown illustrates each tactic using his experience with Hurricane Isabel.

Hurricanes invite scrutiny of local and national governments. The Bush administration was attacked for lack of preparation and response after Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Waymer and Heath (2007) looked at the response after Hurricane Katrina by analyzing the rhetoric of Senators Landrieu and Obama. These senators criticized the Bush administrations dealings with

preparation and response to Hurricane Katrina by appealing to people's need for security. They resituated messages of discrimination and instead claimed that the government failed its citizens, government agencies like FEMA were inept in their response to the hurricane, and citizens affected by the hurricane needed more money. More money was sent to aid victims of Hurricane Katrina after the strong crisis-response messages of Landrieu and Obama (Waymer & Heath, 2007).

The Red River Valley flood of 1997 is another natural disaster used as a case study for understanding crisis response. Sellnow and Seeger (2001) studied the response to the flood and specifically evaluated the *apologia* used in response to the crisis. Several governing bodies apologized for underestimation of the height the waters would reach, but ultimately the flooding was not preventable and reputations of organizations like the National Weather Service were not damaged. Relevant parties took steps to re-evaluate and adjust the tactics used for preparing for floods and predicting the effects of a flood. The tactics used in the Red River Valley case study failed to protect people from the disastrous effects of the flood, so the evaluation of those tactics was beneficial in preventing future damage. Further research is needed to determine whether the same tactics used in the Red River Valley case could be beneficial to organizations in other types of crises.

Ziaukas (1999) presented research that may not apply cross-organizationally. He analyzed the response of the White Star Line following the sinking of the RMS Titanic on April 15, 1912, to understand how the case was involved in the development of crisis management. Ziaukas concluded that the events following the sinking of the Titanic may have been a defining moment in the history of crisis management and public relations. This analysis is important to

understand the evolution of crisis communication, but it does not provide up to date or

generalizable information for use cross organizationally.

Case studies are an important part of theoretical research. Organizations need to

understand how crisis-management theories work in real life situations. Scholars can provide

generalizable theory by applying theoretical findings across a multitude of different cases

involving varying genres of organizations, crises, and cultures. A meta-analysis of various tactics

could explore commonalities in varying situations such as natural disasters and terrorist strikes.

Table 1 shows the case studies in this section broken down by type of crisis and includes the

tactics/findings in each case. Verification of tactical success in varying circumstances provides

organizations with a template of successful strategies to use during crisis response.

Table 1
Response Case Studies by Genre

Author	Date	Title	Tactics/Findings
		Ethical Crises	
Brinson and Benoit	1999	The Tarnished Star: Restoring Texaco's Damaged Public Image	Bolstering, corrective action, mortification, and shifting the blame.
Reber and Gower	2006	Avow or Avoid? The Public Communication Strategies of Enron and WorldCom	Only strategy used was to deflect negative publicity. Enron was not open with the public. WorldCom was open.
Ulmer & Sellnow	2000	Consistent Questions of Ambiguity in Organizational Crisis Communication: Jack in the Box as a Case Study	Jack in the Box elevated need of stockholders and employees over victims of E.Coli poisoning. Assigned blame to federal beef inspection and supplier.
Stevens	1999	Persuasion, Probity, and Paltering: The Prudential Crisis	Apologized to misled customers and created an ethics office to deal with future complaints and violations. Also, increased open communication with stakeholders.
Seeger & Ulmer	2001 & 2002	Virtuous Responses to Organizational Crisis: Aaron Feuerstein and Milt Cole & A Post-crisis Discourse of Renewal: The Cases of Malden Mills and cole Hardwoods	Were considered virtuous responses due to CEOs' immediacy of response, supportiveness of victims, and desire to rebuild following disasters
Knight & Greenberg	2002	Promotionalism and Subpolitics: Nike and its Labor Critics	Found Nike's reaction to sweatshop rumors reactive and defensive. Nike created philanthropic initiative in response to accusations.
McHale, Zompetti, & Moffitt	2007	A Hegemonic Model of Crisis Communication: Truthfulness and Repercussions for Free Speech in Kasky v. Nike	Nike developed a code of conduct in response to sweatshop rumors, criticized, embraced, and made fun of anti-sweatshop activists.
Venette, Sellnow, & Lang	2003	Metanarration's Role in Restructuring Perceptions of Crisis: NHTSAs Failure in the Ford/Firestone Crisis	Found secondary narration from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration as a means to resolve the Ford/Firestone tire crisis.
Blaney, Benoit, & Brazeal	2002	Blowout! Firestone's Image Restoration Campaign	Firestone's use of denial caused more deaths than if the organization had taken corrective action.
Ihlen	2002	Defending the Mercedes A-Class: Combining and Changing Crisis-response Strategies	Mercedes-Benz used denial, accusation, and excuses in response to overturning during road testing. These tactics did not protect the company from scrutiny.
Fishman	1999	ValuJet Flight 592: Crisis Communication Theory Blended and Extended	ValuJet CEO used mortification, bolstering, denial, minimization, and corrective action in response to airplane crash.

Cowden & Sellnow	2002	Issues Advertising as Crisis Communication: Northwest Airlines' use of Image Restoration Strategies During the 1998 Pilot's Strike	Northwest Airlines shifted blame to an internal stakeholder through issues advertising during a 1998 pilot strike.
		External Fault	
Pompper & Higgins	2007	Corporation Bashing in Documentary Film: A Case Study of News Media Coverage Organizational Response.	Corrective action and Defiance/attacking the accuser. Both tactics successful in combating McDonald's and Walmart's negative documentary films.
Svensson	2009	Embracing Left and Right: Image Repair and Crisis Communication in a Polarized Ideological Milieu	Combated a tobacco lawsuit by using messages of collectivism and individualism to play to the current divisions in Sweden.
Elliot & Charlebois	2007	How Mosaic-Esterhazy Applied to a Crisis communication Strategy When it Suddenly had the World's Attention	Analyzed Mosaic-Esterhazy response to mine collapse: Two-way dialogue with key publics, education materials for the media, fast response to crisis, and released frequent factual information.
		Fires/Explosions	
Ulmer	2001	Effective Crisis Management through Established Stakeholder Relationships: Malden Mills as a Case Study	Establish strong community relationships prior to the crisis, immediately release honest messages to stakeholders, strive to provide for the needs of employees.
Gustin	2003	Avoiding the Seven Sins of Crisis Communication	NASA tactics in response to Challenger shuttle explosion: prepared to communication, management was not absent, understood its priorities, open to the public, stayed in the public eye, truthful, dealt with the situation realistically.
Kauffman	1999	Adding Fuel to the Fire: NASA's Crisis Communications Regarding Apollo 1	Illustrated NASA crisis response strategies through tactics following Apollo 1 flash fire and the successful response to the Apollo 13 explosion.
Martin & Boynton	2005	From Liftoff to Landing: NASA's Crisis Communications and Resulting Media Coverage Following the Challenger and Columbia Tragedies	Showed differences in NASA communication following Challenger and Columbia tragedies
		Terrorist Attacks	
Massey	2005	Public Relations in the Airline Industry: The Crisis Response to the September 11th Attacks	Nine U.S. airlines used reassurance, suffering, mortification, and ingratiation to restore consumer confidence after 9/11.
Argenti	2002	Crisis Communication Lessons from 9/11	Reported five tactics for organizational crisis response during the aftermath of 9/11: get on the scene, choose your channels carefully, stay focused on the business, have a plan in place, and improvise from a strong foundation.

