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A STATE OF EMERGENCY IN CRISIS COMMUNICATION: AN INTERCULTURAL CRISIS COMMUNICATION RESEARCH AGENDA

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Abstract: This article seeks to provide an evidence-based set of recommendations for the development of an intercultural crisis communication research agenda with three goals. First, to provide an advancement in our understanding of the state of crisis communication research in general. Second, to offer a grounded introduction to crisis communication for intercultural scholars who may not be as familiar with the field. Finally to identify three broad evidence-based areas for developing intercultural crisis communication research -- (1) representing different cultural perspectives in crisis communication research, (2) placing American crisis research in a global context, and (3) developing cross-cultural comparisons.

Today, organizational crises most often have cultural components – no matter whether we are discussing challenges within countries (Olofsson, 2007) or we are discussing global crises (Gurman & Ellenberger, 2015). For example, increasing globalization poses unique challenges for practitioners as many do not feel prepared to handle multicultural crises or adapt their response strategies across different cultures (de Fatima Oliveira, 2013). In fact, in Zhao's (2014) discussion of crisis communication in a global context, she suggests that nationalist, statist, classist, and often even cultural analyses are often too static rather than relational and dynamic.

There have been a number of examples of multinational organizations that have failed to effectively respond to crises in an international environment because they have chosen strategies that were culturally 'tone deaf' (An, Park, Cho, & Berger, 2010). However, today there are a greater number of analyses considering aspects of intercultural communication as a vital part of understanding crisis communication. For example, studies examining cultural factors like power distance in crisis situations (Koc, 2013) or studies of national culture and religious identification in crises (An, et al., 2010; Goby & Nickerson, 2015; Haruta & Hallahan, 2003; Jindal, Laveena, & Aggarwal, 2015; Palmer-Silveira & Ruiz-Garrido, 2014; Taylor, 2000) all identify the importance of developing culturally-grounded analyses of crisis communication.

Yet, after conducting a systematic review of the English-language crisis communication literature from 1953 to 2015 (see Appendix A for full list of sources analysed) in peer-reviewed journal articles, the state of crisis communication remains shockingly American-centric and fails to reflect the needs and global reality of crisis communication today. There is an opportunity for crisis and cultural researchers to meaningfully advance our understanding of both crisis and intercultural communication in ways that are conceptually complex but also practical. This analysis will not provide a traditional literature review as the discussion of the findings of quantitative findings of the systematic review with selected examples demonstrates the broader trends in the field. Therefore, this article will describe the approach used in the review and then build an intercultural crisis communication research agenda by interrogating the intersection of our fields of study.

Methodology and Approach to the Systematic Review

Within the last few years, there have been two relevant meta-analyses – one tracking public relations scholarship trends (Kim, Choi, Reber, & Kim, 2014) and one examining crisis communication's interdisciplinary approach (Ha & Boynton, 2014). While both of these are useful reflections on the state of public relations and crisis communication, they have some meaningful weaknesses. First, the analysis of the trends in public relations scholarship only tracked articles in two journals – *Public Relations Review* and the *Journal of Public Relations Research*. While the analysis recognized the importance of globalization and its influence on the field of study through the 1990's and 2000's as well as the emergence of crisis communication also during the same time frame in *Public Relations Review*, it does not provide a connection between the two and does not represent the global body of work on crisis communication. Second, the examination of crisis communication's interdisciplinary approach was limited to communication-specific journals and did not directly examine culture or global analyses. So, while useful they provide a limited understanding of the whole of crisis communication research.

Population of Crisis Communication Journal Articles

In order to more effectively assess the state of crisis communication research in a global and multi-disciplinary field of study, I used a different approach to identifying relevant literature to get as broad of a sample of 'crisis communication' journal articles as possible. I used a Google Scholar search with the keyword, 'crisis communication' with peer-reviewed articles presented in order of relevance and then narrowed the search parameter by decade in order to get a more complete list of articles for each decade. I also limited the review to peer-reviewed journal articles, excluding books and book chapters. Though this is a limitation, I focused on peer-reviewed journal articles because they are more widely accessible to scholars and many practitioners across industries without additional purchases. At approximately 20 pages into the Google Scholar results, the quality of the results would break down providing mostly irrelevant or repeated citations. This signalled the end of the search for each decade. All relevant and non-repeated articles were included in the population yielding 690 crisis communication articles from 1953 to 2015 (see Appendix A).

Coding

The following data were captured from each article: year, article type (i.e., conceptual, applied/ case study, or theoretical), research method, the journal, country(ies) directly analyzed in empirical research, primary theory used (where applicable), and keywords or concepts based on author-provided keywords and abstract summaries. In order to identify the primary theory, the abstract and/or text of the articles were analysed for the author(s)' identification of theory applied in the study. In this case, models and theories were treated as equivalent and if they

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were used as an analytical tool for the research, they were measured as a theory for the review. This yielded 278 different journals, presenting empirical findings from 55 different countries, using 99 different theories, and 179 distinctive keywords or concepts identified. Only journals published in English were included in this analysis for two reasons. First, most international conferences and dominant publications are English-language. Second, the author is not sufficiently proficient in other languages to analyse regional variations. Of course, this limits the discussion somewhat; however, given the primacy of English-language publication in our field, the limitation is mitigated.

Analysis Approach

Table 1

The resulting data was impractical to analyse without the following data reduction techniques. First, instead of individual journals, Scimago Journal categories (e.g., Management, Communication, etc.) for each journal were identified and coded resulting in six categories – medicine and health; science, engineering, and technology; management; social sciences and humanities; communication and language; and industry-specific journals (see Table 1).

