Examining Publics’ Crisis Responses According to Different Shades of Anger and Sympathy

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Integrating the discrete emotions and emotional dimensionality theories in crisis communication research, a 2 (emotional type: anger vs. sympathy) × 2 (emotional intensity: high vs. low) between-subjects experiment using a random general public sample was designed to examine the variance in publics’ crisis coping strategies and their acceptance of different organizational crisis responses, as a function of crisis-induced anger and sympathy of different intensity. Differential influences of emotional type and intensity on coping and crisis response preferences were found. Interaction effects revealed: (a) more intense sympathetic feelings lead to higher likelihood of conative coping preference; (b) more sympathy at low intensity contributes to more preference of active cognitive coping and acceptance of accommodative organizational responses; and (c) more intense anger is related to acceptance of more defensive crisis response such as scapegoating.

As Pfau and Wan (2006) advocated, the understanding of persuasion as an intrinsic function of public relations is crucial to decision-makings about message design. In the context of conflict management, Lindner (2006) highlighted the importance of understanding how emotions and conflicts are intertwined. Oetzel and Ting-Toomey (2006) pointed out that directly investigating the links between communication and emotions within relational conflict is one of the most critical issues for conflict communication future research. It is only recently that public relations researchers called for greater attention to the affective factors, mainly from the contingency perspective of strategic conflict management (Jin & Cameron, 2003, 2007; Jin, Pang, & Cameron, 2007). From a crisis manager’s perspective, crisis communication is to address an organization’s need to respond to crises by choosing the most appropriate response to protect the organization’s reputation (Heath & Coombs, 2006), in the process of which emotions play an important role yet to be fully explored and understood (Coombs & Holladay, 2005; Jin et al., 2007).

Among the enormous amount of emotional research in social psychology, there are two main streams (Jin & Bolls, 2005), one examining emotions in terms of valence (positive vs. negative) and arousal (high vs. low intensity), the other exploring the unique patterns and effects of discrete emotions (e.g., anger, hope, sadness, sympathy, etc.). Earlier emotion-related crisis communication research focused on the impact of general positive and negative affective states on decision processes. For instance, Coombs and Holladay (2005) proposed that stronger
perceptions of crisis responsibility should strengthen the negative affect while lower perceptions of crisis responsibility should be related to positive affect. Jin and Cameron’s (2007) study on the effects of threat appraisal on practitioners’ emotional valence and arousal is, by far, the only existing crisis communication research tapping the arousal dimension of affective responses. However, questions remain when it comes to dealing with emotionally charged publics at different intensity levels.

Recently, crisis researchers have started to explore the effects of discrete emotions in crisis context. For instance, Coombs and Holladay (2005) identified sympathy, anger, and schadenfreude (taking joy from the pain of the organization) as particularly salient to crisis management, according to the attribution theory. Jin, Pang and Cameron (2007, 2012) proposed and tested an Integrated Crisis Mapping (ICM) model, mapping out anger, sadness, fright, and anxiety as the primary negative emotions in crises. Choi and Lin (2009) found that anger was the most frequently expressed emotion by the key public after the product recall crisis. Other emotions, such as surprise, contempt, and relief, were found to be associated with perceptions of corporate responsibility for a crisis (Choi & Lin, 2009). Hope was reported to be strategically expressed by an organization to address the need of angry public (Jin, Park, & Len-Ríos, 2010). Jin’s (2010) recent study examined differential influences of cognitive appraisals on publics’ anger, sadness and fright, which also impact publics’ coping strategy and organizational crisis response preferences.

Interestingly, there has been no crisis communication research that integrates the aforementioned emotional dimensionality and discrete emotions perspectives (Jin & Bolls, 2005). Embarking on the new research route, this study examines the interplay of differently valenced emotional type (anger and sympathy) and emotional intensity (high and low). Anger and sympathy are selected due to their importance in crisis situations as revealed in existing crisis literature (Coombs & Holladay, 2005). In addition, Dalal and Tripathi (1987) found that anger and sympathy are typical attribution-dependent emotions. Weiner (2000) identified anger and sympathy as “other-directed affects” (p. 7): Whereas responsibility for a negative outcome gives rise to anger, non-responsibility might give rise to sympathy.

