Title: Toward a Publics-Driven, Emotion-Based Approach in Crisis Communication: Testing the Integrated Crisis Mapping (ICM) Model
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Summary: Extending current theories in crisis communication, the authors have developed a more systemic approach to understanding the role of emotions in crises and the strategies used to respond. The authors' Integrated Crisis Mapping (ICM) model is based 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. The initial test on the first of the four quadrants in the model suggests theoretical rigor in the model and 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 and take active steps to restore some semblance of normalcy within their immediate environment. As counter-intuitive as this may appear, evidence shows that organizations embroiled in these crises need only to engage moderately, rather than intensely, in reaching out to the publics. This "strategic holding position" affords a situation where organizations are able to assume a qualified-rhetoric-mixed stance, 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 publics. This study is the first of a series of studies to generate what Yin (2003) termed "analytic generalization" for the ICM model. The findings from this study, arguably, represent the imprints of an initial trail that may open up to a possibly new vista of research in crisis communication.

Full Text: Public Relations Journal Vol. 4, No. 1, Winter 2010 © 2010 Public Relations Society of America Toward a Publics-Driven, Emotion-Based Approach in Crisis Communication: Testing the Integrated Crisis Mapping (ICM) Model Yan Jin, Ph.D., Augustine Pang, Ph.D. and Glen T. Cameron, Ph.D. Extending current theories in crisis communication, the authors have developed a more systemic approach to understanding the role of emotions in crises and the strategies used to respond. The authors' Integrated Crisis Mapping (ICM) model is based 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. The initial test on the first of the four quadrants in the model suggests theoretical rigor in the model and 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 and take active steps to restore some semblance of normalcy within their immediate environment. As counter-intuitive as this may appear, evidence shows that organizations embroiled in these crises need only to engage moderately, rather than intensely, in reaching out to the publics. This "strategic holding position" affords a situation where organizations are able to assume a qualified-rhetoric-mixed stance, 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 publics. This study is the first of a series of studies to generate what Yin (2003) termed "analytic generalization" (p. 33) for the ICM model. The findings from this study, arguably, represent the imprints of an initial trail that may open up to a possibly new vista of research in crisis communication. INTRODUCTION How to shape the appropriate strategies in

response to a crisis is critical for any given organization and public relations 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

Yan Jin, Ph.D., is Assistant Professor in the School of Mass Communications at Virginia Commonwealth University, yjin@vcu.edu. Augustine Pang, Ph.D., is Assistant Professor in the Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information at Nanyang Technological University, Augustine.Pang@ntu.edu.sg. Glen T. Cameron, Ph.D., is Professor and Maxine Gregory Chair of Journalism Research in the School of Journalism at the University of Missouri, CameronG@missouri.edu. (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" (p. 2). Lukaszweski (1997) argued that the strategic management of message response in crisis communication is a "fundamental communication principle" (p. 8). Designing sound strategic communications and tactics to communicate crisis so as to minimize damage to the image of the organization has been described as "management at its zenith" (Stocker, 1997, p. 203). Grunig (2001) articulated four principles (relationship, accountability, disclosure, and symmetrical communication) of crisis communications, which highlight the important role public relations plays in crisis situations. While most of these strategies are often characterized as direct responses to the crisis (Cowden & Sellnow, 2002; Fearn-Banks, 2002; Fink, 1986; Harrison, 1999; Massey, 2001; Pauchant & Mitroff, 1992; Seegar & Ulmer, 2002; Ulmer, 2001), Ray (1999) argued that strategies would either, (1) deny the crisis exists; (2) provide "partial, inaccurate, or delayed information"; or (3) maintain an open communication channels with constituents (p. 20). Arguably, the two dominant theories on crisis strategies, Benoit's (e.g., 1994; 1995; 1997; 1999; 2004) image repair strategies and Coombs' (e.g., 1995; 1998) 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 publics 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 (e.g., see Carver & Blaney, 1977). Emotion is argued to be a critical stimulus. Lazarus (1991) 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)" (p. 38). In a crisis, as the conflict between the publics and the organization escalates, emotions are one of the anchors in the publics' interpretation of what is unfolding, changing, and shaping. Jin, Pang, and Cameron (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. 1 The authors would like to thank Timothy S. Penning of Grand Valley State University for his suggestion of this term. 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

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