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The role of emotions in crisis responses: Inaugural test of the integrated crisis mapping (ICM) model

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The role of emotions in crisis responses

Inaugural test of the integrated crisis mapping (ICM) model

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to extend current theories in crisis communication, by developing a more systemic approach to understanding the role of emotions in crises and the strategies organizations can use to respond. The authors' integrated crisis mapping (ICM) model is premised on a public-based, emotion-driven perspective where different crises are mapped on two continua, the organization's engagement in the crisis and primary public's coping strategy.

Design/methodology/approach – Content analysis was used to analyze 259 stories in US mainstream newspaper covering five different crisis cases.

Findings – The initial test suggests theoretical rigor. It found that publics involved in crises pertaining to reputational damage, technological breakdown, industrial matters, labor unrest, and regulation/legislation, are likely to feel anxious, angry, and sad. At the same time, they are likely to engage in conative coping.

Originality/value – Understanding publics' emotions in crisis is a rarely studied area. This model is arguably the first to suggest a framework of emotions. This study is the first of a series of tests to generate what Yin termed "analytic generalization" for the ICM model.

Keywords Corporate communications, Communication management, Emotional intelligence, Public relations, United States of America

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

How to shape the appropriate strategies in response to a crisis is critical for any given organization and public relations (PR) practitioner working in the field of crisis communication. Given that the goals of crisis communication, defined as the "ongoing dialogue between the organization and its publics" prior to, during, and after the crisis (Fearn-Banks, 2002, p. 2), are to restore organizational normalcy, influence public perception, and regain and repair image and reputation, strategies used should be "designed to minimize damage to the image of the organization". Lukaszweski (1997, p. 8)

argued that the strategic management of message response in crisis communication is a "fundamental communication principle". Designing sound strategic communications and tactics to communicate crisis so as to minimize damage to the image of the organization has been described as a paramount responsibility (Stocker, 1997). Grunig (2001) articulated four principles (relationship, accountability, disclosure, and symmetrical communication) of crisis communications, which highlight the important role PR plays in crisis situations. While most of these strategies are often characterized as direct responses to the crisis (Cowden and Sellnow, 2002; Fearn-Banks, 2002; Fink, 1986; Harrison, 1999; Massey, 2001; Pauchant and Mitroff, 1992; Seeger and Ulmer, 2002; Ulmer, 2001), Ray (1999, p. 20) argued that strategies would either:

- deny the crisis exists;
- provide "partial, inaccurate, or delayed information"; or
- maintain an open communication channels with constituents.

Arguably, the two dominant theories on crisis strategies, Benoit's (Benoit, 1995, 1997, 2004; Benoit and Brinson, 1994; Brinson and Benoit, 1999) image repair strategies and Coombs' (1995, 1998, 2007) situational crisis communication strategies, are designed to understand what strategies are relevant to use under what circumstances. These often stem from a situation-based response to crisis. The image repair theory is appropriate to be used when the situation leads to a loss of face. When face is threatened, face works is used to repair image, argued Benoit and Brinson (1994). This usually occurs when the accused is believed to have committed an offensive act by its salient audience (Benoit, 2004). Coombs' (1998) strategies are positioned according to the situation based on the types of crises and the organization's *locus* of control. On one hand, when the organization is deemed to have strong personal control over the crisis, more accommodative strategies like full apology are recommended for use. On the other hand, when the organization has weak control over the crisis, more defensive strategies like attack and denial are recommended.

While, these situation-based crisis responses serve as vital roadmaps to understand the crisis situation, it is argued that a more universal and systemic approach would be to shape crisis responses from an emotion-based perspective: to understand what are the emotional upheavals that the public involved in the crisis are likely to experience so that organizations can streamline their strategies to address their specific needs. Previous studies have found that the perception of a crisis, particularly from a given public, is not strictly a function of an environmental stimulus itself, but involves an interpretation of the stimulus (Carver and Blaney, 1977). Emotion is argued to be a critical stimulus. Lazarus (1991, p. 38) defined emotion as "organized cognitive-motivational-relational configurations whose status changes with changes in the person-environment relationship as this is perceived and evaluated (appraisal)". In a crisis, as the conflict between the public and the organization escalates, emotions are one of the anchors in the publics' interpretation of what is unfolding, changing, and shaping. Earlier emotion related crisis communication research focused on the impact of general positive and negative affective states on decision processes. For example, Coombs and Holladay (2005) proposed that crisis responsibility is related to the affect created by a crisis: stronger perceptions of crisis responsibility should strengthen the negative affect while lower perceptions of crisis responsibility should be related to positive affect. Coombs and Holladay (2005) also identified three emotions from attribution theory

particularly salient to crisis management: sympathy, anger, and *schadenfreude* (taking joy from the pain of the organization).

Jin *et al.* (2007) have developed a new conceptualization called the integrated crisis mapping model (ICM) aimed at understanding the diverse and varied emotions likely to be experienced by the key stakeholders in crises. Dominant emotions in the ICM model, developed from integrating works from psychology and crises literature, are extrapolated on two continua. On the *X*-axis is the publics' coping strategy (from cognitive to conative coping), which consists of the primary public's cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external or internal demands and on the *Y*-axis is the level of organizational engagement (from high to low)[1]. Different types of crises, drawn from the crisis literature, are mapped into each of the four quadrants, with the dominant and secondary emotions posited. As an initial attempt to test the theoretical robustness and ecological validity of the ICM model, this study examines five crises posited in the first quadrant hypothesized to require the publics' conative coping and high organizational engagement, where the primary emotion identified is anger, followed by anxiety. These cases are studied for their instrumental value rather than intrinsic value.

This study is significant on four fronts. First, we attempt to understand how an organization and its primary public appraise a crisis; second, how different organizational engagement levels and public coping strategies can lead to different positioning on the crisis map driven by the primary emotion conjured in the primary public; and third, how different crisis mapping can impact organizational responses. Four, and more significantly, this represents our initial attempt to build a new theoretical framework. Saunders (2004, p. 140) argued that applying theory to real life situations is "useful towards theory building" because such situations "provide observations grounded in actual organizational efforts aimed at solving actual organizational problems". Five cases of the same phenomenon were explored in order to construct a more robust study (Yin, 1993). This study represents the first of subsequent empirical tests to understand the theoretical and practical rigors of our ICM model. Through the building of this model, it is the authors' goal to advance our current understanding in crisis communication and offers practical insights to scholars and practitioners on how they can understand, with greater preciseness, the emotional upheavals their primary public are likely to experience so that they can shape the appropriate crisis responses and tools to manage the crisis with optimal effectiveness.

2. Theoretical framework: ICM model

2.1 Public responses based on key emotions

Public are a "group of people who face a common issue" (Gonzalez-Herrero and Pratt, 1996, p. 84). Grunig's situational theory of public stated that the general public can be segmented into different categories of public based on their communication behavior. Three independent variables, i.e. problem recognition, constraint recognition, and level of involvement, are proposed to be capable of predicting why and when people are likely to communicate Grunig (1997). In a crisis, the public have been defined differently, according to their importance to resolving situation (Lukaszweski, 1997), their functional roles (Dougherty, 1992), and their long-term influences (Ulmer, 2001). Based on previous literature, we propose that in crisis situations the primary public comprise the following characteristics:

- they are most affected by the crisis at the levels of cognition, emotion, and behavior;
- they have shared common interests, and destiny, in seeing the crisis resolved; and
- they have long-term interests, and influences, on the organization's reputation and operation.