Summary Journal Category	Sub-Categories	Ν	%
Medicine & Health		47	6.8
	Medicine		
	Health Policy		
	Infectious Diseases		
	Public Health		
	Environmental and Occupational Health		
	Health Professions		
	Emergency Medical Science		
	Epidemiology		
Science, Engineering, &		96	14
Technology	Environmental Science		
	Computer Science		
	Engineering		
	Human-Computer Interaction		
	Computer Graphics and Computer Aided Design		
	Applied Mathematics		
	Modeling and Simulation		
	Industrial Manufacturing Engineering		
	Agricultural and Biological Sciences		
	Food Science		
	Earth and Planetary Sciences		
	Chemistry		
	Planning and Development		
Management & Business		443	64.5
	Business, Management, & Accounting		
	Business & International Management		
	Management of Technology & Innovation		
	Strategy & Management		
	Public Administration		

Fields of Study in Crisis Communication Journal Articles 1953-2015

	Organizational Behavior & Human Resource Management			
	Finance, Strategy, & Management			
	Economics, Econometrics, & Finance			
	Marketing			
	Decision Sciences			
	Management Information Systems			
	Industrial Relations			
	Management			
	Management of Technology and Information			
	Management Science & Operations			
Social Science & Humanities			452	65.9
	Arts & Humanities – Social Science			
	Sociology & Political Science			
	Psychology			
	Cultural Studies			
	Education			
	Social Psychology			
	Social Sciences			
	Anthropology			
	Political Science & International Relations			
	Policy & Law			
	Urban Studies			
	Women's Studies			
Industry Specific			59	8.6
	Development			
	Tourism			
	Leisure and Hospitality Management			
	Safety Research			
	Sports			
	Building & Construction			
	Safety, Risk, Reliability, Quality			
	Energy			
Communication & Language			383	55.5
	Communication			
	Language & Linguistics			
	Media Studies			
	Journalism			
		Total	690	

¹ Based on SCImagio Journal Listing Categories. Categories are not mutually exclusive

Categories were not mutually exclusive and all categories were coded for each article. Countries were condensed into regions (see Table 2). Concepts (see Table 3) and theories (see Table 4) were condensed using a constant comparative method (see, e.g., Derrickson & Brown, 2002) with a couple of exceptions. Because previous analyses (Ha & Boynton, 2014) and most literature reviews in crisis communication studies identify image repair theory and situational crisis communication theory as the dominant theories in the field, these were left separate for comparison. In addition on the theory identification, if an article did not use a theory that was also coded.

Region	Country	N	%
North America		422	67.8
	Canada	7	
	United States	417	
Central & South America, Caribbean		6	.9
	Brazil	1	
	Haiti	1	
	Mexico	2	
	Peru	1	
	Venezuela	1	
Asia (East)		50	7.2
	China	22	
	Hong Kong	2	
	Japan	12	
	South Korea	10	
	Taiwan	8	
Australasia		21	3
	Australia	20	
	New Zealand	12	
Asia (South & Southeast)		22	3.2
	India	6	
	Indonesia	1	
	Malaysia	4	
	Philippines	3	
	Singapore	4	
	Sri Lanka	1	
	Thailand	2	
Middle East		6	.9
	Dubai	2	
	Turkey	1	
	United Arab Emirates	3	
Africa		8	1.2
	Egypt	1	
	Kenya	3	
	Lesotho	1	
	Rwanda	1	
	Somalia	1	
	South Africa	1	
	Tunisia	1	
Europe		128	18.6
	Belgium	8	
	Bulgaria	1	
	Croatia	1	
	Cyprus	1	
	Denmark	8	
	Finland	4	
	France	5	
	Germany	16	
	Greece	3	
	Ireland	3	

Table 2
Regions and Countries Studied in Crisis Communication 1953-2015

Israel		4
Italy		6
Latvia		1
Lithuania		1
Netherlands		18
Norway		6
Romania		3
Russia		1
Spain		10
Sweden		21
Switzerland		1
United Kingdom		30
	Total Countries	55

Table 3

Keywords and Concepts Studied¹ in Crisis Communication Articles 1953-2015

Concept Categories	Concepts	N	%
Crisis Type		87	12.6
	Transgressions		
	Organizational Events		
	Events Outside Control		
	Reputational		
Crisis Context		253	36.7
	Accidents		
	Activism		
	Advertising		
	Celebrity		
	Corruption		
	Counter branding		
	Disease		
	Emergency response		
	Environmental		
	Financial		
	Food/ food quality		
	Globalization		
	Health		
	High reliability organization		
	International relations		
	Multinational corporation		
	Natural disaster		
	News/ breaking news		
	Nuclear disaster		
	Politics		
	Pop culture		
	Product harm crisis		
	Public safety		
	Scandals		
	Terrorism		
	Urban crisis		
	War/ Cold War		
	,		

Industry/ Organization Type		163	23.6
	Agricultural		
	Airline		
	Automobile		
	Defense (national)		
	Finance		
	Food manufacturing		
	Fortune 500		
	Hospitality		
	Journalism		
	Marketing		
	Mining		
	Nonprofit/ Charity		
	Oil/ Energy		
	Pharmaceuticals		
	Police/ Law Enforcement		
	Public Relations		
	Public Sector/ Government		
	Retail		
	Schools/ Universities		
	Small Business		
	Social Movement Organizations		
	Sports		
	Technology		
	Tourism/ Travel		
	Unions		
Crisis Response/ Message Assessment		240	34.8
	Accounts		
	Ambiguity		
	Apology		
	Argumentation		
	Crisis spokesperson		
	Crisis spokesperson Dialogic communication		
	Crisis spokesperson Dialogic communication Diplomacy		
	Crisis spokesperson Dialogic communication		
	Crisis spokesperson Dialogic communication Diplomacy Discourse Forgiveness/ atonement		
	Crisis spokesperson Dialogic communication Diplomacy Discourse		
	Crisis spokesperson Dialogic communication Diplomacy Discourse Forgiveness/ atonement		
	Crisis spokesperson Dialogic communication Diplomacy Discourse Forgiveness/ atonement Message effectiveness		
	Crisis spokesperson Dialogic communication Diplomacy Discourse Forgiveness/ atonement Message effectiveness Message involvement		
	Crisis spokesperson Dialogic communication Diplomacy Discourse Forgiveness/ atonement Message effectiveness Message involvement Persuasion Renewal Response strategies		
	Crisis spokesperson Dialogic communication Diplomacy Discourse Forgiveness/ atonement Message effectiveness Message involvement Persuasion Renewal Response strategies Rhetoric		
	Crisis spokesperson Dialogic communication Diplomacy Discourse Forgiveness/ atonement Message effectiveness Message involvement Persuasion Renewal Response strategies Rhetoric Strategic communication		
	Crisis spokesperson Dialogic communication Diplomacy Discourse Forgiveness/ atonement Message effectiveness Message involvement Persuasion Renewal Response strategies Rhetoric Strategic communication Symbols/ metaphors		
	Crisis spokesperson Dialogic communication Diplomacy Discourse Forgiveness/ atonement Message effectiveness Message involvement Persuasion Renewal Response strategies Rhetoric Strategic communication		
	Crisis spokesperson Dialogic communication Diplomacy Discourse Forgiveness/ atonement Message effectiveness Message involvement Persuasion Renewal Response strategies Rhetoric Strategic communication Symbols/ metaphors		
	Crisis spokesperson Dialogic communication Diplomacy Discourse Forgiveness/ atonement Message effectiveness Message involvement Persuasion Renewal Response strategies Rhetoric Strategic communication Symbols/ metaphors Third person effect		
Relational Factors	Crisis spokesperson Dialogic communication Diplomacy Discourse Forgiveness/ atonement Message effectiveness Message involvement Persuasion Renewal Response strategies Rhetoric Strategic communication Symbols/ metaphors Third person effect Timing	41	5.9
Relational Factors	Crisis spokesperson Dialogic communication Diplomacy Discourse Forgiveness/ atonement Message effectiveness Message involvement Persuasion Renewal Response strategies Rhetoric Strategic communication Symbols/ metaphors Third person effect Timing	41	5.9