Therefore, focusing on the effects of crisis-induced anger and sympathy with different intensity, this study is to examine how emotional type (positive emotion vs. negative emotion) and emotional intensity jointly contribute to publics’ coping strategy preference and their assessment of organizational crisis responses in different crisis situations. The results of this study expand the scope of crisis research and highlight the importance of an integrated understanding of publics’ emotional processes for the crisis managers to achieve overall effectiveness of organizational crisis responses.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Integrating Social Psychological Theories on Emotion to Crisis Communication Research

Emotional research in social psychology is based from information processing and limited capacity perspectives, with emotional dimensionality and discrete emotions as two main research streams (Jin & Bolls, 2005).
**Emotional valence and intensity.** The dimension theories of emotion conceptualize emotional experience as having two commonly derived dimensions (Frijda, 1986; Greenwald, Cook, & Lang, 1989; Mehrabian & Russell, 1974; Osgood, Succi, & Tannenbaum, 1957): valence and arousal. According to Detenber and Reeves (1996), valence is a dimension ranging from positive to negative, and arousal is a dimension ranging from calm to excited. As Bagozzi, Gopinath, and Nyer (1999) pointed out, positive emotion seems to reduce counterargumentation when weak arguments are used, and positive moods lead to less processing of arguments. In terms of emotional intensity, Damasio (1994) suggested that very intense emotions can interfere with effective decision making.

In line with the emotional dimensionality theoretical framework, Jin and Cameron (2003) posited two dimensions of a given emotional response in a given crisis: *emotional tone* as the valence (positivity vs. negativity), and *emotional temperature* as the intensity, which were tested as *valence* and *arousal* in understanding crisis managers’ affective responses to crisis situations (Jin & Cameron, 2007).

*Understanding discrete emotions in crisis communication.* Inspired by Lazarus’ (1991) call for the research transition from affective dimensions to discrete emotions and the advocated importance of examining specific emotions, rather than global feelings (Garg, Inman, & Mittal, 2005), Jin (2009, 2010) suggested that crisis researchers should study both negative and positive emotions in crises so as to provide more insights on how to communicate with publics in a more reasonable and sensible way to achieve higher precision and more effectiveness.

However, there is little research focused on the process and effects of positive discrete emotions in crisis research, although the importance of positive emotions has been evident in strategic communication. For example, Fredrickson, Tugade, Waugh, and Larkin (2003) mentioned that “positive emotions are known to co-occur alongside negative emotions during stressful circumstances (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2000)” (p. 365). The researchers further elaborated on the intermixed experiences of positive emotions and pointed out that “positive emotions such as gratitude, interest, and love provide more pleasant subjective experiences than do negative emotions such as anger, sadness, fear, and anxiety” (p. 366) to the extent that “positive emotions reduce the focus on negative emotions, which can put people’s minds at ease” (p. 366). Therefore, it is important to expand the scope of crisis research by further assessing positive emotions in crisis situations for crisis managers to utilize the positivity in publics’ responses and choose crisis strategies wisely.

**Anger and Sympathy: Crisis Emotions with Different Valence**

Anger and sympathy, different in their valences (negative vs. positive) yet both likely to be experienced by nonvictim publics, were the two focused crisis emotions in this study.

**Anger.** According to Iyer and Oldmeadow (2006), “anger is usually experienced when people blame specific agents (i.e., individuals, groups, or institutions) for a transgression or injustice (Roseman, Wiest, & Swartz, 1994; Smith, Haynes, Lazarus, & Pope, 1993)” (p. 637), as people feel angry in response to national events when an agent is identified as responsible for the suffering. As Jin (2009, 2010) pointed out, publics tend to experience anger when facing a demanding offense from certain organization against them or their well-being. Reports of
felt anger were found to increase as perceptions of crisis responsibilities intensify (Coombs & Holladay, 2005). Lerner, Gonzalez, Small, and Fischhoff (2003) found more reported anger in risk situations of high perceived certainty and control.

**Sympathy.** According to Iyer and Oldmeadow (2006), sympathy occurs when “awareness of others’ suffering elicits feelings of sympathy, especially when the suffering is seen as undeserved (Salovey & Rosenhan, 1989)” (p. 637). They also pointed out that witnessing suffering may not always elicit a direct sympathetic response, as sympathy involves an increased sensitivity to, and understanding of, the feelings of the other (Gruen & Mendelsohn, 1986), as well as a certain detachment from the situation (Iyer & Oldmeadow, 2006). Therefore, to experience sympathy for a victim, witnesses need to be able to cognitively separate themselves from the victim’s circumstances (Wispe, 1986). Given this definition, sympathy is very likely to be felt among nonvictims when exposed to the description of a crisis they do not directly involve but in which victims’ suffering is witnessed and depicted.