However, there is a lack of a crisis-specific and systematic approach to understanding crisis-public identification and segmentation as a reflection of the complex nature of crisis situations, the crisis-derived constraints and the upheavals of emotions in crises. For example, the central concept of situational theory, level of involvement, was defined as the extent people attach themselves to a situation (Grunig and Hunt, 1984), which occurs as a function of prior knowledge or relevance/salience/importance. It has been clearly placed as an antecedent condition to interest and arousal (Grunig, 1969, 1978, 1988), which is more cognitive in nature as a judgment and is not directly related to the emotional process itself. To move beyond sole focus on cognitive perceptions of public in crisis, we proposed to examine the realm of emotions and affective impacts on various public in a spectrum of crisis situations.

Emotion researchers have studied human emotions from diverse points of view, such as bio-information, arousal of activation, and cognitive appraisal, with empirical evidence of emotional effects on memory, evaluation, judgment, information processing, as well as behavior and relationship (Bless, 2000; Booth-Butterfield and Booth-Butterfield, 1990; Cacioppo and Petty, 1989; Lazarus, 1982, 1991; Murry and Dacin, 1995; Rusting, 1998; Tiedens and Linton, 2001). Cognitive appraisal of emotions is one of the most well-established and well-applied emotion research streams in emotion research. Lazarus (1991, p. 38), the main contributor to the integrated cognitive-based emotion research stream, defined emotion as "organized cognitive-motivational-relational configurations whose status changes with changes in the person-environment relationship as this is perceived and evaluated (appraisal)". According to Lazarus, emotion is a mental state of readiness as response to the appraisal of the environment and one's own thoughts. Emotion can be generated by stimuli at present, in retrospection or in anticipation, as a result of cognitive effort or evaluative judgment of the relevance of the stimuli. Specifically, "appraisal" is the judgment or evaluation based on the cognitive-based goals at the given situation, and "relevance" refers to the relationship between the episode/event to the person's own well-being. Without appraisal, there is no emotion.

Consequently, research has found that people make judgments and decisions by inspecting their feelings and interpreting what these feelings mean for the issue at hand. Their perception of a crisis is not strictly a function of an environmental stimulus itself, but involves an interpretation of the crisis situations (Carver and Blaney, 1977). According to risk-as-feeling hypothesis, emotional reactions to risks can diverge from cognitive evaluations of the same risks. Applying the cognitive appraisal perspective in crisis communication, Jin *et al.* (2007) have developed a theoretical framework to understand the primary publics' crisis responses, as evidenced by the predominant emotion elicited by different types of crises. Four negative emotions (anger, fright, anxiety, and sadness) are identified as the dominant emotions that are most likely to be experienced by the public in crisis situations.

2.1.1 Anger. The core relational theme underlying anger is a demanding offense against "me" and "mine" (Lazarus, 1991). In crisis situation, the primary public tend to

experience anger when facing a demanding offense from certain organization against them or their well-being. The ego-involvement of the public is engaged to preserve or enhance their identity or benefit in the situation. There is usually an issue of blaming that derives from the knowledge that the organization is accountable for the harmful actions and they could have been controlled or even prevented by the organization. The primary public might potentially favor attack as the strategy in facing the organization. At the stance and strategy levels, though sometimes the public may appear cooperative, anger can be expressed indirectly in passively aggressive tactics. Reports of felt anger were found to increase as perceptions of crisis responsibilities intensify (Coombs and Holladay, 2005).

2.1.2 Fright. The core relational theme underneath fright is facing uncertain and existential threat (Lazarus, 1991). The public is not certain about how to cope with the loss as well as how the engaged organization may handle this situation. Depending on their resource and power, they may choose avoidance or escape from the crisis as a viable recourse.

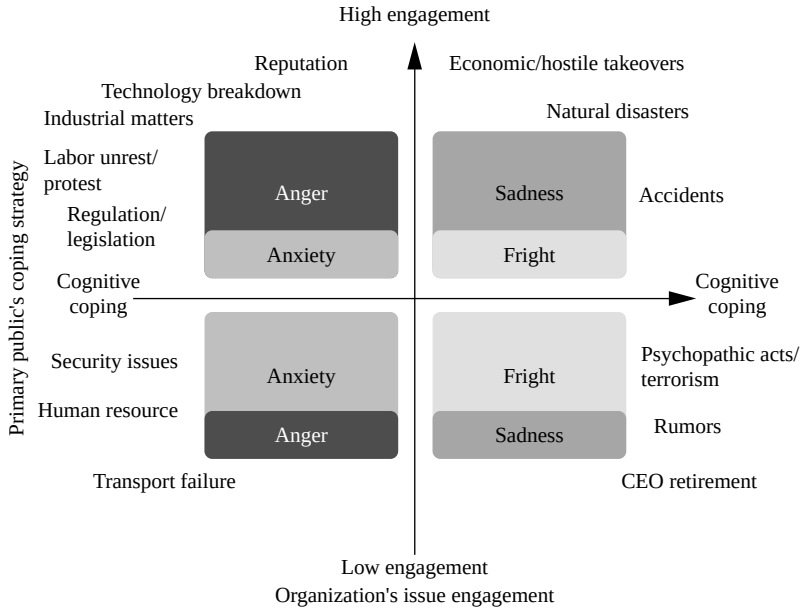
2.1.3 Anxiety. By definition, anxiety stems from the core relational theme as facing an immediate, concrete, and overwhelming danger (Lazarus, 1991). The public may feel overwhelmed by the crisis situation and look for the immediate solutions. Their ego-involvement is evidenced as the effort to protect their own ego-identity against the organization whom they perceive to be the direct source of existential threat. They might blame or not blame the organization depending on their environment assessment. Given the uncertainty of how to cope with the situation and what the organization might react, they tend to avoid and escape.

2.1.4 Sadness. Having experienced an irrevocable loss is the core relational theme of the emotion of sadness (Lazarus, 1991). Here, the public suffers from tangible or intangible loss or both. Their goal of survival is threatened and this loss of any type of ego-involvement (e.g. esteem, moral values, ideal, people, and their well-being) caused by circumstances beyond their control may lead them in desperate need for relief and comfort. If they perceive the loss can be restored or compensated for, their sadness may not occur or will be associated with hope. The action tendency of the public might well depend on what measures the organization may take.

Another key concept in appraisal model of emotion is the different levels of emotions felt at a given time towards a given stimulus. The primary level emotion is the one the public experiences at the first, or immediate, instance. The secondary level emotion is one the public experiences in subsequent instances, as time goes by, and contingent upon the organization's responses to the crisis. The secondary level emotion may be transferred from the dominant emotion or coexisting with the primary level. In this study, we focus on the quadrant with anger as the primary emotion and anxiety as the secondary emotion (Quadrant 1) as conjured by crises in reputational damage, technological breakdown, industrial crisis, labor unrest/protest, and regulation/legislation.

2.2 Operationalization of the ICM model

As Figure 1 shows, the ICM model is indicated by a crisis matrix based on two axes: the analysis of the organizational engagement level in the crisis that can be examined through a scale of high and low engagement, and the primary public's coping strategy from conative coping to cognitive coping. It is argued that for effective crisis management, the organization, at varied engagement levels in different issues, must understand the



Source: Jin *et al.* (2007)

primary publics' emotional demands so as to communicate accordingly and align with the coping strategy needed by the primary public (Jin *et al.*, 2007).