Media Analysis		68	9.9
	Agenda setting		
	Media		
	Media effects		
	Media coverage		
	Television		
Crisis Management	Audits	162	23.5
	Crisis management		
	Decision-making		
	Knowledge management		
	Media relations		
Crisis Planning		41	5.9
	Contingency planning		
	Crisis plans/ planning		
	Documentation		
Internal Crisis Management		32	4.6
	Human Relations		
	Internal PR/ Employee Relations		
	Team/ Teamwork		
Leadership		58	8.4
Interorganizational Relationships		15	2.2
- 0	Boundary Spanning		
	Strategic Alliances		
Issue Management		26	3.8
	Issue Management	-	
	SWOT Analysis		
Crisis Training & Education		14	2.0
	Pedagogy		
	Simulations		
	Training		
Crisis Assessment		60	8.7
	Blame attribution		
	Conflict		
	Sensemaking		
	Severity		
	Urgency		
Organizational Assessments		220	31.9
	Crisis history		51.5
	Halo effect		
	Organizational Image		
	Impression management		
	Legitimacy		
	Organizational behaviour		
	Organizational change		
	Organizational charisma		
	Organizational commitment		
	Organizational credibility		
	Organizational culture		
	Organizational identity		
	Power		
	Trustworthiness		

Values/ value congruence		
	52	7.5
-		
Oncertainty	94	13.6
Community development	54	13.0
· · · · ·		
-		
word-or-modeli	70	10.1
Cross-cultural comparison	70	10.1
Power distance	20	5.7
Emotion	39	5.7
Humor	46	6.7
Information clarity	40	0.7
-		
mornation sharing	16	2.3
Gender	10	2.5
Race, Etimetty	52	7.5
Risk	52	7.5
-		
hisk perception	126	18.3
Big data/analytics	120	10.5
-		
Facebook		
Internet		
Internet Opling community		
Online community		
	Attitudes Efficacy (self & response) Self-protective behaviour Susceptibility Uncertainty Community development Crisis outcomes Crowdsourcing Customer loyalty Negative publicity Organizational learning Public opinion Sponsorship Sustainability Trauma Word-of-mouth Cross-cultural comparison Culture Cultural change Individualist/ collectivist Power distance Emotion Humor Information clarity Information consumption Information expectations Information sharing Gender Race/ Ethnicity Risk Risk communication Risk management Risk perception Big data/ analytics Blogs Digital convergence Engagement	Sel52AttitudesEfficacy (self & response)Self-protective behaviourSusceptibilityUncertainty94Community developmentCrisis outcomesCrowdsourcingCustomer loyaltyNegative publicityOrganizational learningPublic opinionSponsorshipSustainabiliityTraumaWord-of-mouthCross-cultural comparisonCultureCultural changeIndividualist/ collectivistPower distance39EmotionHumor46Information clarityInformation consumptionInformation expectationsInformation sharing16GenderRace/ EthnicitySisk managementRisk communicationRisk perception126Big data/ analyticsBlogsDigital convergenceEngagement

Stakeholders (external)		106	15.4
Meta-analysis, Methods		18	2.6
	Best practices		
	Meta-analysis		
	Paradigm influence, philosophy		
	Research methods		
Corporate Social Responsibility		27	3.9
Ethics		29	4.2
Networks		11	1.6

¹Multiple concepts and keywords possible for each article

Table 4

Theories Applied, Developed in Crisis Communication Articles 19	53-2015
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Theory Categories	Theories/ Theory Type	Ν	%
None		268	39.5
	Practical		
	Descriptive		
Image Repair Theory		37	5.4
Situational Crisis Communication		38	5.5
Theory			
Stakeholder		19	2.8
	Stakeholder theory		
	Stakeholder relationship management		
		F 4	7.0
Psychological	Decision making	54	7.8
	Decision-making		
	Conflict management		
	Impression management		
	Behavioral resistance		
	Cognitive appraisal		
	Congruence theory		
	Expectancy violation theory		
	Uncertainty avoidance		
	Cognitive functional model		
	Emotional dimensionality theory		
	Identity theory		
	Discrepancy theory		
	Social cognition theory Self-determination theory		
Organizational	Social approval theory	32	4.6
Organizational	Institutional theory	52	4.0
	Organizational behaviour		
	Systems theory		
	Sensemaking theory		
	Network theory		
	Social capital		
	Organizational change		
	Organizational learning		