**Anger and sympathy in crisis situations.** In studying and comparing anger and sympathy from an achievement motivation perspective, Hareli and Weiner (2002) found: (a) The uncontrol-lable goal nonattainment gives rise to sympathy and the associated emotions of pity and compassion and (b) judgments of personal responsibility and lack of effort as the cause of failure generate anger (p. 188). As Weiner (1995) systematized, whereas anger emerges from responsibility judgments, sympathy is evoked from nonresponsibility judgments. Weiner (1995) posited that organizations can elicit judgments of responsibility and feelings of anger and sympathy among individuals, which can drive human behaviors to either assist or to punish the organization. Iyer and Oldmeadow (2006) found that sympathy, but not anger, predicted attitudes toward negotiation.

Based on the difference between anger and sympathy and their important roles in individuals’ coping process and supportive/punitive behavior or behavioral tendencies toward organizations in negative events, this study is to further explore the effects of anger and sympathy at different intensity levels on publics’ coping preference and expected organizational crisis responses.

**Publics’ Coping Strategy in Crisis Situations**

Coping is the vital concept in appraisal theory of emotions (e.g., Lazarus, 1991) and has recently been adopted into crisis communication research in understanding how publics deal with crisis situations (Jin, 2009, 2010). Lazarus and Folkman (1984) proposed two types of coping: (a) 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; and (b) emotion-focused (reappraisal 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 & Berenbaum, 2007).

Duhacheck (2005) defined coping as “the set of cognitive and behavioral process... in response to emotionally arousing, stress inducing interactions with the environment aimed at bringing forth more desirable emotional states and reduced levels of stress” (p. 42).
In crisis communication, Jin et al. (2007, 2012) applied the coping strategy framework, positing that publics appraise a crisis differently and enact different strategies to coping with crisis-stimulated stress. They proposed two types of crisis coping strategies used by publics in crisis: cognitive coping, used to obtain information and make sense of a crisis situation; and conative coping, focusing on taking actions to deal with a crisis situation.

Based on Duhachek’s (2005) multidimensional scale to measure the coping construct as it emerges as a consequence of emotion, embedded in dynamic, spanning cognitive, behavioral, and emotional domains of responses, this study further adopted a three-dimensional coping strategy framework (Jin, 2010) to understand how publics cope with stressful crisis situations: cognitive coping (rational thinking, positive thinking, avoidance, and denial), conative coping (action and instrumental support), and emotional coping (emotional support and emotional venting), each enacting a set of crisis coping strategies.

**Effects of emotions on publics’ crisis coping.** Research has found that coping strategies are influenced by two central determinants of risk judgments: certainty and situational controllability (Slovic, 1987). In terms of negative emotion, it was found that anger, based on high certainty and control appraisal (Lerner et al., 2003), evokes more optimistic risk estimates and risk-seeking choices such as taking actions and looking for instructions (Lerner & Keltner, 2000, 2001).

In terms of positively-valenced emotions, recent studies on stress and coping link positive emotions to a coping style of taking a broad perspective on problems, seeing beyond immediate stressors, and generating multiple courses of action (Fredrickson & Joiner, 2002). Fredrickson et al. (2003) further mentioned, “There is a welcomed effect of positive emotions in crises” (p. 366), and advocated that positive emotions function as active ingredients in more effective coping due to the three benefits of positive emotions: physiological undoing, cognitive broadening, and resource building. The “cognitive broadening” (p. 366) is especially relevant to coping strategy research because it can “alter people’s modes of thinking” (p. 366), which “expands and improves the ways people cope during crises” (p. 366). According to Fredrickson et al., lab experiments also showed that induced positive emotions facilitate attention to and processing of important and self-relevant information (e.g., Reed & Aspinwall, 1998; Trope & Pomerantz, 1998).

Comparing anger and sympathy, Caprara, Pastorelli, and Weiner (1997) identified the linkages between causal ascriptions, emotions (e.g., anger and sympathy), and behavior. As the researchers pointed out, anger and sympathy, according to attribution perspective (Weiner, 1995), respectively give rise to antisocial versus prosocial responses: (a) Although anger causes antisocial response, sympathy is linked to prosocial response, which might well include more proactive coping strategies; (b) if there is anger but no sympathy, it might cause lack of help; (c) if there is sympathy but no anger, help might occur. Their psychological findings are particularly relevant and meaningful to crisis managers. Given the fact that anger and sympathy are likely to cooccur among publics in a given crisis (for example, publics might feel angry toward the predator and feel sympathy for the victim), it is crucial for crisis researchers to compare their relative effects in same crisis situations with higher ecological validity.