On the *X*-axis is the public's coping strategy. Coping is the vital concept in appraisal theory of emotions. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) proposed two types of coping:

(1) Problem-focused coping (an attempt to manipulate the environment to reduce stress), which involves efforts to modify the problem at hand and typically includes elements such as generating options to solve the problem, evaluating pros and cons of different options, and implementing steps to solve the problem.

(2) Emotion-focused (re-appraisal of the environment stimuli), which is defined as aiming to manage the emotional distress that is associated with the situation. Emotion-focused strategies range from denial, venting of emotions, positive interpretation of events, to seeking out social support (Baker and Berenbaum, 2007).

Adapting the cognitive appraisal framework of coping in crisis situations, we posit:

(1) Cognative coping as the public trying to manage the situation so as to alter a troubled relationship or to sustain a desirable one by taking actions or at least show their tendency of action, which corresponds to Lazarus' concept of problem-focused coping, aiming at changing the actual relationship between the public and the organization via actual measures and steps.

(2) Cognitive coping as the public trying to sort out a way of thinking or interpreting the meaning of the crisis with regard to their well-being, which

corresponds to Lazarus' concept of emotion-focused coping, aiming at changing only the way the relationship is interpreted by the public.

Anchoring these two coping strategies to the axis, different primary public in different crises may choose different coping strategy along this continuum. Therefore, this *X*-axis consists of cognitive (reappraisal of emotions) and behavioral (problem-solving) efforts to manage specific external or internal demands (and conflicts between them) that are appraised as exceeding the resources of the public.

On the *Y*-axis is the level of organizational engagement, ranging from high to low. Jin *et al.* (2007) defined high organizational engagement as intense, consolidated, sustained, and high priority in allocation of resources to deal with the crisis; on the contrary, low organizational engagement does not mean cursory or no engagement, but that the organization devotes comparatively less resources, effort, and energy to deal with the crisis, either because the organization recognizes there is little it can do, or when the organization did not cause the crisis, it is depending on external help, like a regulatory agency, to help it resolve the crisis.

The two axes further form four quadrants in the crisis matrix: Quadrant 1 (high engagement/conative coping), Quadrant 2 (high engagement/cognitive coping), Quadrant 3 (low engagement/cognitive coping), and Quadrant 4 (low engagement/conative coping). In each of the quadrants is the dominant emotions (primary and secondary), based on the confluence, interactions, and inter-relations of the publics' coping strategy as well as organizational engagement.

In this study, which is the first of empirical tests to examine the theoretical and practical rigors of our model, we focused on testing the *X*-axis, the coping continuum of Quadrant 1 (high engagement/conative coping): anger is fueled, and abated, by the organization's high engagement. On the immediate level, the public may feel angry because they held the organization responsible. On the secondary level, they may feel anxious when they feel the organization is not doing enough. The conative coping strategy is driven by action tendency, the feeling that the public can, and must do something about the situation.

Given the proposed attributes of crises in this quadrant, we seek to understand, through the five cases:

RQ1. What are the primary emotions displayed by the primary public?

According to Lazarus (1991), after the evaluation of one's options and resources for coping with the situation, decision on future prospects needs to be made such as whether action is required, and if so, what kind of action ought to be taken. In a crisis situation, blaming takes precedence over credits. The coping potential, and future expectancy, specify any given action the public or the organization might take to prevent harm, and how it manages the demands of the crisis situation, and whether the strategy is feasible, and what result is expected. Thus, we seek to examine:

RQ2. What coping strategies are evident in the primary public? What, if any, is the difference in perception of the degree of the public's coping strategy between the organization and the public?

2.3 Organizational stance and strategies

Cancel *et al.* (1997) first introduced the notion of organizational stance in the contingency theory of strategic conflict management. Stances were measured through a continuum

from advocacy to accommodation. Between the two ends were a wide range of operational stances and these entailed different degrees of advocacy and accommodation (Cameron *et al.*, 2008). Jin and Cameron (2006) further developed a scale measuring stance as degree of action-based accommodation and qualified-rhetoric-mixed accommodation. Within an organization, the contingency theory had identified more than 80 variables, categorized into 11 themes, which could affect stance movement along the continuum (Cameron *et al.*, 2008). One's stance necessarily affects one's strategies (Pang, 2006). Coombs (1998) alluded to a natural integration of stance and strategy. Using terms that are synonymous with contingency theory's stance, Coombs (1998) argued that an organization's reaction to conflict might vary from defensive to accommodation. Defensive strategies include attack the accuser, denial, excuse, and justification, while accommodative strategies include ingratiation, corrective action, and full apology.

To study the full range of advocacy or accommodation undertaken by the organization towards its public and vice versa based on the understanding of primary publics' emotions, we have adapted Coombs' (1998) crisis communication strategies into the contingency framework, and extend our study to examine:

RQ3. What stance (action-based versus qualified-rhetoric) did the organizations take towards its primary public? What contingent factor appears to influence this stance? How does this affect the strategy used?

3. Method

We attempted to understand the veracity and rigor of the ICM model through content analyses of crisis cases. Case studies allow the researcher to delve into and explain, the uniqueness and complexity of organizational processes, and as Gummesson (2000) argued, to capture the essential processes of decision-making, implementation, and change. The purpose of case studies is to empirically investigate a "contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context" and address a "situation in which the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (Yin, 1993, p. 59). In this study, we adopt a multiple case study design within the same phenomenon, with the primary interest of understanding how the ICM model works. The cases are thus studied for their instrumental value rather than intrinsic value (Stake, 1998). Though the cases are analyzed in detail, contexts examined, and activities explored, these play supporting roles to the researchers' objectives, which are to facilitate understanding of how relevant they are to the model. Consequently, by applying the method on five disparately managed cases, Yin (1993, p. 64) argued, is an appropriate initial attempt at theory testing, with the aim of building "analytic generalizations" (Yin, 2003, p. 33) from the conceptualization.

Kaid (1996) argued that analyses of crisis events through media coverage are well-trodden paths taken by researchers. Owing to the rapidity, abruptness, and volatility in each of the crises, and the exigency and imperativeness to respond to the crisis, both on the organizational as well as the publics' side as rapidly as possible, analysis of news coverage is argued to provide, to a large extent, an expeditious, fair, and present representation of the crisis. For instance, Carey (2003, p. 6), in analyzing the uses of media in reporting the 9/11 crisis, had described media reportage of the crisis as "robust". Journalism, in its purest form, is capturing and recording history in the making, and we argue that studying news coverage is one way to capture the

unfolding drama of the crises. Indeed, previous works analyzing crises through media coverage had proved insightful. For instance, Reber *et al.* (2003) examined the dynamics of a hostile takeover using media sources. Jin *et al.* (2006), Pang *et al.* (2004), and Meng and Berger (2008) examined how governments managed health crises by analyzing prestige newspapers, which was the forum of public discourse between the governments and respective public during the crises. Shin *et al.* (2005) examined the life cycle and resolution of high profile conflicts as evidence in the news coverage, which revealed the high relevance and meaningfulness of the integration of journalistic conflict coverage and PR process representation. Our rationale is that with every quick turn of events during the crisis, the media, particularly the prestige newspapers, would be at the forefront of reporting the crisis. Even though there might be some elements of bias and subjectivity in some of these news reports, we believe that prestige newspapers, as argued by Krippendorff (2004) and Riffe *et al.* (1998), would project a fair representation of what had happened. Noll (2003, p. 18) argued that media content may be studied to "verify assumptions of content", and we argue that in our verification of content, we had examined beyond media framing to distilling to its fundamental forms what were the key ingredients in each crisis with the primary goal of shedding light to our model, not to prove or disprove media biases. The intention was not just to capture the rapidly unfolding communication between the organizations and their public as enumerated in documents of public record. The study of each of the crises was centered on the height of the crisis, i.e. the first month(s) of the crisis.