Barnett	2003	Crisis Communications Now: Three Views	Three different organizations tactics during 9/11: build relationships with credible outside experts, be resourceful when you cannot respond to damaging news, prioritize media calls but give media highest priority, keep crisis communication experts on hand, and anticipate the needs of the media.
Greer & Moreland	2003	United Airlines' and American Airlines' Online Crisis Communication Following the September 11 Terrorist Attacks	United Airlines and American Airlines use of the Internet to communicate with key publics during and after the 9/11 attacks.
Kiger	2001	Lessons from a Crisis: How communication Kept a Company Together	Illustrated Aon Corporation's web- based response to 9/11. Aon used the web as the primary source of relaying information in response to the terrorist attacks.
Mullin	2003	The Anthrax Attacks in New York City: The "Giuliani Press Conference Model" and Other Communication Strategies that Helped	Discussed the communication strategies that helped New York cope with Anthrax attacks specifically "Giuliani Press Conference Model"
Wise	2003	The Oxford Incident: Organizational Culture's Role in an Anthrax Crisis	Success in dealing with a bioterrorism attack was due to a previously prepared crisis plan and open communication with employees.

School & University Crises

Barnett	2007	The PR Response to Virginia Tech and Beyond	Tactics in response to the Virginia Tech shooting: Be workable with resources at hand, be workable in real time, be able to go on auto-pilot, communicate in advance with government officials, have low-tech backups, field test, rehearse, review internally, recognize the need to communicate in real time, include post disaster components.
McGuire	2007	Campus Communication in the Age of Crisis	Reports the following lessons in response to Virginia Tech shootings: Tell the truth quickly and often, important news travels quickly, do not assume crises will not happen, have something to say about important issues.
Tracy	2007	The Discourse of Crisis in Public Meetings: Case study of a School District's Multimillion Dollar Error	Explained the need to look at organizational discourse to see how a crisis builds from that information in response to a multi-million dollar budget error in the St. Vrain Valley School District.
Dysart	2008	When Danger Strikes	Writes about benefits of text messaging communication with parents during a school crisis.
Herrmann	2008	Ready, Set, Respond	Explained new message systems for universities to deliver emergency messages via a variety of technological devices.
Yuan, Dade, & Prada	2007	Texting When There's Trouble: State of the Art Systems can Blast mass Warnings to Cell Phones and PCs.	Explained new message systems for universities to deliver emergency messages via a variety of technological devices.
Vielhaber & Waltman	2008	Changing Uses of Technology: Crisis Communication Responses in a	Technology was used to promote and support the causes of coth sides during the 2006 faculty strike at Eastern Michigan University

		Faculty Strike	
		Natural Disasters	
Brown	2003	Powerful Crisis Communication Lessons: PR Lessons Learned from Hurricane Isabel	Illustrated five key tactics Conectiv used following Hurricane Isabel: Anticipate criticism, step back and take time to think, change the way you think about media relations, keep internal communication needs in view, and focus on people.
Waymer & Heath	2007	Emergent Agents: The Forgotten Publics in Crisis Communication and Issues Management Research	Analyzed Senators Landrieu and Obama's criticism of the Bush administration following Hurricane Katrina. They claimed the government failed its citizens, FEMA was inept in their response, and citizens needed more money.
Sellnow & Seeger	2001	Exploring the Boundaries of Crisis Communication: The Case of the 1997 Red River Valley Flood	Apologia was used in response to the Red River Valley flood of 1997. Governing bodies apologized for underestimating the height the waters would reach, but the flooding was not preventable. The experience led to preparation for future floods.

Problem 2 – Foundational Public Relations are not addressed

Foundational public relations is as essential to crisis response as crisis preparation. Two-way symmetric communication with key publics allows an organization to understand and fulfill needs not met during a crisis. Public needs may include information updates, employee work and pay status, expected reopening notifications, and other types of information that may not be reaching key publics because of the chaos involved in crisis management. Those needs are then met and provide a better opportunity for positive reputation reinforcement. This two-way communication allows better information dissemination and better public understanding of the organization's strategies. Two-way symmetric communication can prevent informational chaos that may spawn from crisis response.

Ogrizek & Guillery (1999) covered crisis units' responsibilities and communications during a crisis. The tactics addressed include only tactics of communication directed from the organization to the public. The authors included being a credible source of information, responding immediately to accusation and confusion, and communicating with victims and media. The study did not address tactics for two-way symmetric communication with key publics.

Pinsdorf (1999) provided a detailed look at communicating when an organization is under attack. The information includes communication with the media and employees, developing messages to survive during a communications crisis, how to prevent causing a crisis, and communicating a CEO's failing health without causing problems. The majority of the tactics are internally focused. The information does not detail two-way symmetric message strategies with all key publics to better survive reputational damage caused by communication crises.

Marsh (2006) discussed *apologia* as a response tactic to communication crises. He says crisis managers, by understanding the use of stasis theory, can choose to attack an accusation at

its minor premise level, major premise level, or conclusion (p. 41). This article leaves out public

relations in the response process. It focuses only on the response tactic coming from the

organization and neglects the impact that public feedback has on every aspect of crisis.