Thus, based on the coping literature and existing findings related to the effects of anger and sympathy,

- **Hypothesis 1.1 (H1.1):** Conative coping (action and instrumental support) will be preferred when the crisis situation evokes more sympathy than anger.
Hypothesis 1.2 (H1.2): Affective coping (emotional support and emotional venting) will be preferred when the crisis situation evokes more sympathy than anger.

Hypothesis 1.3.1 (H1.3.1): Active cognitive coping (rational thinking and positive thinking) will be preferred when the crisis situation evokes more sympathy than anger.

Hypothesis 1.3.2 (H1.3.2): Passive cognitive coping (avoidance and denial) will be preferred when the crisis situation evokes more sympathy than anger.

Based upon the dimensionality theories of emotion, in addition to the valence of emotions, it is informative to examine the arousal of feelings, which captures emotional intensity and affects individuals’ decision making process (Damasio, 1994; Detenber & Reeves, 1996). By far, in crisis communication research, no research has been conducted in terms of how publics’ emotional intensity exerts influences on publics’ different types of crisis coping, although general cognitive psychology research implies that high intensity of emotion will reduce the cognitive capacity of individuals to process information or conduct information seeking according to the limited-capacity steam of cognition and emotion research (Jin & Bolls, 2005). Thus, to integrate the emotional intensity dimension into crisis coping research:

Hypothesis 2.1 (H2.1): Conative coping (action and instrumental support) will be preferred when the crisis-evoked emotional responses are of high intensity.

Hypothesis 2.2 (H2.2): Affective coping (emotional support and emotional venting) will be preferred when the crisis-evoked emotional responses are of high intensity.

Hypothesis 2.3.1 (H2.3.1): Active cognitive coping (rational thinking and positive thinking) will be preferred when the crisis-evoked emotional responses are of low intensity.

Hypothesis 2.3.2 (H2.3.2): Passive cognitive coping (avoidance and denial) will be preferred when the crisis-evoked emotional responses are of low intensity.

Publics’ Acceptance of Organizational Crisis Responses

Lukaszweski (1997) advocated that the strategic management of message response in crisis communication is a “fundamental communication principle” (p. 8), as the goals of crisis communication are to “restore organizational normalcy, influence public perception, and regain and repair image and reputation” (p. 2, Fearn-Banks, 2002). Huang (2006) suggested that a combination of crisis communication strategies would be most effective in most crisis situations. Based on the Situational Crisis Communication Theory framework (e.g., Coombs, 1995, 1998), Coombs and Holladay (2005) mapped postcrisis communication reputation-building strategies on a range of actions from defensive responses (i.e., attack the accuser, denial, scapegoat, excuse, and justification) to accommodative responses (i.e., compensation and apology), mentioning that an organization can incur more financial expenses when more accommodative strategies are used. They further posited the importance of emotions as they may facilitate or negate the effectiveness of various crisis response strategies, and that “the emotions generated by crisis will help crisis managers know when accommodative strategies are required and to better justify the use of these more expensive communication strategies” (p. 267). Therefore, a better understanding of stakeholder reactions to a crisis can help the crisis managers balance these sometimes competing concerns and crisis response choices, because “emotions may require certain crisis response strategies in order for the response to be effective and protect the organizational reputation” (Coombs & Holladay, 2005, p. 271).
Effects of Emotions on How Publics Evaluate Organizational Crisis Responses

Coombs and Holladay (2007) called attention to the impact of stakeholder affect on behavioral intentions. Emotions as predictors of supportive/punitive behaviors and the willingness for negotiation have been studied. For instance, Fredrickson (1998) argued that whereas negative emotions narrow individuals’ attention to support specific action tendencies (e.g., attack and escape), positive emotions broaden people’s attention, thinking, and behavioral options (e.g., play and explore). It was also found that positive emotions increase people’s preferences for variety and thus broaden the arrays of acceptable behavioral options (Kahn & Isen, 1993). These findings suggest that publics might have different preferences in terms of which organizational crisis response is more align with their behavioral tendency toward the crisis situation.