3.1 Sample

Five crises that matched the crisis types are selected based on the suggestions of a group of PR practitioners and educators. Shin *et al.* (2005) found this to be a viable way of identifying the appropriate crises to analyze. The five cases are: Hewlett Packard (HP) case, an example of reputational damage; Dell's battery recall, an example of technological breakdown; the Sago mining crisis, an example of industrial crisis; Ford Motors' job cuts, an example of labor unrest/protest; and Military Commissions Act of 2006, an example of regulatory/legislative minefield.

Data to examine Quadrant 1 of the ICM model comes from content analyses of the population of stories published in the largest circulating and widely influential national newspapers, *USA Today, Wall Street Journal, New York Times, Los Angeles Times*, and *Washington Post* (Audit Bureau of Circulations, 2006; Viguerie and Franke, 2004). News stories in the five major newspapers ($n = 259$)[2] were uploaded from Lexis-Nexis by typing in the keywords of the organization and the crisis. News stories were excluded if:

- there was no comment made by a spokesperson from the respective organization or official from the organization or no mention of any official communication from the organization; or
- the stories were in the same publication or there was no mention of the crisis. The respective organizations' web sites were accessed to analyze their official announcements through press releases.

However, as such information were not available in two of the five cases, namely the Ford Motors and Military Commissions Act 2006 cases, the authors decided to analyze only media coverage for all cases for more comparable analyses (see Appendix for the details of the cases).

3.2 Coding instrument

The unit of analysis is defined as a news story. This includes stories by the staff of the newspaper and wire stories from the editors. The 259 stories were coded for the following variables:

3.2.1 Primary public's coping strategy. First, primary public's willingness to change their opinion of the crisis (cognitive coping) was measured on a seven-point Likert like scale, where 1 was "not evident". Specifically, 1 stands for "Public is not willing to change its perception of the crisis, e.g. the crisis is what it is and there is no need to explain it further or change the angle of looking at it"; 2 stands for "Public mentions examining the crisis further without detailed plan or explanation"; 3 stands for "Public tries slightly different ways to explain the crisis, but essentially it keeps the same perspective on the crisis"; 4 stands for "Public remains neutral and does not seem to be willing, nor unwilling, to address the crisis"; 5 stands for "Public is willing to readdress the crisis from different perspective"; 6 stands for "Public is proactive in re-addressing the crisis, providing different angles and explanations of what happened"; and 7 stands for "Public is extremely proactive in taking another look at the crisis and providing full explanation on the new perception".

Second, primary public's willingness to take actions to address the crisis (conative coping) was measured on a seven-point Likert like scale, where 1 was "not evident", and 7 was "very evident"). The same set of coping strategy variables were also measured from the organization's perspective as evidenced in the news stories. Specifically, 1 stands for "Public is not willing to take any action regarding the crisis"; 2 stands for "Public mentions the possibility of taking measures to address the crisis, without detailed plan"; 3 stands for "Public tries slightly different ways to change the crisis situation, but essentially it keeps the status quo with little identifiable action"; 4 stands for "Public remains neutral and does not seem to be willing, nor unwilling, to take actions to change the crisis situation"; 5 stands for "Public is willing take planned actions to address the crisis"; 6 stands for "Public is proactive in planning steps of actions to fight against the crisis"; and 7 stands for "Public is extremely proactive in taking actions with detailed plans against the crisis".

3.2.2 Public's emotion expressed (from a list of sadness, fright, anger, and sadness). Primary emotion and secondary emotion were measured on a seven-point Likert like scale, where 1 was "not evident (no trace of display of emotion)", and 7 was "very evident (vivid and graphic description of facial expression of the public and direct quote on the emotion expressed)", scoring the highest and second highest among other negative emotions, respectively.

We captured the four emotions by noting their presence or absence expressed in news reports by the primary public, and if they were present, to what extent were they evident. We base our assumption that news stories should capture comments from not just the organization in crisis, but also the people affected by the crisis with the primary public as a major stakeholder. Thus, for a story that reports on how an organization is managing the situation, we assume that reporters would at the same time seek the views of the victims' families or employees. In our codebook, we measure emotion expressed according to the following way:

- 1: No trace of display of emotion.
- 2: Denial of emotion or denying it was affecting them.

- 3: Mention the (specific) emotion, with little description and elaboration of the said emotion.
- 4: Declaration of how they feel and display of emotion.
- 5: Description of the emotion of the public.
- 6: Direct quote on the emotion expressed by the public.
- 7: Vivid and graphic description of facial expression of the public, and direct quote on the emotion expressed.
- 99: Emotion not mentioned in the story.

3.2.3 Organizational stance. Items from Jin and Cameron's (2006) stance inventory were used to examine two clusters of stances as degree of accommodation, on a seven-point Likert-like scale, with 1 as "not evident" and 7 as "very evident":

(1) The organization takes action-based stance towards the public (the organization seems willing to: yield to the public's demands; or agree to follow what the public proposed; or accept the publics' propositions; or agree with the public on future action or procedure; or agree to try the solutions suggested by the public; or any combination of these).

(2) The organization takes qualified-rhetoric-mixed stance towards the public (the organization seems willing to: express regret or apologized to the public; or collaborate with the public in order to solve the problem at hand; or change its own position towards that of the public; or make concessions with the public; or admit wrongdoing; or any combination of these).

3.2.4 Dominant contingent factor. Dominant contingent factor that drives the organization's stance with regards to its public was identified, using the matrix of contingent factors as: external threats, industry environment, general political/social environment/external culture, external public, issue under question, organization's characteristics, influence of PR practitioners, influence of dominant coalition, internal threats, individual characteristics, and relationship characteristics.

3.2.5 Primary crisis response strategy. Primary crisis response strategy was coded according to the crisis response strategies by level of responsibility acceptance: attack, denial, excuse, justification, ingratiation, corrective action, and full apology.

3.2.6 Message attributes. The overall attributes of crisis communication response messages were measured on three continuums, using a seven-point Likert-type scale:

(1) defense-accommodation continuum, with 1 as "defensive" and 7 as "accommodative";

(2) ambiguity-specification continuum, with 1 as "ambiguous" and 7 as "specific"; and

(3) emotion-cognition continuum, with 1 as "emotional" and 7 as "factual".

3.3 Coders and training

Two coders, both graduate students and familiar with the content analysis method, conducted the coding. With the help of a codebook, the coders were given detailed instruction and description of the various categories used and defined in the coding instrument. Sufficient measures have been taken (Krippendorff, 2004) to ensure that the inter-coder reliability achieved was the result of extensive training before the pretest,

followed by pretest. Two practice sessions were held in December 2006 using a randomly-selected 10 percent of the samples of stories to familiarize with the coding instruments. The coders worked independently and were not allowed to consult with each other about the coding. The results were discussed and the disagreements were resolved, which were also reflected in the revision and adjustment of the codebook. After multiple training sessions, based on the 10 percent of the story sample at the final coding pretest, the inter-coder reliability across all coding items achieved 0.84 using Scott's Pi. Before the coders proceeded with the rest of the coding, the remaining disagreements were discussed and the common understanding of the coding items was established. Thereafter, the two coders split the rest of the story sample and finished the rest of the coding separately within a week, based on a well-established satisfactory inter-coder reliability during the development and refinement of the codebook.