Hearit (2001) explored corporate *apologia* as a crisis-response tactic to internal misdeeds.

The exploration details Benoit's strategies used by organizations to minimize effects of crises:

denial, bolstering, differentiation, and transcendence (p. 503). These strategies can be used alone

or in combination with each other. Hearit (2006) also looked at *apologia* as a crisis-management

technique for all types of crises, both internal and external. Hearit, in both instances, neglected to

include the importance stakeholder feedback can have on an organizations choice of *apologia*

strategy. Constant two-way symmetrical communication with key publics provides guidance for

an organization to know which *apologia* tactic or combination of tactics would be most

beneficial following an internal misdeed.

Stanton (2002) also neglected the importance of public feedback in a crisis. He suggests

10 common mistakes made by organizations in response to a crisis: 1. Rushing to judgment, 2.

Overreacting, 3. Failure to act, 4. "Bending" the facts, 5. Lack of concern/empathy/sympathy, 6.

Affixing blame, 7. Remaining insular, 8. Absence of teamwork, 9. Restriction of information

internally, and 10. Failure to plan. Stanton included the need to have two-way communication

with employees and assumed information derived from that tactic will allow the organization to

understand the general population. However, he does not take into consideration employee

devotion to the organization or an employee's desire to keep his or her job. The opinion of an

employee will not reflect adaquately the opinion of a customer or the public. Two-way

communication with each key public is necessary to understand each individual reaction.

In addition, Lewis (2006) discussed the "human factor" of crisis management. He covered the psychological reactions employees could have to crises, employee services and programs after a crisis, as well as employees' options after a crisis. The information included an organization's need to meet the needs of its employees, communicate with them, and minimize workplace disruptions. Lewis neglected the other "human factor" involved in a crisis, non-employee stakeholders. These groups include stockholders, customers, media, and the community. Organizations must maintain reciprocal communication with these groups and administer to their needs to prevent reputational breakdown following a crisis.

Similarly, Reilly (2008) emphasized the need for communication internally and from the organization to the public, but neglected the need for communication from key publics to the organization. Also, Kimes (2009) interviewed CEO's and a crisis manager about how to keep a company's reputation intact, but did not include any form of direct public communication. Similarly, Hwang and Lichtenhal (2000) addressed response tactics for abrupt and cumulative crises but do not add the specific need for reciprocal communication.

Bernstein (2006) provided a "what not to do" crisis response article. The article claimed a crisis will grow if an organization: 1. plays ostrich, 2. only starts work on a potential crisis situation after it is public, 3. Lets its reputation speak for it, 4. treats the media like the enemy, 5. gets stuck in reaction mode versus getting proactive, 6. uses language the audience doesn't understand, 7. assumes that truth will triumph over all, 8. addresses only issues and ignores feelings, 9. makes only written statements, and 10. uses best-guess methods of assessing damage. Bernstein does not include an organization's tendency to throw information at publics without getting feedback. Feedback is essential for the crisis team to adjust tactics to better suit the needs of those individuals who support the organization.

Another area of crisis management that depends on two-way communication is crisis teams. King (2002) analyzed the importance of teams and team cohesiveness in crisis response. The research illustrates the importance of solid and effective communication within the crisis team, but the need for two-way symmetric communication from the crisis team to key publics (especially, in this instance, internal publics such as employees) is left out of the equation.

Organizations sometimes forget that the media should be treated as a key public. Two-way relationship developing communication is necessary in dealing with the media during all phases of crisis management. Seigenthaler and Buitelaar (2008) discussed how to deal with negative press coverage during a crisis, but they seemed to forget the need to allow the media to interact openly with the organization. Open communication potentially will allow appropriate information to reach reporters faster.

Organizations in crisis must not only provide information to key publics but also listen to feedback. Two-way symmetric communication with key publics provides an organization a way to notice gaps in crisis response and in turn fill those holes in communication, creating positive reputation reinforcement. This reinforcement comes as organizations' crisis response meets the needs of all key publics and stays strategically controlled. Scholars could aid this organizational crisis need by including two-way symmetric communication in future research.

Problem 3 – The literature is not systematic or thorough – the information fails to look at all elements of the communication model

The communication model provides a guide for understanding all criteria that could affect a message during a crisis (Appendix II). An organization needs to reference a communication model as they develop the response to a crisis. Each area -- source/sender/receiver, message, feedback, channel, field of experience, environment/context, and noise -- is

representative of a potential area of miscommunication. Organizations can reduce confusion and miscommunication during crisis response by taking into consideration each area of the communication model. Messages are central to an organization's success during the response phase, but each aspect of the communication model directly affects the delivery and interpretation of those messages and therefore cannot be eliminated from the study of response messages. Current crisis experts are not incorporating all aspects of the communication model into the literature. Most research is seeking a functional approach to understanding crisis.

One of the biggest problems with the communication model in current literature is found in the environment/context surrounding research. Coombs and Holladay (2002a) examined how an organization's relationship history affects an organization's crisis responsibility. They found that only a negative relationship history affected organization reputation and crisis responsibility. The study was done using only college students who did not experience the crisis example used in the study. The students were informed of the situation surrounding the crisis and then surveyed. Information contained in this study was based on a fictitious communication model. College students live in a specific context. They have similar experiences, and similar types of "noise" hindering messages. The context, experiences and "noise" of college students does not accurately reflect the situation of the publics of most organizations. College students may reflect a portion of an organization's publics, but many organizations also have homemakers, white-collar workers, blue-collar workers, and other social groups not linked to universities. Therefore, the information concerning relationship history and organizational reputation may not transfer to different communication model combinations.

Massey (2001) studied how crises can affect organizational legitimacy. The study used undergraduate communication students. Results showed that organizations with consistent

responses across stakeholders increased their legitimacy while organizations with inconsistent responses reduced their legitimacy. Specialist organizations were less legitimate that general organizations, and a combination of niche-width and response consistency had differing effects on legitimacy (pp. 165-168).

Arpan and Roskos-Ewoldsen (2005) conducted an experiment with undergraduate students and determined that organizations that break the news about their own crisis (stealing thunder) have higher credibility ratings. Arpan and Pompper (2003) conducted a similar study using reporters and journalism students and found the same result. These results still do not give an accurate picture of whether all key publics will react the same way to organizations "stealing thunder" (p. 291). Testing a variety of demographics would produce results that are more complete and provide more accurate information for organizations and crisis managers.