In terms of negative emotions such as anger, which is typically associated with antagonistic movement against a target (Frijda, Kuipers, & ter Schure, 1989), Coombs and Holladay (2007) recommended that less accommodative strategies could be used effectively in dealing with angry publics if the perceived crisis responsibility is low. As for positive emotions such as sympathy, Iyer and Oldmeadow (2006) mentioned that sympathy is associated with a desire to help those who are suffering. Comparing anger and sympathy, the strategy of negotiations, often evidenced as providing help, is predicted by stronger feelings of sympathy, and anger is associated with more active, direct challenges to those responsible for the situation (Iyer & Oldmeadow, 2006). Linking emotion theories to an attributional perspective, Weiner, Graham, Peter, and Zmuidinas (1991) found that perceived responsibility for a negative outcome elicits anger toward the person, rather than sympathy, and decreases helping behavior. When one party is not considered personally responsible for a negative outcome, sympathy, rather than anger, is evoked and prosocial behaviors toward the party are expressed. Struthers et al. (2004) further resonated that ‘‘anger related positively to anti-social coworker interactions and negatively to prosocial coworker interactions, whereas sympathy related to prosocial coworker interactions and negatively to antisocial coworker interactions’’ (p. 180).

Therefore, to extend existing crisis theories on the effects of different types of emotions,

- **Hypothesis 3.1 (H3.1):** Defensive crisis responses (attack, denial, scapegoat, excuse, and justification) will be more acceptable when the crisis situation evokes more anger than sympathy.
- **Hypothesis 3.2 (H3.2):** Accommodative crisis responses (ingratiation and full apology) will be more acceptable will be preferred when the crisis situation evokes more sympathy than anger.

As for the emotional intensity dimension of publics’ affective responses in crisis, as Coombs and Holladay (2005) suggested, stronger negative emotions might need more accommodative crisis communication strategies so as to diffuse negative feelings and more costly responses; excuse and justification strategies might be effective in crises in the accident clusters as they might lack of strong emotions. There has been no existing study examining the intensity of positive emotions, such as sympathy, on publics’ assessment of organizational crisis response. Therefore, to tap into this new research front:

- **Hypothesis 4.1 (H4.1):** Defensive crisis responses (attack, denial, scapegoat, excuse, and justification) will be more acceptable when the crisis-evoked emotional responses are of high intensity.
• Hypothesis 4.2 (H4.2): Accommodative crisis responses (ingratiation and full apology) will be more acceptable when the crisis-evoked emotional responses are of low intensity.

When it comes to the interaction effects of different emotional type (anger and sympathy) and emotional intensity (high and low) in crisis situations, there is no existing research available. Therefore:

• Research Question (RQ): Are there any interaction effects between emotional type (anger vs. sympathy) and emotional intensity (high vs. low)?

METHOD

Participants and Procedure

A random sample of general public (N = 164) based on the 2008 white page book of a mid-Atlantic capital city were recruited through mailed letters of research invitation to participate in and completed the experiment. There were 83 men (50.6%) and 81 women (49.4%), with an average age of 54 (53.7%).

The effects of emotional type and emotional intensity were examined via a 2 × 2 between-subjects design. The first factor is emotional type (anger vs. sympathy). The second factor is emotional intensity (high vs. low). The participants were randomly assigned to the four conditions. Each participant was given one crisis scenario, followed by a questionnaire.

The crisis scenarios were New York Times stories about actual crisis events. News delivered via mass media has been used to study emotional experience (Wallbott & Scherer, 1989). As Coombs and Holladay (2005) argued, nonvictims are most likely to experience a crisis through the news media. Lerner et al. (2003) also used stimuli from major media outlets to evaluate the effects of actual media portrayals. Iyer and Oldmeadow (2006) mentioned that emotional studies of reactions to tragedies and other national events have tended to present participants with written information about the event to elicit emotional responses people tend to experience as nonvictims.

A pool of crisis cases were first suggested by a panel of public relations practitioners, based on their impression of which recent crises were most emotion-charging for publics. Then, newspaper news stories about these crises were selected from the New York Times. A mixed group of students and nonstudent adults were invited to read these crisis news stories and discuss their feelings and reactions after reading these stories. Questions such as, “What did this crisis news make you feel?” and “How would you describe your emotions when reading the stories?” were asked and noted to determine which stories might be most likely to stimulate the intended emotions (e.g., anger and sympathy) with different levels of affective intensity. As a result, four crisis news stories were selected: (a) “Vick Pleads Guilty, Apologizes in Dogfighting Case” (8/27/07; Dogfighting case, anger + high intensity; N = 42 (Schmidt, 2007); the organization in crisis was National Football League); (b) “Families and City Mourn as Hunt for the Missing Continues” (8/6/07; Minnesota Bridge collapse case, sympathy + low intensity; N = 47) (Belluck, 2007); (c) “Anger of Killer Was on Exhibit in His Writings” (4/20/07; VA Tech shooting case, sympathy + high intensity; N = 38) (Santora & Hauser, 2007); and (d) “The
Energy-Drink Buzz Is Unmistakable. The Health Impact in Unknown.” (9/12/06; Energy drink case, anger + low intensity; N = 37) (Mason, 2006).