4. Results

4.1 Primary emotions

RQ1 examined the primary emotions displayed by the primary public, as evidenced in the news coverage. For HP case, anger was displayed as the primary emotion ($M = 2.22$, $SD = 1.40$, $n = 58$) while anxiety as secondary emotion ($M = 2.09$, $SD = 1.30$, $n = 57$). Sadness ($M = 1.12$, $SD = 0.53$, $n = 58$) and fright ($M = 1.10$, $SD = 0.45$, $n = 58$) were also evident in the news coverage. Anger and anxiety were highly correlated ($r(56) = 0.63$, $p < 0.001$). For Dell case, anger was displayed as the primary emotion ($M = 3.17$, $SD = 2.08$, $n = 12$) while anxiety as secondary emotion ($M = 2.50$, $SD = 1.68$, $n = 12$). Sadness ($M = 1.67$, $SD = 1.23$, $n = 12$) and fright ($M = 1.00$, $SD = 0.00$, $n = 12$) were also evident in the news coverage. However, anger and anxiety were not significantly correlated ($r(9) = 0.26$, ns).

For Sago Mine case, anxiety was displayed as the primary emotion ($M = 4.48$, $SD = 2.06$, $n = 25$) while sadness as secondary emotion ($M = 3.20$, $SD = 2.00$, $n = 25$). Anger ($M = 2.96$, $SD = 2.01$, $n = 25$) and fright ($M = 2.92$, $SD = 1.80$, $n = 25$) were also evident in the news coverage. There were two identifiable "other emotions" ("joy" and "hope", occurred three times and once, respectively). Anxiety and sadness were highly correlated ($r(23) = 0.60$, $p < 0.01$), and there was significant difference in terms of how evident they were in the news coverage ($t(24) = 3.53$, $p < 0.01$)[3].

For Ford case, anxiety was displayed as the primary emotion ($M = 4.17$, $SD = 1.49$, $n = 35$) while sadness as secondary emotion ($M = 2.63$, $SD = 1.72$, $n = 35$). Anger ($M = 1.69$, $SD = 1.08$, $n = 35$) and fright ($M = 2.23$, $SD = 1.59$, $n = 35$) were also evident in the news coverage. Anxiety and sadness were highly correlated ($r(33) = 0.75$, $p < 0.001$), and there was significant difference in terms of how evident they were in the news coverage ($t(34) = 7.96$, $p < 0.001$).

For the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) immigration case leading to the Military Commissions Act 2006, anxiety was displayed as the primary emotion ($M = 2.38$, $SD = 1.42$, $n = 47$) while anger as secondary emotion ($M = 2.02$, $SD = 1.47$, $n = 47$). Sadness ($M = 1.04$, $SD = 0.29$, $n = 47$) and fright ($M = 1.04$, $SD = 0.29$, $n = 47$) were also evident in the news coverage. Anxiety and sadness were significantly correlated ($r(45) = 0.41$, $p < 0.01$).

4.2 Primary publics' coping strategies

RQ2 examined the primary publics' coping strategies, as evident in the news coverage. For HP case, the primary public tended to use more conative coping ($M = 5.14$,

SD = 1.09, $n = 59$) than cognitive coping ($M = 4.53$, SD = 1.19, $n = 59$) ($t(58) = 3.85$, $p < 0.001$). For Dell case, there is no significant difference in its primary publics' coping strategy preference. For Sago Mine case, the primary public tended to use more conative coping ($M = 4.79$, SD = 0.78, $n = 24$) than cognitive coping ($M = 3.96$, SD = 1.33, $t(23) = 2.78$, $p < 0.05$). For Ford case, the primary public tended to use more conative coping ($M = 4.64$, SD = 0.96, $n = 33$) than cognitive coping ($M = 4.27$, SD = 1.21, $n = 33$) ($t(32) = 2.43$, $p < 0.05$). For the CIA immigration case, the primary public tended to use more conative coping ($M = 5.40$, SD = 0.65, $n = 47$) than cognitive coping ($M = 4.74$, SD = 1.13, $n = 47$) ($t(46) = 4.70$, $p < 0.001$). Except for the case involving Dell, the primary public in all the other cases were more willing to take actions to address the crisis than to change their opinion of the crisis.

In terms of the perception of the degree of the publics' coping strategy in between the organization and the public, for the HP and CIA immigration cases, the primary public were more willing to take cognitive coping (HP case: $M = 4.53$, SD = 1.20, $n = 58$; CIA immigration case: $M = 4.74$, SD = 1.13, $n = 47$) than the organization (HP case: $M = 3.86$, SD = 1.26, $n = 58$; CIA immigration case: $M = 3.98$, SD = .99, $n = 47$) (HP case: $t(57) = 3.13$, $p < 0.01$; CIA immigration case: $t(46) = 4.07$, $p < 0.001$) perceived it to be. The primary public were also more willing to take conative coping (HP case: $M = 5.14$, SD = 1.09, $n = 59$; CIA immigration case: $M = 5.40$, SD = 0.65, $n = 47$) than the organization (HP case: $M = 4.46$, SD = 1.33, $n = 59$; CIA immigration case: $M = 4.91$, SD = 1.20, $n = 47$) (HP case: $t(58) = 3.44$, $p < 0.01$; CIA immigration case: $t(46) = 2.49$, $p < 0.05$) perceived it to be. It seems that the primary public in these two cases were more active than the organizations in taking efforts to change opinions and the crisis situations.

For Dell and Ford cases, there was no significant difference in the cognitive coping strategy taking between the primary public and the organization (Dell case: $t(10) = 1.48$, ns; Ford case: $t(32) = 1.44$, ns). Interestingly, the organizations in both cases were more willing to take conative coping (Dell case: $M = 5.92$, SD = 0.80, $n = 11$; Ford case: $M = 5.44$, SD = 0.9, $n = 33$) than the primary public (Dell case: $M = 4.17$, SD = 1.19, $n = 11$; Ford case: $M = 4.63$, SD = 0.98, $n = 33$) (Dell case: $t(10) = 3.78$, $p < 0.01$; Ford case: $t(32) = 3.66$, $p < 0.01$). It seems that these two organizations are more active than the primary public demand in taking efforts to change opinions about the crisis situations.

For Sago Mine case, there was no significant difference in the cognitive and conative coping strategies taking between the primary public and the organization ($t(23) = 1.48$, ns; $t(23) = 1.00$, ns, respectively).

4.3 Organizational stance and strategy

RQ3 examined the stance taken by the organizations towards their primary public, the factors influencing this stance, and the strategy used. For HP and Ford cases, more qualified-rhetoric-mixed accommodation was taken (HP case: $M = 4.55$, SD = 0.863, $n = 82$; Ford case: $M = 4.97$, SD = 0.674, $n = 67$) than action-based accommodation (HP case: $M = 4.37$, SD = 0.882, $n = 82$; Ford case: $M = 4.66$, SD = 0.729, $n = 67$) (HP case: $t(81) = 3.312$, $p < 0.01$; Ford case: $t(66) = 4.218$, $p < 0.001$). For HP case, the influence of dominant coalition (31.7 percent), external threats (25.6 percent), and influence of PR practitioners (24.3 percent) were the dominant contingent factors (χ^2 (36, $n = 259$) = 263.289, $p < 0.001$) appeared to influence these stances. For Dell,

Sago Mine and the CIA immigration cases, there was no significant difference in terms of the two types of stance. The factors in the Dell case appeared to be relationship characteristics (40.0 percent), issue under question (15.0 percent), influence of dominant coalition (15.0 percent), and individual characteristics (15.0 percent) (χ^2 (36, $n = 259$) = 263.289, $p < 0.001$). For Sago mining case, influence of dominant coalition (40.7 percent), relationship characteristics (22.2 percent), and external public (14.8 percent) were the dominant contingent factors (χ^2 (36, $n = 259$) = 263.289, $p < 0.001$). For Ford case, industry environment (26.1 percent), internal threats (24.6 percent), and influence of dominant coalition (18.8 percent) were the dominant contingent factors (χ^2 (36, $n = 259$) = 263.289, $p < 0.001$). For CIA immigration case, influence of dominant coalition (49.2 percent) and organization's characteristics (29.5 percent) were the dominant contingent factors (χ^2 (36, $n = 259$) = 263.289, $p < 0.001$).