	Organizational perception management		
	theory		
	Groupthink		
Public Relations & Communication		58	8.4
	Dialogic theory		
	Argumentation theory		
	Excellence theory		
	Theory of publics		
	Third person effect		
	Anticipatory impression management		
	Narrative		
Management		6	.9
	Human resource development		
	Ownership theory		
	IDEA model		
	Integrated strategic management model		
	Brand commitment		
Persuasion		9	1.3
	Extended parallel process model		
	Theory of planned behavior		
	Elaboration likelihood model		
	Inoculation theory		
Media		55	8.0
	Media framing		
	Digital convergence theory		
	Information exchange theory		
	Agenda setting		
	Media richness theory		
	Diffusion theory		
	Media dependence theory		
	Theory of channel complementarity		
	Dissonance theory		
	Uses and gratifications theory		
Culture		7	1.0
	Hofstede's dimensions of culture		
	Cultural trauma		
	Theory of cultural competence		
	Public diplomacy		
Rhetoric		11	1.6
	Deliberative rhetoric		
	Symbolic interaction		
	Burkean rhetoric		
Attribution		14	2.0
	Blame attribution		
	Attribution theory		
Leadership	,	3	.4
·	Leadership performance		
	Leader member exchange theory		
	Situational leadership theory		
Other Crisis Theories		38	5.5
	Crisis la sud a des services en se		0.0
	Crisis knowledge governance		

	Crisis behaviour model		
	Ethical crisis response		
	General failure type model		
	Early warning signals		
	Crisis, emergency, & risk communication		
	model		
	Stage model for crisis response		
	Learning in crisis		
	Strategic crisis management model		
	Internet crisis potential model		
	Social mediated crisis communication		
	Mass, material, access, and motivation		
	model		
	Enthymematic crisis rhetoric		
	Crisis lifecycle model		
	Integrated crisis mapping model		
	Crisis management theory		
Corporate Social Responsibility		1	.1
corporate social responsibility		-	
Education		1	.1
Education	Adult learning theory	T	.1
Critical	Addit learning theory	8	1.2
Cifical	Critical theory	0	1.2
	Gender power theory		
Contingonau	Gender power theory	8	1.2
Contingency	Contingonauthoonu	ð	1.2
lasua Managament	Contingency theory	2	1 4
Issue Management		3	1.4
Risk Communication		7	1.0
	Risk communication models	/	1.0
Other	Social amplification of risk framework	2	h
Other	Chanadhaan	2	.3
	Chaos theory		

¹Only 1 principle theory was coded per article. Articles whose purpose were theoretical comparison were excluded from this analysis

The data were then analyzed to answer several broad questions. First, what are the key trends in crisis communication research? Second, to what degree does research in the field of crisis communication reflect the need for greater multicultural understanding of crises and people affected by them? Third, what are the key trends in research in each major region? Data were analyzed with descriptive statistics, correlations, regression, and ANOVA and are reported in the research agenda.

An Intercultural Crisis Communication Research Agenda

The best summary of the story about the state of published journal articles related to intercultural crisis communication research is to say that it is in a dire condition and greatly in need of development in all areas of study. This represents an important development in both the fields of intercultural communication as intercultural issues are fuelling many of the

conflicts at all levels of society and crises are increasingly global (see, e.g., An, et al., 2010; de Fatima Oliveira, 2013; Gurman & Ellenberger, 2015; Olofsson, 2007; Zhao, 2014). Therefore, this research agenda will identify some key limitations in our understanding of intercultural crisis communication and also to offer several starting points for research in intercultural crisis communication in order to address these limitations in theory and conceptual development needed in the increasingly multi-cultural organizational reality.

Representing Different Experiences and Voices in Crisis Communication

The simplest way to begin this story is to ask the question, when scholars and practitioners talk about the field's current understanding of 'crisis communication,' whose voices are being represented and in what contexts? The voice is disproportionately North American and specifically American with 60 percent of all empirical journal articles in crisis communication published since 1953 researching an American point of view (see Table 2). Thus, to talk about 'North American' research is really to talk about research focusing on the United States because there were only seven articles focusing on Canadian crises and the two articles on Mexico were culturally more appropriately grouped with the rest of Latin America in Central America, South America, and the Caribbean. In addition, if the field considers voice and experience more broadly, the 'West's' (i.e., North America and Europe) voice dominates with 83 percent of all articles articulating a developed world and western perspective.

That is not to say that the field of crisis communication is ignoring different cultural experiences. In recent years there has been a modest expansion of voices with research focusing on the US reducing significantly (r = -.24, p < .00) with research in Europe overall (r = .16, p < .00) and Sweden (r = .09, p < .00), in particular, both significantly rising. In addition, there has been a significant increase in representation of Chinese voices in crisis communication research (r = .09, p < .00). Finally, there has been an increasing trend towards studying crisis communication within and between countries worldwide (r = .17, p < .00). However, there are some areas for developing a more effectively grounded understanding of crisis communication in a global context.

Research objective one – develop a more meaningful and global understanding of crisis communication. In short, continue the existing trend. More research across Europe and China alone is not the answer – the contributions of scholars in these countries is important; however, there is simply a dearth of research reported in journals focusing on Central and South America, the Caribbean, the Middle East, South and Southeast Asia, and Africa. It is problematic that in more than 60 years of research in crisis communication that there are only around 20 articles focusing on South and Southeast Asia, eight on the continent of Africa, six on the broad region of Central and South America plus the Caribbean, and six on the Middle East (see Table 2). Functionally, crisis communication scholars and practitioners know very little about the topic as it applies to the majority of the world's population. I would argue there is no great conspiracy in crisis communication against these regions – it is not an issue of intention, but it is an issue of ease of access. It is not a coincidence that the majority of active scholars in crisis communication happen to live in the regions that are well-researched or where research in crisis is rising. However, access is not the most significant barrier for initially developing research focusing on these areas. Certainly, encouraging scholars from these underserved regions is important; however, there is much that those scholars and practitioners outside of these regions can do to initiate more research. Considering the manner in which crisis communication, as a field of study, has developed provides a template for how research underserved regions can be developed.

A template for developing culturally grounded crisis research. Over the last six decades, a clear pattern of conceptual development in crisis communication has emerged. Early stages of research in any region (see Table 5, 6, & 7) has focused on non-empirical research (M = 2002.86) – particularly conceptual analysis and 'best practice' recommendations (M = 2002.13). Then the bulk of the research on crisis communication in the last 60 years has focused on applied or case study research (M = 2005.95; see Table 7) with a strong emphasis in rhetorical methodologies (M = 2005.29; see Table 8) – functionally describing cases and crisis responses from organizations. From there, qualitative analyses of cases began to emerge (M = 2007.39) followed by cross-sectional research (M = 2009.36).