Each participant was randomly mailed one of the four crisis news stories, after which a questionnaire was attached. Participants were instructed to read the crisis news and then complete the questionnaire. Items on the questionnaire asked participants to indicate how they would feel about the crisis, how they were likely to cope with the negative feelings, and how they would assess different organizational strategies employed to deal with the crisis, if they found themselves in the situation. Afterward, the participants returned the questionnaires to the researcher in self-addressed envelopes through mailing services.

The two independent variables for this study were emotional type and emotional intensity.

Emotional type. The variable emotional type had two levels—anger and sympathy—representing emotions that publics are likely to experience in crisis situations. In the anger condition, two crisis situations (dogfighting case and energy drink) were selected. In the sympathy condition, another two crisis situations (case Minnesota bridge collapse case and VA Tech shooting case) were selected.

Emotional intensity. The variable emotional intensity had two levels—high and low. In the high condition, two crisis situations (dogfighting case and VA Tech shooting case) were selected. In the low condition, another two crisis situations (Minnesota bridge collapse case and energy drink case) were selected.

Manipulation check. To validly manipulate the two independent variables, two manipulation check items were included to determine whether the participants felt the emotions with different levels of intensity in the same direction as the stimuli being manipulated. To ascertain whether the experimental manipulations were effective, one-way ANOVAs were performed using the Scheffé procedure. The results suggested that the manipulations of the four conditions and the according crisis situations stimuli were successful.

For anger/sympathy emotion, participants were asked to respond to, “What happened in the news story made me feel:’” (a) “angry, irritated, annoyed;” (b) “sympathy, concern, compassion,” recorded on a 7-point Likert-type scale where 1 = very unlikely, and 7 = very very likely. These emotion measures were selected from Izard’s (1977) Differential Emotions Scale (Fredrickson, Tugade, Vaugh, & Larkin, 2003) assessing experiences of discrete emotions. According to Wallbott and Scherer (1989), questionnaire is one of the most suitable self-report techniques to access the emotion component of information regarding an individual’s subjective experience. One-way ANOVA found significant differences between the reported anger (anger 4.57, sympathy 3.42, F[1,161] = 12.276, p < .01, par. η² = .071) and reported sympathy (anger 3.45, sympathy 5.74, F[1,161] = 60.331, p < .001, par. η² = .271).

For emotional intensity, the participants were asked to indicate their emotional intensity, or emotional arousal level, if they found themselves in the situation as described in the crisis scenario. The 3-item arousal index (Jin & Cameron, 2007) was measured using 7-point scale ranging from 1 (not at all alarmed/agitated/aroused) to 7 (extremely alarmed/agitated/aroused; alpha = .77). A one-way ANOVA found a significant difference between high and low reported emotional intensity (high intensity 4.63, low intensity 3.98, F[1,162] = 6.385, p < .05, par. η² = .038).
Measures

After reading each crisis news story in the experiment packet, the dependent variables for coping strategy (action, rational thinking, emotional support, instrumental support, emotional venting, avoidance, positive thinking, and denial) and acceptance of organizational crisis response strategies (acceptance of the relevant organization’s attack the accuser, denial, scapegoat, excuse, justification, compensation, and apology strategies) were measured by using a series sets of indexes in the questionnaire instrument.

Public’s Crisis Coping Strategies

Based on the coping strategy inventory developed and tested by Duhachek (2005), eight types of coping strategies and 36 items were measured in response to “Please indicate the extent to which you would cope with your negative feelings about what happened in the news story via each of the following coping items” on a 7-point Likert-type scale where 1 = very unlikely and 7 = very likely.

Principal components analysis for the eight scales revealed that each scale captured a distinguishable strategy of public’s crisis coping in the presented scenarios. The reliability coefficients for the eight coping strategies are: action (alpha = .86), rational thinking (alpha = .88), emotional support (alpha = .87), instrumental support (alpha = .95), emotional venting (alpha = .95), avoidance (alpha = .81), positive thinking (alpha = .87), and denial (alpha = .89).