Across the five cases, more qualified-rhetoric-mixed accommodation was taken ($M = 4.63$, SD = 0.830) than action-based accommodation ($M = 4.50$, SD = 0.840, $n = 256$) ($t(255) = 3.616$, $p < 0.001$). Across the five cases, different contingent factors seemed to make a significant difference in both degrees of action-based accommodation ($F(9, 247) = 3.812$, $p < 0.001$) and qualified-rhetoric-mixed accommodation ($F(9, 247) = 3.801$, $p < 0.001$). *Post hoc* Scheffe tests were used to examine the difference between the contingent factors: on one hand, external threats led to significantly ($p < 0.05$) higher degrees of action-based accommodation ($M = 4.96$, SD = 0.720, $n = 26$) than the influence of PR practitioners did ($M = 4.00$, SD = 0.764, $n = 25$). On the other hand, eternal threats also led to significantly higher degrees of qualified-rhetoric-mixed accommodation ($M = 5.08$, SD = 0.744, $n = 26$) than the internal threats ($M = 5.08$. SD = 0.717, $n = 24$; $p < 0.05$), and the influence of PR practitioners ($M = 4.12$, SD = 0.881, $n = 25$; $p < 0.05$) did.

For the strategies used, for HP case, justification (35.5 percent), ingratiation (21.0 percent), corrective action (17.7 percent), and excuse (16.1 percent) were the primary crisis strategies (χ^2 (24, $n = 220$) = 132.104, $p < 0.001$). For Dell case, corrective action (70.0 percent), justification (15.0 percent), and ingratiation (15.0 percent) were the primary crisis strategies (χ^2 (24, $N = 220$) = 132.104, $p < 0.001$). For Sago mining case, excuse (33.3 percent), corrective action (22.2 percent), justification (18.5 percent), and ingratiation (18.5 percent) were the primary crisis strategies (χ^2 (24, $n = 220$) = 132.104, $p < 0.001$). For Ford case, corrective action (46.8 percent) and ingratiation (41.9 percent) were the primary crisis strategies (χ^2 (24, $n = 220$) = 132.104, $p < 0.001$). For CIA immigration case, ingratiation (73.5 percent) and justification (24.5 percent) were the primary crisis strategies (χ^2 (24, $n = 220$) = 132.104, $p < 0.001$). Across the five cases, the primary crisis strategies (excuse, justification, ingratiation, and corrective action) had significant influence on three message attribute continuums (defensive-accommodative, $F(6, 212) = 24.305$, $p < 0.001$; ambiguous-specific, $F(6, 209) = 6.207$, $p < 0.001$; and emotional-factual, $F(6, 205) = 3.212$, $p < 0.01$).

Post hoc Scheffe tests were used to examine the difference between the four primary crisis strategies. For defensive-accommodative message attribute: excuse ($M = 3.14$, SD = 0.573, $n = 21$) led to significantly more defensive message attributes than other crisis strategies did (i.e. ingratiation, $M = 4.16$, SD = 0.793, $n = 82$, $p < 0.01$; corrective action, $M = 5.17$, SD = 1.224, $n = 60$; $p < 0.001$). Justification ($M = 3.56$, SD = 0.796, $n = 48$) led to significantly more defensive message attributes than other crisis strategies did (i.e. ingratiation, $M = 4.16$, SD = 0.793, $n = 82$, $p < 0.05$;

corrective action, $M = 5.17$, SD $= 1.224$, $n = 60$, $p < 0.001$). Corrective action ($M = 5.17$, SD $= 1.224$, $n = 60$) led to significantly more accommodative message attributes than other crisis strategies did (i.e. excuse, $M = 3.14$, SD $= 0.573$, $n = 21$, $p < 0.001$; justification, $M = 3.56$, SD $= 0.796$, $n = 48$, $p < 0.001$; ingratiation, $M = 4.16$, SD $= 0.793$, $n = 82$, $p < 0.001$). For ambiguous-specific message attributes, excuse ($M = 3.62$, SD $= 1.284$, $n = 21$) was found to be significantly more ambiguous than ingratiation ($M = 4.74$, SD $= 0.909$, $n = 81$; $p < 0.01$) and corrective action ($M = 4.92$, SD $= 1.134$, $n = 59$; $p < 0.01$). For emotional-factual message attributes, corrective action ($M = 5.14$, SD $= 1.249$, $n = 58$) was found to be significantly more factual than attack ($M = 2.00$, SD $= 1.414$, $n = 2$; $p < 0.10$).

5. Discussion

The findings were distilled into two categories: what the evidence suggests as strong merit; and what the evidence suggests as some merit. Implications of the evidence were drawn, with suggestions to refine the ICM model (Figure 2).

5.1 Publics' emotional response: new variations of emotions

In crises which required high organizational engagement, and conative coping by the public, the ICM model posited the existence of two emotions: anger as the primary level emotion where the public experience at the first or immediate instance; and anxiety as the secondary level emotion where the public experience in subsequent instances. The secondary level emotion may be transferred from the dominant emotion or coexisting with the primary level. This paper finding showed that anger and anxiety were evident in three of the five cases. Of the three, two showed that it was associated or co-existed with the other. Of the two emotions posited, anxiety was evident in all the cases studied, mostly as primary level emotion while anger was present in three of the five cases, either as primary or secondary level emotions. Another emotion, which we had posited in another quadrant, sadness, was evident in two of the five cases. Regardless of what the emotional combinations were (anger-anxiety, anxiety-anger, anger-sadness, anxiety-sadness), in four of the five cases, our findings found a high likelihood that one emotion co-existed with the other. Though anxiety is found to be evident in all five cases, it could not be said with certainty that anxiety was the more powerful or dominant of the two emotions. Evidence, thus, suggests strong merit in the

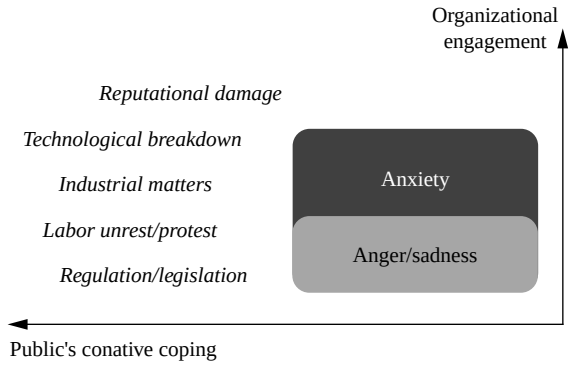


Figure 2.
Revised first quadrant of ICM model

existence of three variants of emotions (anger, anxiety, and sadness), instead of two (anger and anxiety), in this quadrant. Evidence also suggests some merit that there may not be a distinction between primary and secondary level emotions, but that these emotions are often intertwined and interwoven with one another.