Table 5

Independent Variable	df	F	р	Post Hoc I	Post Hoc J	I-J	Sig.
Type of Research	2, 687	16.74	< .00	Conceptual & Best	Applied/Case Study	-3.81	< .00
				Practices	Cross-Sectional	-6.66	< .00
					Cross-Sectional	-2.84	.02
				Applied/Case Study			
Research Methods	6, 684	7.65		Non-Empirical	Qualitative	-5.31	.05
					Quantitative	-5.96	< .00
					Experimental	-7.28	< .00

ANOVA for the Type of Research and Methodological Development in Crisis Communication

Notes: The alpha for all tests was set at .05.

Table 6

Types of Articles in Crisis Communication Journal Articles 1953-2015

Broad Type of Article		Ν	%
Non-data (conceptual, theory, or practical recommendations)		188	27.2
Applied or Case Study		335	48.6
Cross-Sectional		167	24.2
1	Fotal	690	

Table 7

Broad Type of Article		Ν	%
Conceptual/ Best Practices		198	28.7
Rhetorical		199	28.8
Qualitative		54	7.8
Quantitative (questionnaire, content analysis)		168	24.3
Experimental (quantitative)		64	9.3
Mixed Method (qualitative & quantitative)		7	1
	Total	690	

Methods in Crisis Communication Journal Articles 1953-2015

This is a sensible evolution because scholars and practitioners need to theorize about the influence of culture on crisis communication in different regions of the world. This allows the field to build up a strong log of case studies of crises based on available media sources using rhetorical methodologies, and then the more difficult work of resolving the access problem begins by finding ways to gain access to people and organizations in these regions (i.e., the point at which the access problem does become an issue). This also suggests that researchers from different regions probably need to build more strategic connections with researchers and practitioners in other parts of the world in order to collaborate on research. Conferences, graduate student recruitment, and networking all represent viable avenues to accomplish these goals along with more organizational collaborations – from corporate to governmental or nonprofit operating in different parts of the world.

Research objective two – consider the U.S. as part of the world community in crisis communication. Again, discussing 'North American' research is misleading when all but seven of the 422 journal articles focusing on North America are actually analyzing American organizations, it is more accurate to call it U.S. research. Thus, when U.S. companies, crises, or stakeholders are analyzed in crisis communication research there is little cross-cultural analysis, as indicated by the strong negative correlations between research focusing on the U.S. compared to most of the other regions (see Table 8). Certainly, there are a handful of studies like Gonzales-Herrero and Pratt's (1998) tourism marketing crisis comparison of the US and Spain; Haruta and Hallahan's (2003) comparison of airline crisis communications in the US and Japan; An, et al.'s (2010) comparison of crisis response strategy in the US and South Korea; Palmer-Silveira and Ruiz-Garrido's (2014) comparison of US and Spanish annual reports in crisis communication; Hajibaba, Gretzel, Leisch, and Dolnicar's (2015) analysis of crisis resistant tourists; or Jindal, et al.'s (2015) comparison of the American and Japanese auto industry's crisis management strategies. However, there are relatively few of these comparisons suggesting we have little substantial evidence to place the American-centric body of crisis communication research in context of the rest of the world.

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. North America	1							
2. Central, South America, & Caribbean	07	1						
3. Asia (Eastern)	32***	.15***	1					
4. Australasia	23***	.16***	.01	1				
5. Middle East	11**	01	03	02	1			
6. Europe	64***	05	11**	05	.03	1		
7. Asia (S/SE)	22***	.16***	.07	.11**	02	08	1	
8. Africa	17***	01	03	02	.14***	06	02	1

l able 8	
Correlations for of Regions Studied in Crisis Communication	1

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Notes: * = significant at the .05 level; ** = significant at the .01 level; N = 622

Simply reducing or eliminating studies of the U.S. is not the answer to better intercultural crisis communication (ICC) research; the American perspective needs to be considered in comparison with those from other places. This would more meaningfully allow us to understand the degree to which different cultural identities influence crisis communication and in what ways. For example, do/should organizations simply respond to crises differently in different locations? Do people react to crises fundamentally differently in different locations? What factors influence the relative success of crisis communication across cultures? The present body of research gives us a starting point, but we need to actively and constantly compare that with voices from other regions to better understand whether the crisis situation is unique in its communicative needs or whether a deep cultural understanding will substantially improve engagement between organizations and stakeholders to mutually beneficial ends during crises. Certainly no individual study needs to accomplish all of these goals; however, beginning to juxtapose findings from the United States with more directly comparable studies analyzing different populations would be meaningful where data collected from multiple nations is not possible.

Research objective three – broaden cross-cultural research beyond regional research. At present, much of the cross-cultural research emphasizes comparisons within regions (see, e.g., Table 5). The analysis indicates large scale comparisons between regions is limited with the majority positive correlations representing research in the tourism industry. Since 2010 with the emergence of the global economic crisis and with some noteworthy disasters, research focusing on factors affecting the tourism industry has received quite a bit of attention. For example, there have been large multi-nation studies emphasizing tourism and topics like social media use among tourists during crises (Schroeder & Pennington-Gray, 2015; Schroeder, Pennington-Gray, Donohoe, & Kiousis, 2013), sustainability in tourism across the EU (Bodosca, 2015), or factors that mitigate risk perception and crisis resistance among tourists (Hajibaba, et al., 2015).

The other primary vein of large-scale cross cultural research in crisis communication focuses on a few pan-European analyses. For example, explorations of food security and cross-

national food contamination have emerged (Frewer et al., 2014; Lok & Powell, 2000; Rutsaert et al., 2014; Verbeke, Viaene, & Guiot, 1999), analyses of social media in crisis contexts (Moreno, Navarro, Tench, & Zerfass, 2015; Rutsaert, et al., 2014; Vesnic-Alujevic, 2012 976), analyses of European-wide crisis management and practitioner applications (Stern, 1999; Tench & Moreno, 2015; Verhoeven, Tench, Zerfass, Moreno, & Verčič, 2014), and the European debt or financial crisis (Büchel, 2013; Robertson, 2014; Schmidt, 2014; Touri & Rogers, 2013) have dominated pan-European cross-cultural comparisons.