Public’s Acceptance of Organization’s Crisis Response Strategies

Seven crisis communication strategies (Coombs & Holladay, 2005) with various levels of accommodation were presented for the participants to respond to by indicating “how acceptable each of the actions taken by [organization name] could be,” measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale where 1 = not acceptable at all and 7 = totally acceptable: (a) attack the accuser: “[Organization name] confronts the person or group claiming something is wrong with the policy and regulation toward [the publics];” (b) denial: “[Organization name] claims that there is no crisis;” (c) scapegoat: “[Organization name] blames [another party] alone for the crisis;” (d) excuse: “[Organization name] minimizes organizational responsibility by denying intent to do harm and/or claiming inability to control the events that triggered the event;” (e) justification: “[Organization name] minimized the perceived damage caused by the event;” (f) compensation: “[Organization name] offers money or other ways of compensation to [the victim];” and (g) apology: “[Organization name] indicates the organization takes full responsibility for the crisis and asks [the publics] for forgiveness.”

RESULTS

MANOVAs were used for between-subjects design analysis. Main effects of emotional type (anger vs. sympathy) and emotional intensity (high vs. low), felt by the publics when exposed to crisis news, on coping strategies and acceptance of organizational responses were evident (see Table 1). The findings also indicated interactions of the two factors on the dependent variables (see Table 2).
TABLE 1
Pairwise Comparisons of Mean Scores on Dependent Variables

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<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Emotional type</th>
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<th>Emotional intensity</th>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Anger</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Rational thinking</td>
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<td>5.42*</td>
<td>(1.15)</td>
<td>4.31*</td>
<td>F [3,149]</td>
<td>5.15</td>
<td>(1.40)</td>
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<td>• Positive thinking</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>(1.68)</td>
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<td>(1.47)</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>F [3,149]</td>
<td>3.59**</td>
<td>(1.48)</td>
<td>4.82***</td>
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<td>• Avoidance</td>
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<td>3.71</td>
<td>(1.58)</td>
<td>3.99</td>
<td>(1.53)</td>
<td>1.13</td>
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<td>3.77</td>
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<td>• Denial</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.84*</td>
<td>(1.53)</td>
<td>1.45*</td>
<td>(1.05)</td>
<td>4.14*</td>
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<td>1.41*</td>
<td>(1.04)</td>
<td>1.86*</td>
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<td>Conative coping</td>
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<td>• Action</td>
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<td>4.34***</td>
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<td>15.22***</td>
<td>F [3,149]</td>
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<td>.31</td>
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<td>(1.45)</td>
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<td>2.97**</td>
<td>(1.94)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Ingratiation</td>
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<td>.44</td>
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<td>(1.85)</td>
<td>7.28**</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.14***</td>
<td>(2.25)</td>
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Note. Cell entries are estimated marginal means. Pairwise planned comparisons are adjusted for Bonferroni multiple comparisons. Standard deviations are in parentheses. Significance for the multivariate F is based on estimates of the marginal means for the Wilk’s Lamda statistic.

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001. +p < .10.
Effects of Emotions on Publics’ Crisis Coping Strategy

**Effects of emotion type on coping preference.** H1.1 hypothesized that conative coping (action and instrumental support) will be preferred when the crisis situation evokes more sympathy than anger. In the measurement of action coping strategies, significant main effects, $F(3, 149) = 15.22, p < .001$, par. $\eta^2 = .093$, were found: Participants tended to use more action-based coping strategies to deal with crisis situations evoking more sympathy ($M = 5.24, SD = 1.32$) than anger ($M = 4.34, SD = 1.63; p < .001$). In the measurement of instrumental support coping strategies, significant main effects were also found, $F(3, 149) = 6.70, p < .05$, par. $\eta^2 = .043$: Participants tended to use more instrument support coping strategies to deal with crisis situations evoking more sympathy ($M = 4.70, SD = 1.59$) than anger ($M = 4.05, SD = 1.62; p < .05$). Therefore, H1.1 was supported.