Similarly, Conte, Myer, Miller, and D'Andrea (2007) evaluated the Triage Assessment Scale for Organizations (TAS:O). The TAS:O was developed to distinguish between mild, moderate, marked and severe crisis. The author's again used college students as the participants in the study. The study confirmed that TAS:O could determine if a crisis was mild, moderate, marked or severe. Conte, et. al did use graduate students with a broader field of experience, but the goals, desires, and motivations of the students may not reflect that of a typical organization's public. Also, the students filled out the questionnaire in response to organizational crisis they read about rather than experienced.

Coombs and Holladay (2002b) began testing Situational Crisis Communication Theory. The theory attempts to match crisis response to the level of the organizations perceived responsibility. They tested undergraduate communication students. Coombs (2006a) used Situational Crisis Communication Theory to determine how stakeholders perceive crisis-

response strategies. He found that response strategies fell into three categories: deny, diminish, and deal.

Kim, Kim, and Cameron (2009) tested whether during a crisis emphasis on corporate ability would be more effective than emphasis on corporate social responsibility. The results showed corporate ability was more effective, especially when culpability was low. The testing was done using undergraduate journalism students.

Hwang and Cameron (2008) again used a group of undergraduate students exposed to a fictitious organizational crisis. They found that "respondents expected the most advocative stance when exposed to the autocratic leadership message, neutral stance to transactional leadership, and most accommodative stance to transformational leadership and democratic leadership" (p. 72). They used the same technique when determining that individuals' perceptions of an organization's leadership produced predictions about the crisis-response techniques, but the perceived threat moderated their predictions about the crisis response (Hwang & Cameron, 2009, p. 138).

Coombs and Holladay (2008) studied corporate apology using an undergraduate student test group. They found that the students responded similarly to apology, compensation, and sympathy response tactics. Also, Kline, Simunich, and Weber (2008) studied equivocal messages in crisis response and found that "equivocal messages were both viewed as appropriate messages to use and associated with two measures of corporate reputation in avoidance-avoidance situations. By contrast, non-equivocal messages were viewed as more appropriate to use and associated with corporate reputation in non–avoidance-avoidance situations" (p. 770).

Dean (2004) used undergraduate students enrolled in an introductory marketing course to study public response to negative publicity during a crisis. Unexpectedly, the study found that an

inappropriate response (shifting blame) by a company with a positive reputation before a crisis damaged the company's reputation more than an inappropriate response by a company with a negative reputation before a crisis. The findings were based on situations where students were not direct stakeholders of the organizations. College students do not represent an accurate demographic for all organizations. They reflect one unique environment of an organization's many typical key publics. The student demographic may not accurately portray the elements of the communication model represented during an organizational crisis.

Coombs (1999) examined how compassion and instructing information have an effect on an organizations reputation, honoring accounts, and attempted supportive behavior. The study showed that compassion, but not instructing information, had a positive effect on areas of study. Coombs did not use a student population for testing; instead, he used a population of crisis managers. This population represents a field of experience not typically seen in organizational publics. Crisis managers have an understanding of organizational crisis unlike that of the typical stakeholder. Their education and training may prevent them from viewing the organizational crisis in the same manner as the general public.

Seymour and Moore (2000) extensively discuss crisis management and important keys in having efficient crisis response. They include what a crisis is, how it develops and unfolds, giving and receiving of information during a crisis, and other essential tools in successful crisis response. They do not include the different problems an organization can face as messages are delivered. Cultural differences (even in a single state or even town), technological problems, educational differences, and other hindrances can affect the way an organization perceives information. Organizations need guidelines on how to prevent the confusion of messages due to

these outside factors. Guidelines based on the factors in a communication model (Appendix I) may aid in preventing message confusion due to the obstacles listed above.

Payne (2006) found that organizational reputation plays a large part in measuring organizational defensiveness. Individuals remembered less about crises involving an organization with a bad reputation if the organization apologized, and remembered more about the crisis of an organization with a positive reputation when they used apology. This study was done using a fictitious crisis. The context of the situation did not reflect that of a real crisis. The crisis did not affect the participants in the study the same way an organization's crisis would affect its stakeholders. Organizational crisis can affect jobs, health insurance, retirement, and other forms of security for their stakeholders. The study could not provide the same feelings of insecurity for participants.

Coombs and Holladay (2009) evaluated how the effects of crisis-response tactics, sympathy and compensation may differ when presented through different communication channels (print vs. video). The testing resulted in no significant difference, but once again, the testing used an undergraduate student population. Also, Coombs and Holladay did not take into consideration other channels of crisis response such as Internet or word-of-mouth campaigns.

Lee (2004) studied Hong Kong consumers' responses to organizational crisis information. The study found that internal causes of crisis and denial of crisis resulted in negative impressions of the organization. The study also determined the "no comment" response to crisis provided more trust in the organization than a minimal crisis response. For example, publics may see "no comment" as an indication that the organization is aware of the problem and cares enough not to release detrimental information, whereas publics may see a minimal crisis response as neglectful. Also, Wester (2009) found that Swedish crisis managers react to crises

differently depending on the cause of the crisis. Accidents are perceived differently than terrorist attacks. Accidents potentially indicate an internal problem from the organization while terrorist attacks are an external problem imposed on the organization. Those perceptions lead to differences in the kind of information released to the public. Similarly, Baker (2001) and Coombs and Schmidt (2000) evaluated image restoration in relation to organizational accusations of racism. They found that image-restoration case study results need a more meticulous application of image restoration theory to apply adequately to crisis management. The environment/context (or culture) makes the results difficult to apply to other scenarios. Similar analysis in other scenarios would benefit organizational understanding of the effectiveness of the evaluated response tactics.

Perry, Taylor, and Doerfel (2003) and Taylor and Perry (2005) analyzed organizations use of the Internet in crisis response. They found the Internet was used frequently as a way to communicate with key publics and to post press releases and pertinent information about the crisis. The study included information to guide organizations in developing Internet based response tactics, but did not include the distraction (noise) problems involved with Internet response. Pop-ups, advertising, server problems, time delays, and viruses are all aspects of the Internet that can detract from or prevent an organizations message from reaching key publics.