5.2 Publics' coping strategy: evidence of conative coping

In this quadrant, our ICM model had posited that the public engaged more in conative than cognitive coping. In conative coping, we argued that the public try to manage the situation so as to alter a troubled relationship or to sustain a desirable one by taking actions or at least show their tendency of action. On the contrary, in cognitive coping, we argue that the public try to sort out a way of thinking or interpreting the meaning of the crisis with regard to their well-being. Findings showed that as far as the public were concerned, in four of the five cases, they engaged in conative coping and regarded their own abilities and willingness to take action to change their perception of the crisis situation. Consequently, findings also showed that because they were willing to take proactive steps to deal with the crises on their ends, these public expected, in two of the five cases, the organizations to do likewise and similarly engage in conative coping strategies to deal with the crises. Evidence thus suggests strong merit in the conative coping strategies of the primary public in crises relating to reputation, technological breakdown, labor unrest, industrial matters, and regulation and legislation.

5.3 Qualified rhetoric-mixed stance rather than action-based stance

The evidence provides support for the idea that organizations embroiled in the types of crises identified in this quadrant engaged in qualified rhetoric-mixed stance towards their primary public rather than action-based stance. In the former, the organization is willing to express regret and apologize to the public, to collaborate with the public, to make concessions, or to admit wrongdoing. In the latter, the organization is willing to yield to the public's demands, accept the public's propositions, and agree to the public's suggestion for solution. The former, as the name suggests, contains more rhetoric or posturing by the organization, and may or may not lead to action that supports the rhetoric. The latter promises concrete action by the organization, in accordance to the public's demands, to resolve the situation. Therefore, saying what one is willing to do is only tantamount to posturing, or qualified rhetoric-mixed stance. Saying what one will do is an indication of action-based stance.

The factors, as identified by the contingency theory, that appeared to influence this stance were threats (external and internal), followed by the involvement of PR practitioners. Contingency theory argued that three sets of variables, predisposing, situational, and proscriptive, influence organizational stance. Predisposing variables are factors that influence the organization on the continuum before it enters into a particular situation involving a public. Situational variables are factors that are most likely to influence how an organization relates to its public by effecting shifts from a predisposed stance along the continuum during an interaction. Proscriptive variables prohibit the organization from engaging in any accommodative stance with its public. In this study, threats, which is a well-supported situational variable in the contingency theory (Cameron *et al.*, 2008) appeared to have a stronger influence on organizational stance than the involvement of PR practitioners, a factor identified as a predisposing variable (Cameron *et al.*, 2008).

Evidence suggests that collectively, both the internal and external threats seemed to exert such a strong influence on the organizations' assumption of a qualified rhetoric-mixed stance that any attempt by the PR practitioners to engage a more action-based stance with the organizations' public, a stance they often assume (Choi and Cameron, 2005; Pang *et al.*, 2006; Reber and Cameron, 2003; Yarbrough *et al.*, 1998), was not sufficient to alter the eventual stance adopted. This supports Cameron *et al.*'s (2001) assertion that situational variables can prove to be compelling and powerful enough to posit the organizational stance even though the organization may have assumed an initial predisposed stance.

5.4 Mixed strategies: defensive and ambiguous versus accommodative and factual

Four common strategies by organizations embroiled in crises were identified in this quadrant: excuse, justification, ingratiation, and corrective action. Excuse and justification are reflective of the defensive stance whereas ingratiation and corrective action are indicative of an accommodative stance. It is no surprise that mixed strategies are used given the finding that the organizations maintained the crises did not relate to or affect their operations or reputations, nor did they think they were fully responsible for the crises. Interestingly, evidence offers some merit that when organizations become defensive while assuming the qualified rhetoric-mixed stance, they use the strategy of excuse to send out a message that is more ambiguous than specific. Conversely, in times when they are more accommodative while assuming the qualified rhetoric-mixed stance, they use the strategy of corrective action to send out a message that is more factual than emotional.

This mixed bag of strategies lends further support to earlier findings that the public did not attribute crisis responsibility to the organizations. At the same time, it does appear that in some ways, the organizations use these strategies to reinforce the public perception that the organizations are not responsible for the crises. Lee (2004) argued that in cases when public are more critical of the organizations and attribute more organizational responsibility, this may signal organizational guilt. Heath and Coombs (2006) argued that excuse and justification belonged to the cluster of strategies called diminish strategies, which is an attempt to minimize organizational responsibility while ingratiation could be construed as the organization's attempt to reinforce its status and relationship with its public. Additionally, based on Coombs' (1995) categorization of response strategies based on crisis types, with three of the five crises examined here belonging to the "intentional" category that involves "transgression" (Ford, HP, and CIA cases) and two of the five crises examined here belonging to the "unintentional" category involving "faux pas" and "accidents" (Dell and Sago Mine cases), ingratiation and justification are viable strategies to employ to maintain the delicate balance of engaging the public while distancing the organizations from guilt and responsibility.

5.5 Strategic holding position: relevance to practitioners

The evidence provides support for the idea that the organizations view their strategies as effective and the public regard organizational responses as acceptable. This provide further support for earlier findings that the public in these crises engaged in conative coping, where they did their best to manage the situation so as to alter a troubled relationship or to sustain a desirable one by taking actions or showed their tendency of action, compared to the more passive cognitive coping, where the public try to sort out

a way of thinking or interpreting the meaning of the crisis with regard to their well-being. Similarly, the public also did not think the organizations were fully responsible for the crises.

Though, the crisis literature has continually emphasized the need for candid, swift, and accurate dissemination of information by organizations during crises, this study shows that it need not always be the case. Stanton (2002, p. 20) argued that organizations always fell into the "easy trap" of "treating every difficulty as if it were a crisis". Ulmer and Sellnow (2000) furthered the concept of strategic ambiguity in crisis communication, where some crisis situations prohibit organizations from engaging in the precise dissemination of messages. What we have uncovered in this study is evidence to support the idea of a "strategic holding position", a situation where organizations are able to assume a qualified rhetoric-mixed stance, galvanized by a neutral yet a common enemy of collective threat (Jin *et al.*, 2006), and consequently, utilizing a mixed bag of strategies ranging from defensive strategies like excuse and justification as well as accommodative strategies like ingratiation and corrective action, to engage their public. The result: the public found the organizations' strategies acceptable, and the organizations were satisfied with the effectiveness of their strategies.

However, we qualify that since this study examined up to the first month of each crisis, practitioners can only adopt a strategic holding position for a restricted period of time and under certain conditions. One can assume this position as long as the public adopted:

- conative coping;
- the public did not think the organizations were fully responsible for the crises; and
- the crisis is still at its infancy.

Over time, practitioners should likely shift position to reach out to the public. Coombs (2007) recommended two ways, form and content recommendations. Form recommendations meant engaging in open, prompt, and consistent communication. Content recommendation focused on providing more concrete information through instructing information; and more assurance to help public cope through adjusting information. Seeger (2006, p. 241) argued practitioners should not shy away from showing compassion, concern, and empathy "for fear of appearing unprofessional".

Interestingly, this study did not show any evidence of the employment of denial and mortification strategies, both extreme ends of the continuum. Denial often arouses the suspicion of wrongdoing while mortification signals the acceptance of wrongdoing, strategies the organizations did not employ because they did not accept responsibility and guilt in the first place.