This suggests that the opportunity to begin to build a more comprehensive understanding of ICC through multi-country cross-cultural comparisons is substantial. There are few limits in terms of concepts, industries, or comparative reactions to crises from any perspective as all need to be better developed in the context of crises. There are many ways that scholars can go about this data collection. One way is for a more meaningful engagement with our colleagues from other countries than just sharing ideas at conferences; instead, conference organizers could build in meaningful workshopping and collaboration sessions into the schedules to facilitate organizing multi-national studies. A second way is making more effective use of an increasingly global student and faculty by collecting more group data within our own departments with people from different countries recruiting participants from their home nations.

Understanding Dominant Contexts in Current Research

In building on the three broad research objectives that I have laid out, ICC research should also explore the particular contexts in which the most research is presently conducted and thus those areas that are most needed. I have taken two approaches to exploring this theme for ICC development. First, is to identify what research has emerged or dominated within particular regions and second to identify theory development and preference across regions as ways to assess the present state of research and identify new areas for research development. These regional research opportunities should be taken within the broad domain of any of the first three that I have discussed – broadening voices heard in ICC research, placing American research in context, and developing more meaningful cross-cultural comparisons.

To explore the dominant research themes in each region I analyzed the influence of time, fields journal articles were published in, and keywords and concepts explored using multiple hierarchical regression in order to identify the formative description of the ways that research in these regions differs from crisis research in the rest of the world. In addition, I also examined dominant theories used in crisis research within each of the regions using ANOVA and descriptive analysis. Across all geographic locations a strong central theme emerged – crisis communication research, particularly with regards to intercultural contexts, needs to broaden its theoretical, analytical, and publishing scope.

Broadening research about North America. The predominantly American-oriented research tradition in crisis communication is diverse; however, there are some aspects to crisis communication in North America to be considered (see Table 9). First, there is a significant under-representation of cultural or multi-cultural research compared to crisis research from the rest of the world. Second, American-oriented research predominantly publishes communication

journals. In particular, crisis research from the American perspective is substantially under-represented in medical and health journals. By publishing disproportionally in a single field's journals, American-oriented research is not effectively disseminating the research to the fields and places that actually need it. Naturally, there is an inclination for scholars in schools and departments of communication to focus on communication journals, in an era where research impact is important, if we do not have diverse eyes on the research, it will have considerably less measurable impact. In addition, it creates a risk that American crisis researchers will also primarily use communication journals to build their understanding of crisis communication. While providing a strong background, focusing only on a communication journal perspective leads to an ethnocentric and limited understanding of crisis communication as these results demonstrate it preferences an American voice and set of perspectives further insulating American research from the global trends in ICC research. Finally, American-oriented research is more likely to focus on the communicative aspects of crisis communication compared to others it is significantly less likely to focus on industry and direct media analyses.

Table 9

		Model 1			Model 2			Model 3	
Regressor	Beta	SE	t	Beta	SE	t	Beta	SE	t
Intercept		3.31	-6.38		3.29	6.91		3.28	6.55
Year	25	.00	-6.38***	25	.00	-6.38***	23	.00	-5.89***
Medicine & Health				08	.07	-1.91*	09	.07	-2.17*
Communication & Language				.07	.04	1.88	.07	.04	1.76
Industries							06	.04	-1.52
Crisis Response							.06	.04	1.56
Media Analysis							06	.60	-1.56
Culture/Multi-cultural							15	.06	-3.96***
F	40.74***			16.78***			11.19***		
ΔF	40.74			4.56			6.55		
R^2	.06			.08			.11		
R ² adj.	.06			.07			.10		
<i>R</i> ² change	.06			.01			.04		
df	1, 617			2,615			4, 611		

Regression for North American Crisis Communication Research

Notes. * Significant at .05 level; *** Significant at p < .01 level

When we consider the role that theory plays in North American research (see Figure 1)– a disproportionate amount of research is a-theoretical – a recurring theme across all regions. North American research uses six categories of theory most often – image-repair theory and situational crisis communication theory along with psychological, general public relations and communication, media, and crisis-specific theories.

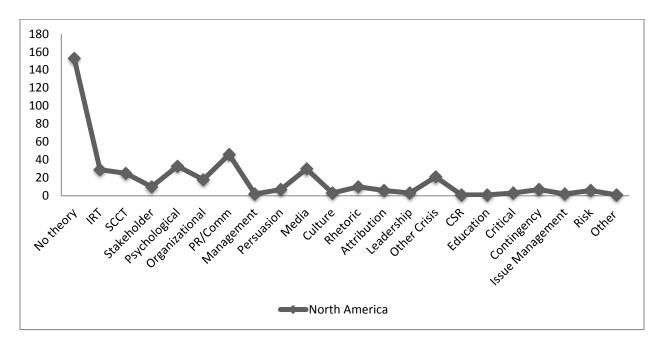


Figure 1. Theories used in North American-oriented crisis research

Therefore, there are three primary recommendations for North American-oriented crisis research. First, it must expand its consideration of cultural and multi-cultural research or it runs the risk of being less relevant in a global society. Second, scholars should disseminate their work more effectively by publishing more consistently across different fields of work. Finally, American-oriented research needs to consider a more diverse set of theoretical perspectives so that it does not pigeon-hole itself into a limited number of perspectives driving the regional research agenda.

Broadening research about Europe. Crisis communication focusing on Europe has been meaningfully growing over recent years – largely helped by the development of an active crisis research community within the last decade. This is good news as the field continues to develop and diversify. However, in understanding the key differences in European research compared to research in the rest of the world, there are a few important trends to acknowledge (see Table 10). First, Europeans are far less likely to publish in social science and humanities as well as communication journals. In part, this is likely because the field of communication is often combined with business schools in Europe and so there are more pressures to publish in business-oriented publications. Yet, whereas the American-oriented researchers needed to expand their focus beyond communication journals, to develop more credibility and impact

within crisis communication, European-oriented researchers should work to publish more often in traditional communication journals. This is good for the field of crisis communication as it makes it more visible and diverse within the broader field of communication.