Noise affects the message of crisis response, but sometimes is left out of crisis communication strategy. Ulmer, Sellnow, and Seeger (2007) discussed the importance of communicating with audiences during a crisis and the messages targeted to those audiences, and Coombs (2004) collected the "Crisis Communication Standards" (p. 467) to guide crisis managers in the best practices for crisis response. Also, Seeger (2006) put together a description of the "best practices in crisis communication" (p. 232) as interpreted from the discourse of a

panel of crisis communication experts. The response tactics include: Partnerships with the

Public; Listen to the Public's Concerns and Understand the Audience; Honesty, Candor, and

Openness; Collaborate and Coordinate with Credible Sources; Meet the Needs of the Media and

Remain Accessible; Communicate with Compassion, Concern and Empathy; Accept Uncertainty

and Ambiguity; and Messages of Self-Efficacy. Heath (2006) reviewed Seeger's best practices

and added two of his own: 1. Realize that crisis response is a narrative, and 2. Be committed and

able to deliver on the promise to be the first and best source of information. Covello (2003) also

put together a list of best practices in crisis communication and public health risk. He included

involving stakeholders as partners, listening to people, being truthful and open, teaming with

other credible sources, meeting the needs of the media, communicate clearly and

compassionately, and plan thoroughly. These authors do not discuss types of noise that may

affect the message and how to combat that noise. Noise could include false rumors, testimonies

of rival organizations to the media, or even misinterpretation of messages. In addition, Putnam

and Fairhurst (2001) address corporate advocacy strategies in response to a crisis, including

apologia techniques and understanding the effective strategies for different audiences, but they

do not include noise.

Message channels are another way messages can be diverged or confused. Cho and

Gower (2006) studied how the type of organizational crisis (accidental vs. transgression) affects

assignment of blame. They used written news stories followed by a survey and found that

unintentional events lead to less blame than intentional events. The study did not take into

consideration how different message channels may affect the outcome of assignment of blame.

Stevens, Malone, and Bailey (2005) studied organizational message strategies during

crisis and found that message strategies differ depending on the audience. Specifically, in

response to a technical crisis, organizations rarely explained technical details in a manner understandable by typical audiences. The study focused specifically on messages and message strategies, but it failed to take into consideration outside influences on message perception in the categories of noise, field of experience, and feedback. The study did not include how changes in those areas affected message strategies or public reception of the messages.

Coombs (2000a) analyzed the relational perspective of crisis management. He discussed the importance of organizational reputation management in supporting crisis-response strategies. Coombs (2000b) again discussed the importance of crisis-response strategies and using those strategies. The information does include *apologia* message strategy used in reputation management, but does not cover channels to deliver those messages, environmental factors, or noise hindrances to positive reputation messages. The communication model helps organizations develop powerful messages, understand how audiences interpret those messages, and what obstacles could prevent accurate interpretation.

Barton (2001) offered one of the most comprehensive looks at crisis response. He included generalized tactics supported by case studies, and an understanding of the need for reciprocal communication between the organization and all stakeholders of the company. The information also explains message development, channels for messages, and delivering messages in a manner acceptable to all types of stakeholders. Barton excluded one aspect from his analysis: noise.

Fearn-Banks (2001) also provided an excellent overview of the best practices in crisis communication. She included the need for two-way symmetrical communication with key publics and the need to develop a specific communication plan for each public. The best-practices information does not cover how to battle the noise or interference that inhibits crisis

messages. Outside factors can have a huge impact on how the public perceives organizational messages. Specific attention should be paid to how to combat message interference so the public gets the purest form of the message.

The communication model provides a base structure for developing crisis-response messages that reach key publics in the purest and most persuasive form possible. Organizational crisis managers can use the model to make sure they have an accurate understanding of the environment/context, field of experience, message, and potential noise distractions. Crisis researchers are not considering these keys when framing research. Many studies use subjects from one kind of environment/context or field of experience, such as college students or crisis managers, to test crisis management theories. Scholars use fictitious crisis stories that do not allow for accurate emotional reactions. Other studies neglect the importance of message channels, and noise interference in the delivery of key messages.

The communication model, two-way symmetric communication, and generalizable case study theory work hand-in-hand to provide organizations the most effective crisis-response tools. Organizational crisis research needs to include these areas in research in order to prevent limiting and damaging the information available for successful response tactics. These same tools can be used in the Recovery phase. The next chapter describes the research found in the Recovery phase and applies the same evaluation that was used in previous chapters.

Chapter 6

Recovery Phase

The Recovery phase occurs after the fires are out and the smoke has cleared. Once the

crisis is over and the media are no longer standing outside waiting for a break in the story, an

organization has to put the broken pieces back together. CEOs strive to rebuild positive

reputations. Organizations must reinforce a positive reputation after a crisis to assure key publics

that the company is doing everything possible to prevent future incidents, even when a positive

reputation already exists. The messages differ from typical public relations strategies. The

campaign is still crisis focused. Some scholars include image restoration strategies or *apologia* in

the recovery phase of crisis management. These tactics appear in the Response phase of this

study since those strategies should originate while the media coverage is extensive.

The recovery phase also includes evaluating the strategies used during the crisis and

making appropriate changes to crisis plans. Eventually, the recovery phase melds into the

preparation phase and the preparation, response, and recovery cycle begins again.

Current and past research neglect crisis recovery. Few scholars recognize crisis recovery

as a separate and important part of the crisis cycle. The literature sometimes labels response

tactics as recovery or recovery is passed over as general public relations strategy. Organizations

need specialized recovery tactics to move past damage caused by crisis. The small amount of

literature available on crisis recovery still suffers from the three problems found in other areas of

crisis-management research.

Problem 1 – The case based literature exhibits incomplete inductions.

The literature of recovery revolves primarily around the use of past crisis management

cases to describe tactical procedures, similar to the state of literature in the preparation and

response emphases. Also, in the recovery phase of literature, few attempts are made to generalize the findings of case studies to apply to all types of organizations and situations.

Ulmer and Sellnow (2002) studied the crisis recovery discourse of organizations following the 9/11 attacks. The authors suggest that despite the typical organizational tactic of image restoration following a crisis, renewal efforts based on core values may be more beneficial to an organization's recovery. However, these tactics would not apply to all types of organizations and all circumstances. More research is needed to determine which circumstances would call for image restoration and which post crisis recovery would call for renewal.