6. Conclusion: what next?

Arguably, scant attention has been paid in the crisis literature to understand the emotions of the public in crisis, whether crises involving reputation (Ihlen, 2002; Johnson and Peppas, 2003; Puchan, 2001); labor unrest (Crandall and Menefee, 1996); or technological breakdown (Benoit and Brinson, 1994; Benoit and Czerwinski, 1997), and what organizational strategies can be used to respond to the public. Yet, it is our thesis that studies analyzing audience reception in crises should increasingly dominate crisis scholarship for the simple argument that organizational strategies would be ineffectual

if these do not appeal to the hearts and minds of the public the organizations are trying to reach. The ICM model is positioned as a nascent attempt to understand crisis from the perspectives of the public so that organizational strategies and responses can be more appropriately targeted and honed. Both organizations and their public respond not only intellectually, but emotionally, to the events around them that shape the reputation and future of their own lives to a greater or a lesser extent.

Based on this first stage of the testing of the ICM model, we are able to offer testable propositions: that public involved in crises pertaining to reputational damage, technological breakdown, industrial matters, labor unrest, and regulation/legislation, are likely to feel anxious, angry, and sad. At the same time, they are likely to engage in conative coping and take active steps to restore some semblance of normalcy within their immediate environment.

This study has investigated the viability of the core of the ICM model, emotion, and coping, by integrating crisis perspectives with psychological analyses. Organizational engagement, defined by Jin *et al.* (2007) as the level of an organization's crisis resource allocation, crisis responsibility, and the crisis relevance to the organizational goals, needs to be further explored and tested empirically. It is our hope that as we assiduously test the theoretical rigor of each of the quadrants posited in the model, we would be able to, over time, generate what Yin (2003, p. 33) termed "analytic generalization". Analytic generalization, or what Bennett (2004, p. 22) called "theory confirming and infirming", is achieved when "two or more cases" support the theoretical assertions (Yin, 2003, p. 33).

Admittedly, one limitation of this study is that the analyses are all based on media reports; we relied on content analysis of media reports which are filtered through the eyes of journalists who may frame issues according to their perceptions of what had happened. As we had argued, due to the rapidity, abruptness, and volatility in each of the crises, and the exigency and imperativeness to respond to the crisis, analysis of news coverage would provide an expeditious and fair representation of what had happened as in all of the cases, particularly as our studies often centered on the height of the crisis, i.e. the first month(s) of the crisis. Studying news coverage is one way to capture the unfolding drama of the crises. In our analysis, we took care to examine content beyond media framing to distilling to its fundamental forms what were the key ingredients in each crisis with the primary goal of shedding light to our model, not to prove or disprove media biases. Besides, any potential media bias would have been detected and accounted for by analyzing data from not one but five prestige newspapers. Even though there might be some elements of bias, subjectivity, and negativity in some of these news reports, we believe that analyzing prestige newspapers would project a fair representation of what had happened (Krippendorff, 2004; Riffe *et al.*, 1998). Our intention was not just to capture the rapidly unfolding communication between the organizations and their public as enumerated in documents of public record, we humbly submit that the ongoing public discourse would reflect, to a large extent, an accurate and present reading of the reality. Even with the inherent methodological limitations, these limitations should not invalidate our findings.

Since this is part of an ongoing study exploring the viability of the model, it has provided a fruitful exploratory area of research. Findings suggest theoretical rigor in the model, with room for further refinements. Owing to the small sample size of codable crisis stories, our results are exploratory and descriptive in nature. Our future research would also use more in-depth case analysis approach to examine how individual crisis

evolve, what was the level of organizational engagement, and how the public respond emotionally. Also planned is the examination of messages disseminated through media releases as well as interviews with practitioners and focus groups with public involved in the respective crises. Analysis could dive into analyzing emotional expressions. These emotions could then be validated and triangulated through interviews and experiments so as validate the publics' affective responses in a given crisis situation. We also hope to triangulate the findings of our case analyses using experimental designs.

Notes

1. The authors would like to thank Timothy S. Penning of Grand Valley State University for his suggestion of this term.
2. HP case ($n = 82$); Dell's battery recall ($n = 20$); Sago mining crisis ($n = 27$); Ford Motors' job cuts ($n = 69$); and Military Commissions Act of 2006 ($n = 61$).
3. All *t*-tests were conducted as paired samples test (two-tailed).

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Appendix. Summary of crisis cases selected for crisis types mapped in ICM (Quadrant 1)

HP case. This is an example of reputational crisis. HP's internal leak crisis became public September 6, 2006 when the company filed documents with the Securities and Exchange Commission. Media coverage on the leak investigation lasted for months, but the articles analyzed focused on coverage until September 22, 2006, the day that the chairwoman of the board Patricia Dunn resigned.

Story collection. The populations of HP news stories were obtained from September 6-22, 2006. News stories were uploaded from Lexis-Nexis by typing in the key words (HP, H-P and Hewlett Packard). Stories that were relevant to the crisis were eventually filtered to 82.

Dell case. This is an example of technology breakdown. The crisis surrounding Dell's battery recall began on August 14, 2006 with the organization's official announcement of the recall. The recall was voluntary and lasted until September 29, 2006 when the company announced an update on the situation. The majority of news coverage occurred during the first two weeks of the recall.

Story collection. The populations of Dell news stories were obtained from August 14 to September 30, 2006, from the first official communication by Dell to one day after the last release on the topic by Dell. News stories were uploaded from Lexis-Nexis by typing in the key words (Dell and battery). Stories that were relevant to the crisis were eventually filtered to 20.

Sago mining case. This is an example of industrial matters. Media coverage of the Sago Mining accident began on January 4, 2005 with the statement given by the mine's owner ICG Group Incorporation. The bulk of media coverage occurred from January 6 to 13, 2006.

Story collection. The population of stories was accessed from January 4 to February 1, 2006, from the first official announcement from ICG to the last official statement by ICG on the crisis. News stories were uploaded from Lexis-Nexis by typing in the key words (Sago mine and ICG). Stories that were relevant to the crisis were eventually filtered to 27.

Ford case. This is an example of labor unrest/protest. Media coverage of the Ford job cutback crisis began on May 11, 2006, as newspapers reported on the mounting struggle of American automobile producers to keep pace with foreign competitors. Coverage intensified in August and September, following Ford's announcements that it would implement massive production cuts and manufacturing plant closings, as well as the buyout or layoff of tens of thousands of workers, as part of a massive corporate restructuring plan.

Story collection. The population of Ford news stories were obtained from from May 10 to September 20, 2006. The news stories were uploaded from Lexis-Nexis by typing in the key words (Ford and jobs). Stories that were relevant to the crisis were eventually filtered to 69.

Military Commissions Act 2006. This is an example of regulation/deregulation. The CIA's crisis regarding the treatment of suspected terrorist conspirators imprisoned at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, began on July 12, 2006. Responding to allegations of physical torture and unethical interrogation of detainees, American media questioned whether the constitutional rights of prisoners should be extended to alleged terrorists held abroad. President Bush and his administration acknowledged the existence of secret CIA prisons hosted by foreign governments, but declined to confirm the exact locations of these facilities.

Story collection. The population of CIA releases and news stories were searched from July 12 to November 4, 2006. News stories were uploaded from Lexis-Nexis by typing in the key words (CIA and Guantanamo) and stories that were relevant to the crisis were eventually filtered to 61.

About the authors

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