Table 10

Regression for European Crisis Communication Research

		Model 1			Model 2			Model 3	
Regressor	Beta	SE	t	Beta	SE	t	Beta	SE	t
Intercept		2.91	-4.04		2.91	-3.84		2.86	-3.92
Year	.18	.00	4.46***	.17	.00	4.32***	.17	.00	4.29***
Soc. Sci & Humanities				08	.04	-1.70	07	.04	-1.50
Communicaton & Language				06	.04	-1.32	05	.04	-1.17
Crisis Response							04	.03	-1.08
Relational Factors							07	.07	181
Media Analysis							.11	.05	2.74**
Training/Education							.08	.11	2.03*
Culture/ Multi-cultural							.15	.05	3.83***
Emotion							07	.07	-1.85*
F	19.86***			9.48***			7.84***		
ΔF	19.86			4.19			6.75		
<i>R</i> ²	.03			.04			.10		
R ² adj.	.03			.04			.09		
R^2 change	.03			.01			.06		
df	1, 617			2, 615			6, 609		

Notes. * Significant at .05 level; ** Significant at .01 level; *** Significant at p < .01 level

Additionally, European-oriented research is more likely to focus on three research areas – media analysis, training and education, and cultural research. It is also significantly less likely to examine crisis response, relational factors influencing (or influenced by) crises, and emotion. As such, it would appear that English language European-oriented research does not focus on the process of crisis communication as directly as other research focusing on other regions. Theoretically, while some meaningful use of image repair, situational crisis communication, psychological, organizational, critical, and other crisis-related theories exists in European-oriented scholarship, the predominant theoretical perspective employed emphasizes media-based theory (see Figure 2). This suggests that much of the English-language European-oriented research is likely either practitioner-oriented or emphasizes rhetorical case studies such as analyses of communication management competences in European public relations firms (Tench & Moreno, 2015), the case of the Muhammad cartoons in Denmark (Lindholm & Olsson, 2010), or the case of Findus Nordic and the horsemeat scandal (Falkheimer & Heide, 2015).

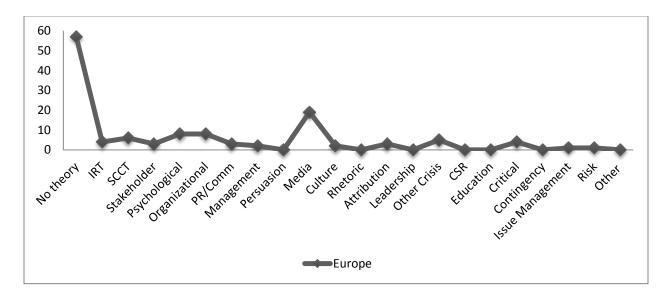


Figure 2. Theories used in European-oriented crisis research

While the emergence of an active research community in Europe is important, and European-oriented research is more likely to emphasize culture or multi-cultural dimensions, there are two primary suggestions for research in this region. First, European-oriented research needs to begin focusing more on messages and relative message effects instead of mediaoriented research. There is a wealth of cross-cultural information and understanding to be developed about the impact of crises on all stakeholder groups, their attitudes towards the organizations, and certainly their attitudes towards issues that is largely untapped. Second, similarly, European-oriented research needs to consider more theoretical perspectives so that it broadens its conceptualization of ICC research.

Broadening research about the rest of the world. Because of the fundamental dearth of research on other regions around the world, any and all research embracing different perspectives and exploring the dual forces of culture and crisis on people and organizations needs to be developed. It is difficult to draw many conclusions about the other regions because of the small amount of research available compared to Europe and especially North America. However, there a couple of salient points about research in other parts of the world. First, in most regions (see Tables 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15 – note there were no significant findings for Africa) there is already a strong emphasis on issues related to culture. That certainly needs to continue to be developed and developed in regions like Africa and Australasia where that might not be the case. Second, when we take a look at the theoretical orientations of research across the world (see Figure 3), we can see an emphasis – to some degree – on image repair and situational crisis communication theories but also influences of stakeholder, psychological, organizational, PR/communication, attribution, media, other crisis, and critical theories. It seems as though there is greater theoretical diversity in the research occurring across the globe. Continuing to develop theoretically diverse perspectives, in an ICC agenda, is important to maximize different voices and perspectives articulated about crisis.

		Model 1			Model 2	
Regressor	Beta	SE	t	Beta	SE	t
Intercept		.02	69.90		.04	18.82
Industry Specific Jnls	.09	.01	2.12*	.05	.01	1.19
Issue Management				.14	.02	3.62***
Culture/Multi-cultural				.22	.01	5.52***
Demographics				.06	.03	1.58
Risk				.07	.02	1.70
Social Media				.08	.01	2.14*
F	4.49*			10.73***		
ΔF	4.49			11.90		
<i>R</i> ²	.01			.10		
R ² adj.	.01			.09		
R ² change	.01			.09		
df	1, 617			5, 612		

Regression	for Central & :	South America,	Caribbean	Crisis Con	nmunication	Research

Notes. * Significant at .05 level; *** Significant at p < .01 level

Table 11

		Model 1	
Regressor	Beta	SE	t
Intercept		.07	10.47
Culture/ Multi-cultural	.25	.03	6.34***
CSR	.09	.05	2.26*
F	22.81***		
ΔF	22.81		
<i>R</i> ²	.07		
R ² _{adj.}	.07		
R ² change	.07		
df	2, 619		

Table 12Regression for Asia (East) Crisis Communication Research

Notes. * Significant at .05 level; *** Significant at p < .01 level

Table 13

Regression for Australasian Crisis Communication Research

Regressor	Model 1			Model 2		
	Beta	SE	t	Beta	SE	t
Intercept		.04	24.78		.05	17.75
Medicine & Health	.06	.03	1.34	.07	.03	1.57
Industry-Specific Jnls	.11	.03	2.71**	.08	.03	1.91*
Industry				.09	.02	2.29*
Risk				.05	.03	1.18
F	6.18**			4.70***		
ΔF	6.18			3.17		
<i>R</i> ²	.02			.03		
R ² _{adj.}	.02			.03		
<i>R</i> ² change	.02			.01		
df	2, 616			2, 614		