Sellnow and Brand (2001) discuss a strategy called model and anti-model arguments where an organization shifts focus to the industry to prevent further negative ramifications from a crisis. Phil Knight, co-founder and CEO of Nike, used these tactics in 1998 to highlight the company's new global initiative and present six initiatives that set the industry standard for corporate social responsibility (CSR). Knight's strategy removed the focus from Nike's previous problems with sweat-shop rumors and created a challenge for the rest of the industry to follow Nike's CSR example. The research neglects to describe how an organization without Nike's global reputation and market would be successful using these same strategies. A smaller organization facing the same reputational crisis may not have the same success or power to call for a new industry standard the way Knight did for Nike.

Dufresne and Clair (2008) studied how organizations can become hyper-resilient to crisis using the Duke lacrosse team rape accusations in March of 2006. The lacrosse players were found innocent. Duke University rebounded masterfully from the crisis and used the crisis as a building block for positive internal and external organizational change. The university's recovery process placed it in a position superior to its pre-crisis state. However, the research cannot

guarantee that similar circumstances would take place if the lacrosse players had been found guilty. All types of organizations and all types of crises may not find the same success despite intensive preparation for hyper-resilience.

Case studies in the recovery phase reflect similar problems to studies in the preparation and response phases. The theoretical observations apply to specific types of organizations in exact circumstances. Recovery phase research needs to be more extensive as well as tested cross-organizationally in order to provide a better understanding of organizational crisis recovery tactics.

Problem 2 – Foundational Public Relations are not addressed

Two-way symmetric communication with key publics is essential in all aspects of organizational life. The public's opinion is invaluable in preparation, response, and especially recovery. The constant mutual communication provides an organization with knowledge of steps needed to increase positive reputation and provides the public with security concerning the organization's plan to prevent future crises. Unfortunately, organizational crisis-management literature often neglects this aspect of crisis recovery.

Turner and Toft (2006) discussed the ways organizations can learn from disasters. They included investigating the crisis and crisis management, drawing conclusions from the investigation of events in order to increase future efficiency, and passing the lessons learned to those who will benefit from the information (p. 203). This knowledge leaves out one essential aspect of effective crisis learning, two-way symmetric communication with key publics. Organizations must gain the public's opinion in order to draw effective conclusions about performance after a crisis.

Pratt (2007) also explains the need to move an organization ahead following a crisis. Analyzing the past situation, making policy changes, and revamping the crisis plan to reflect lessons learned from the incident. Pratt neglects the need to use specialized two-way symmetric communication to rebuild the organization's reputation. The public and specific company stakeholders must know the company is taking measures to prevent the incident from occurring again and feel like they have an impact on the behavior of the organization.

Two-way symmetric communication is as essential in the recovery phase of crisis management as the preparation and response phases. Key publics need to know an organization is doing everything possible to prevent future crises, and those publics need to feel they have a say in how the organization progresses after a crisis. This give-and-take communication will aid in rebuilding and reinforcing a positive reputation, which will aid in future crises.

Problem 3 - The literature is not theoretically systematic or thorough – the information fails to look at all elements of the communication model.

The pool of research available for the recovery phase of crisis management is very small. None of the research found applied in this problem category. Crisis-management scholars and consultants still need to understand the importance of applying the communication model to the recovery phase of crisis communication.

The same hindrances can occur in this phase of crisis management as in the preparation and response phases. Experts tend to ignore environment/context, channels, and noise. Message corruption can be avoided through an understanding of the situation surrounding the message and message recipients, potential problems with message channels, and combating of noise interference.

The same problems are found in research of the recovery phase as that of preparation and response phases despite the limited collection of research. Case studies need hard evidence proving the theoretical assumption applies in many circumstances and with many organizations. Researchers and organizations also need to remember that two-way symmetrical communication is essential in all aspects of organizational life. The recovery phase provides an opportunity to build a positive reputation, reassure key publics of the organization's interest in their opinions, and desire to provide the best service possible.

Chapter 7

Discussion

The reputations of Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, Citibank, and Washington Mutual and other organizations involved in the 2008 bailouts may never recover from the negative publicity generated by the scandalous actions of the corporate executives and the need for taxpayer money to continue successful business operations. The public will never know if a change in public relations, ethics, or crisis planning could have prevented the strike against the reputations of those companies. The nature of the organizations forces the American public to continue business relationships with the companies whether they want to or not. However, crisis researchers and crisis managers can benefit from this occurrence and add this new type of crisis to the pool of experiences for furthering crisis-management tactics.

This study has presented three problems with current crisis-management literature.

1. The case based literature exhibits incomplete inductions – case analysis does not end with theory easily generalized across other crises and/or other organizations.

2. Foundational public relations are not addressed adequately – the literature does not take into consideration the importance of message development and dissemination from organization to public as well as from public to organization.

3. The literature is not theoretically systematic or thorough – the information fails to look at all elements of the communication model.

These three problems resulted from eight reasons that illustrated a need for extensive review of current crisis-management literature to further the field of research. Crisis research over the last ten years explained many necessary and beneficial tactics and findings to expand the field of crisis management.

After the problems found in the research, a brief history of crisis-management research led to the collection of the three phases of crisis management: preparation, response, and recovery. The preparation and response phases each had a significant amount of research over the past ten years with the response phase carrying the focus.

The recovery phase lacked research of any kind but specifically theoretical research leading to tactic building and guidance for organizations recovering from crisis. Organizations must understand public relations are not the same even after the fires have gone out and the media has disappeared. The recovery phase is continual, informing key publics of what the organization is doing to prevent and prepare for future problems. There are no distinct lines between preparation, response, and recovery. For example, image repair starts in the response phase and continues into the recovery phase. In the recovery phase, image repair focuses on building relationships, not on apologizing, denying, or making restitution. An organization evaluates the crisis plan during the recovery phase to learn from mistakes. That evaluation bleeds into the preparation phase and the cycle starts all over again. The blurred line between phases allows for some confusion as to where tactics belong, but the response phase has definite needs that must be met for an organization to continue reputational success.

Those phases set the framework for the evaluation of the literature by phase based on the three problems. The first problem addressed the nature of case based research. Case study research is essential in the recognition of new and successful crisis-management techniques. Past research successfully analyzes specific cases and finds tactics successful or ineffective in those instances. These studies provide organizations with similar characteristics to find potential alternatives for crisis-management success. Each phase -- preparation, response, and recovery -- needs case studies to learn from past mistakes and develop new tactical theory. The key in

applying that theory to multiple organizations is to use the findings of case studies, test them across different organizations to determine applicability, and then present them in a generalized form for appropriate use to varying organizations. Theoretical research can use case studies to illustrate the success of proven tactics. Comparing the tactics and findings in similar case studies may lead to an understanding of how certain tactics apply in specific circumstances.

Case studies also provide a resource for collecting crisis typologies. Past research does not agree on one type of genre classification for crises. The collection of case studies in this work provides a starting point to develop a comprehensive list of potential crises. The collection of past crises allows for better prediction of future crises that can be updated as new types of problems occur.

Risk management is part of crisis management. Case studies provide the information needed to create accurate risk communication involved in educating the public on potential risks and prevent those risks from manifesting as crises. This study provides a source for developing sound risk-assessment models through the same process of collecting case studies and using them to develop a conglomeration of potential risks. Past case studies provide optimal information about potential risks in all types of organizations. The case collection in this study is a starting point for organizations to identify all potential risks and prepare for prospective crises. The review of current crisis literature provides a source that applies to many different types of organizations and crises.

The second problem addressed the lack of foundational public relations in current crisis literature, specifically two-way symmetric communication with key publics (employees, stakeholders, stockholders, customers, and the community). Positive reputation development and maintenance requires constant communication to key publics and from key publics. When key

publics understand an organization's values their welfare and their opinions, those publics are

more likely to support the company during a perilous time and stick through the recovery

process. Organizations need to implement a system for audience and stakeholder analysis to

evaluate their efforts at two-way symmetric communication and use the feedback to adjust

communication efforts to meet the needs of key publics. The literature analysis involved in this

study provides a stepping-stone for future development of theory for creating efficient two-way

symmetrical communication between organizations and the public.

The third problem, literature was not systematic or thorough, evolved into a specific

problem with the communication model. The foundations of good public relations are also the

foundations of good crisis management. Public relations are about messages and the effective

delivery of messages. The foundation of message delivery is the communication model. This

analysis of literature found insufficient coverage of several aspects of the communication model,

but one specific area left out of almost all research was noise. Noise causes misinterpretations of

key messages. Organizations must combat noise for the public to understand the true meaning of

their messages. Message-hindering noise is everywhere. Crisis managers cannot simply develop

and send crisis-management messages. Anything can get in the way of message delivery. Time is

a key element during a crisis. Organizations need to understand message-hindering noise and

develop ways to combat that delay in crisis communication.

The communication model includes message delivery channels. Crisis research tends to

focus more on the development of messages and less on the need to send those messages through

correct channels to reach target audiences efficiently. These channels may consist of mainstream

media outlets or may include non-mainstream channels such as grassroots campaigns, phone

trees, social networking, or text messaging. Crisis managers need to pinpoint the most effective

channels for communication with key publics and make those channels as noise-free as possible.

The research process found a few exceptions throughout the literature. Some collections

found in crisis-management research address all of the problems discussed in this study.

However, these exceptions are the minority in crisis research. The bulk of the literature falls

under one of the three problems of this study.

Heath and O'Hair (2009) edited a collection of works supporting an understanding of

risk and crisis communication. This book includes mostly chapters directed at a generalized

occupation of organizations. While each chapter may have specific problems, together the

collection meets the criteria set up for this study. Many areas cover the effect culture has on

crisis response. (Heath & O'Hair, 2009, p. 14-22; Tansey & Rayner, 2009). Other aspects of the

communication model are also included in Heath and O'Hair's collection: message and message

design (Covello, 2009, pp. 157-159; Andersen & Spitzberg, 2009, pp. 214-215), noise (Covello,

2009, pp. 145-146; Andersen & Spitzberg, 2009, p. 216), and channels including media, Internet,

etc. (Coombs, 2009, pp. 103-104; Palmlund, 2009, pp. 194-195; Andersen & Spitzberg, 2009,

pp. 217-221).

The book also includes sections detailing the need for two-way communication and

public participation before and during a crisis (Bowen, 2009, p. 348; McComas, Arvai, &

Besley, 2009; Heath, Palenchar, & O'Hair, 2009), sections defining the use of new technology

in crisis (Hallahan, 2009; Neuwirth, 2009, p. 407), and ways that media can cause a crisis (Allen,

Angie, Davis, Byrne, O'Hair, Connelly, & Mumford, 2009). Heath and O'Hair include a section

specifically for contextual account of crisis communication. The cases in this section help to

support information given in other sections of the book and allow for specific guidelines in

certain areas of crisis and risk communication. Unfortunately, the book does not address

specifically the recovery period of crisis management and how to rebuild organizational

communication after a disaster. In the areas of Preparation and Response Heath and O'Hair have

put together a collection of works that at least address the problems previously discussed in this

study.

Millar and Heath (2004) also provided a collection of works that partially cover the

problems discussed earlier in the study. The book is separated into the three response phases:

Preparation, Response, and Recovery. The Preparation section includes works that cover all

aspects of the communication model, establish a foundational public relations approach to crisis

management, and illustrate key points and tactics using cases.

The Preparation section of the book not only discusses the importance of a crisis-

management plan, but also the importance of communicating that plan in a two-way symmetrical

manner to key publics (Stacks, 2004). The section includes the importance of discovering all

potential environments for crises based on theory rather than case-driven analysis (Coombs &

Holladay, 2004). Borda and Mackey-Kallis (2004) add to the effectiveness of the book by

illustrating the need to thoroughly define the target audiences and understand the techniques

needed to communicate successfully the corporate messages to those audiences.

The Response and Recovery sections of the book do not vehemently address tactical

approaches to successful crisis absolution. The works include a qualitative look at how the public

views a crisis metaphorically (Millar & Beck, 2004) and how to use narrative to make crisis

response systematic and clear (Heath, 2004). The Recovery section includes image restoration

discourse (which was previously placed in Response) (Benoit, 2004) and the importance of

internal communication when involved in post-crisis workforce reduction (Leeper, 2004). The

Response and Recovery parts of this book do not cover the problems previously discussed in the literature, but this book has been included in the exceptions section because of the excellence of the crisis preparation materials provided.