Notes. * Significant at .05 level; ** Significant at .01 level; *** Significant at p < .01 level

Table 14

Regression for Middle Eastern Crisis Communication Research

	Model 1			
Regressor	Beta	SE	t	
Intercept		.04	21.00	
Training/Education	.11	.03	2.74**	
Culture/ Multi-cultural	.12	.01	3.03**	
Demographics	.08	.03	1.89*	
F	7.11***			
ΔF	7.11			
<i>R</i> ²	.03			
R ² adj.	.03			
<i>R</i> ² change	.03			
df	3, 618			

Notes. * Significant at .05 level; ** Significant at .01 level; *** Significant at p < .01 level

	Model 1				
Regressor	Beta	SE	t		
Intercept		.11	8.16		
Industry	.07	.04	1.75		
Issue Management	01	.09	23		
Culture/ Multi-cultural	.16	.05	4.12***		
F	6.76				
ΔF	6.76				
<i>R</i> ²	.03				
R ² adj.	.03				
<i>R</i> ² change	.03				
df	3, 618				

Table 15 Regression for Asian (South/ Southeastern) Crisis Communication Research

Notes. *** Significant at p < .01 level

Broadening the use of theory. In 2011 at the Crisis2 conference in Denmark the keynote speaker made an unpopular statement – that he did not believe there was enough theory in crisis communication. And then in a practitioner/academic discussion in 2016 at the International Crisis and Risk Communication Conference in the US, practitioners asked why there was not more predictive theory that would help them build strategy and the academics responding to the question did not have a good answer. I would partly agree with these assessments because while it is evident that crisis communication has a diverse range of applicable theoretical perspectives at its disposal (see Table 4), academics and practitioners publishing in crisis communication often fail to use them (see Figures 1, 2, 3, and 4). Worse yet, when we do there is often an assumption that image repair theory and situational crisis communication theory are the dominant theories in the field (Ha & Boynton, 2014; Kim & Sung, 2014; Xu & Li, 2013), when most of these assumptions are based in a limited understanding of the full field of research in crisis communication.

Clearly, as the systematic review demonstrates, not only are there rich theoretical traditions connected to crisis communication – ranging across the spectrum of perspectives – but also the field is not dominated by just a couple of theories. Now, we should be applying a diverse set of theories across a diverse set of circumstances. Specifically, if we are going to meet practitioners' calls for more predictive theories, we need to be focusing more often on stakeholder perspectives instead of describing the nature of crisis response. Herein lays the need for strong ICC theory development. Given that there is already substantial interest in considering global issues (Gurman & Ellenberger, 2015; Lawniczak, 2009; Pang, Cropp, & Cameron, 2006; Taneja, Pryor, Sewell, & Recuero, 2014), social media (Bruns & Stieglitz, 2013; Brynielsson, Johansson, Jonsson, & Westling, 2014; Coombs & Holladay, 2014; Diers & Donohue, 2013; Fraustino & Ma, 2015; Gu, 2014; Mou & Lin, 2014; Sanderson & Emmons, 2014; Sung & Hwang, 2014; Yin, Feng, & Wang, 2015), and disasters (Chae et al., 2014; Figueroa, 2013 2902; Gesser-Edelsburg, Shir-Raz, Hayek, & Lev, 2015; Liu, Fraustino, & Jin, 2015; Sutton, League, Sellnow, & Sellnow, 2015; Verroen, Gutteling, & Vries, 2013) as emergent and meaningful areas of crisis research that need an intercultural perspective, emphasizing

more culture-related concepts and cultural theories is a natural progression in our understanding of crisis communication.

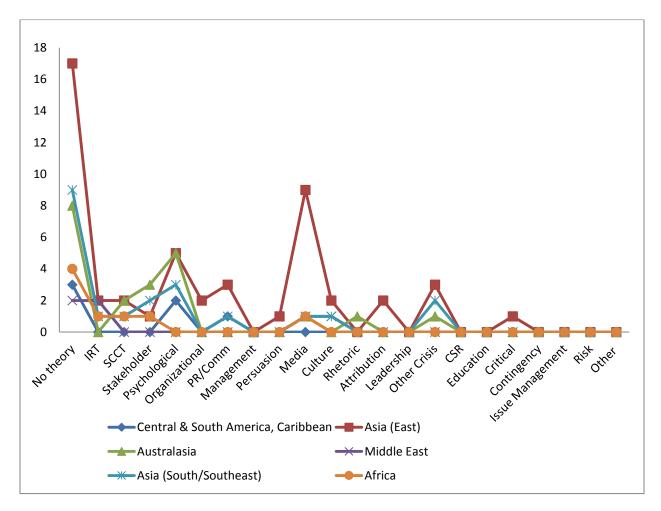


Figure 3. Theories used in crisis research across regions.

Looking Ahead

My primary goal in this systematic review of crisis communication literature was to offer some evidence-based arguments for an intercultural crisis communication research agenda by shining a light on both the centrality of cultural knowledge for crisis communication and the lack of research and theory building in this area. I do believe that modern crisis communication research is becoming more multi-cultural and exploring more voices and perspectives with an active research community that is globally minded. However, I also believe that we need to work more closely with cultural scholars and use stronger culturally-based resources in our analyses. Therefore, I have suggested three broad research objectives – broadening voices heard in ICC research, placing American research in context, and developing more meaningful cross-cultural comparisons. In addition, in identifying these broad research objectives, I have also provided suggestions throughout as to how researchers could begin. These suggestions are certainly not all-inclusive; rather, they are meant to provide some initial ideas and directions for researchers interested in developing their own crisis communication research agenda to tailor it to their particular interests. In so doing, I believe we can develop research within and across regions in a number of different ways, ranging from simply cultivating more knowledge about the Americas (outside of North America), Asia, Africa, Australasia, and the Middle East to more careful considerations of where we publish in North America and Europe, developing underserved areas of research, and broadening our theoretical perspectives.

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