Coombs and Holladay (2010) have put together a potential exception to the problems analyzed in this study. Their book *Handbook of Crisis Communication* is not released at this time. Amazon.com described the book as having a comprehensive look at research, methods, and issues in crisis communication. The book includes input from 50 top organizational crisis scholars, analyzes popular case studies, and examines new technology. Unfortunately, at this time, the book is several months from its release date and cannot be included in this study, but reviews from amazon.com place it as a potential exception to the problems found in this study.

Research in the field of crisis management has become more complicated as new crises develop. Organizations desperately seek a cure-all for potential crises. Unfortunately, there is no cure-all, and in the attempt to develop one, a portion of theoretical research has become too complex for application. The field needs to "get back to the basics" of crisis management. Theoretical research needs to include the importance of two-way symmetric communication and all aspects of the communication model in tactical development. These two keys are essential to crisis-management success. Future research should also include a comprehensive view of case studies to develop a full crisis typology and aid in future risk-assessment models, and studying tactics specific to corporate recovery following a crisis.

Crisis is a part of organizational life. Management plans are not based on "if" but "when" a crisis occurs. John F. Kennedy said, "When written in Chinese, the word 'crisis' is composed of two characters - one represents danger, and the other represents opportunity." Powerful and

direct research based on foundational public relations and structured through case support and

analysis advances the field, and provides opportunities for successful organizational recovery.

Appendix I

COMMUNICATION MODEL

Field of Experience

Field of Experience

Environment/
Context

Noise

Feedback/Channel

Noise

Noise

Message/Channel

Source/Sender/Receiver

Source/Sender/Receiver

Noise

Noise

Feedback/Channel

Noise

Noise
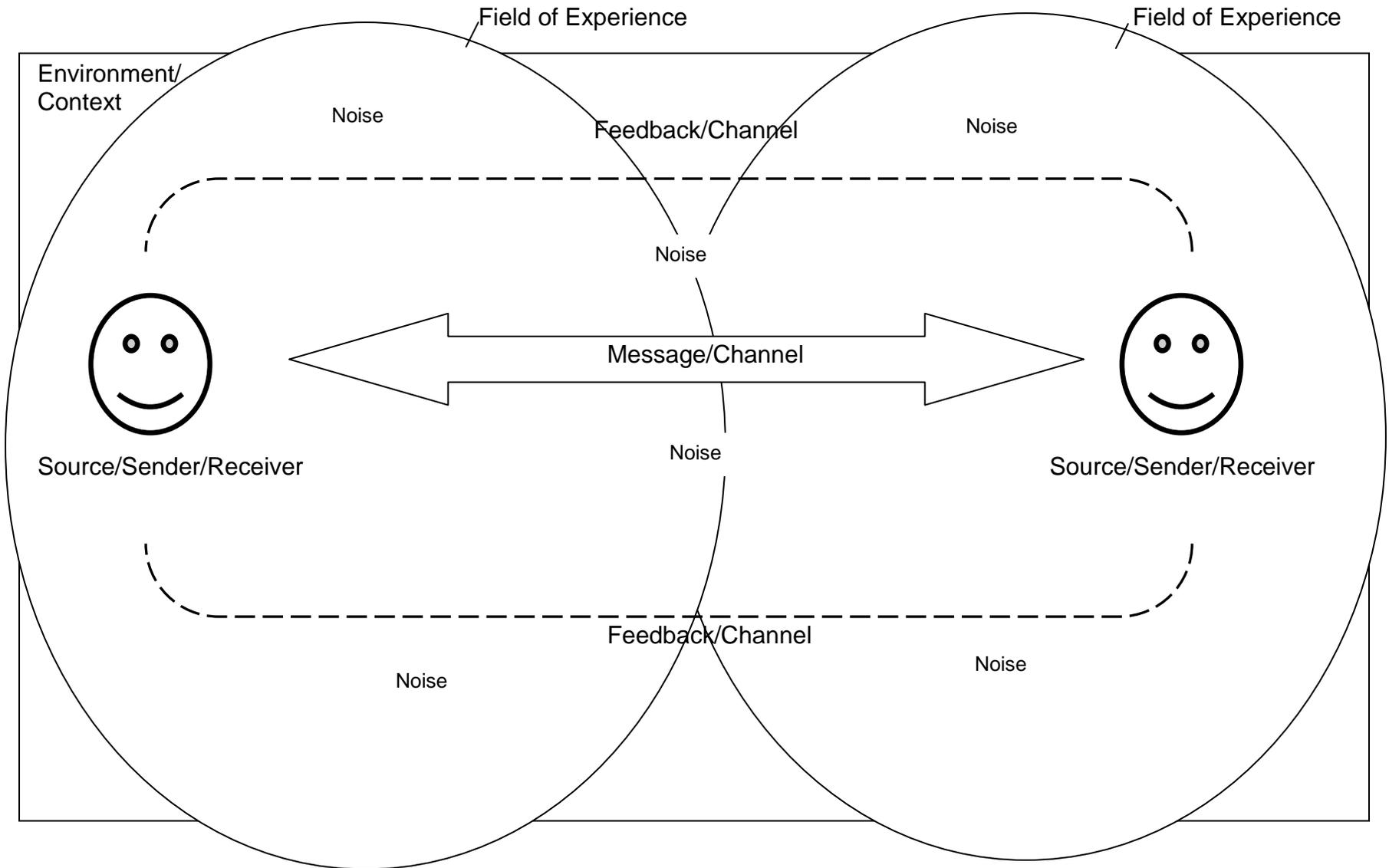
Appendix II

CRISIS COMMUNICATION MODEL

Field of Experience

Field of Experience

Environment/
Context

Noise/Channel
Disruption

Noise/Channel
Disruption

Two-way Symmetric Communication/Channel

Noise/Channel
Disruption

Message/Channel/Two-way Symmetric Communication

Organization

Noise/Channel
Disruption

Key Public/Stakeholders

Two-way Symmetric Communication/Channel

Noise/Channel
Disruption

Noise/Channel
Disruption

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Vita

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