H1.2 hypothesized that more affective coping (emotional support and emotional venting) will be preferred when the crisis situation evokes more sympathy than anger. In the measurement of emotional support coping strategies, significant main effects were also found, $F(3, 149) = 6.43, p < .05$, par. $\eta^2 = .041$, were found: Participants tended to use more emotional support coping strategies to deal with crisis situations evoking more sympathy ($M = 5.08, SD = 1.47$) than anger ($M = 4.47, SD = 1.51; p < .05$). In the measurement of emotional venting coping strategies, significant main effects were also found, $F(3, 149) = 10.07, p < .01$, par. $\eta^2 = .063$: Participants tended to use more emotional venting coping strategies to deal with crisis situations evoking

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Interactions (F)</th>
<th>Anger + High intensity</th>
<th>Anger + Low intensity</th>
<th>Sympathy + High intensity</th>
<th>Sympathy + Low intensity</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Action: 5.08*</td>
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<td>4.69* (1.74)</td>
<td>5.46* (1.01)</td>
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<td>5.01 (1.06)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>2.03*** (1.34)</td>
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<td>3.81* (2.18)</td>
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<td>Full apology: 3.78+</td>
<td>3.49 + (2.29)</td>
<td>5.71 + (1.58)</td>
<td>4.86 + (2.00)</td>
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Note. Cell entries are estimated marginal means. Standard deviations are in parentheses. Significance for the multivariate F is based on estimates of the marginal means for the Wilk’s Lambda statistic.

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001. +p < .10.
more sympathy ($M = 4.95$, $SD = 1.31$) than anger ($M = 4.27$, $SD = 1.34$; $p < .01$). Therefore, H1.2 was supported.

H1.3.1 hypothesized that active cognitive coping (rational thinking and positive thinking) will be preferred when the crisis situation evokes more sympathy than anger. In the measurement of rational thinking coping strategies, significant main effects, $F(3, 149) = 4.31$, $p < .05$, par. $\eta^2 = .028$ were found: Participants tended to use more rational thinking coping strategies to deal with crisis situations evoking more sympathy ($M = 5.42$, $SD = 1.15$) than anger ($M = 4.93$, $SD = 1.48$; $p < .05$). There were no significant main effects in the measurement of positive thinking coping strategies. Therefore, H1.3.1 was partially supported.

H1.3.2 hypothesized that passive cognitive coping (avoidance and denial) will be preferred when the crisis situation evokes more sympathy than anger. There were no significant main effects in the measurement of avoidance coping strategies. In the measurement of denial coping strategies, significant main effects, $F(3, 149) = 4.14$, $p < .05$, par. $\eta^2 = .027$, were found: Participants were more likely to use denial coping strategies to deal with crisis situations evoking more anger ($M = 1.84$, $SD = 1.53$) than sympathy ($M = 1.45$, $SD = 1.05$, $p < .05$). Therefore, H1.3.2 was not supported.

Effects of emotional intensity on coping preference. H2.1 hypothesized that conative coping (action and instrumental support) will be preferred when the crisis-evoked emotional responses are of high intensity. In the measurement of both action and instrumental support coping strategies, no significant main effects were detected. Therefore, H2.1 was not supported.

H2.2 hypothesized that more affective coping (emotional support and emotional venting) will be preferred when the crisis-evoked emotional responses are of high intensity. In the measurement of both emotional support and emotional venting coping strategies, no significant main effects were detected. Therefore, H2.2 was not supported.

H2.3.1 hypothesized that active cognitive coping (rational thinking and positive thinking) will be preferred when the crisis-evoked emotional responses are of low intensity. There were no significant main effects in the measurement of rational thinking coping strategies. In the measurement of positive thinking coping strategies, significant main effects, $F(3, 149) = 25.35$, $p < .001$, par. $\eta^2 = .145$, were found: Participants tended to use more positive thinking coping strategies when their feelings were of low intensity ($M = 4.82$, $SD = 1.46$) than when they were of high intensity ($M = 3.59$, $SD = 1.48$, $p < .001$). Therefore, H2.3.1 was partially supported.

H2.3.2 hypothesized that passive cognitive coping (avoidance and denial) will be preferred when the crisis-evoked emotional responses are of low intensity. There were no significant main effects in the measurement of avoidance coping strategies. In the measurement of denial coping strategies, significant main effects, $F[3, 149] = 5.29$, $p < .05$, par. $\eta^2 = .034$, were found: Participants were more likely to use denial coping strategies when their feelings were of low intensity ($M = 1.86$, $SD = 1.50$) than when they were of high intensity ($M = 1.41$, $SD = 1.40$, $p < .05$). Therefore, H2.3.2 was partially supported.

Effects of Emotions on Publics’ Acceptance of Organizational Crisis Responses

Effects of emotion type on crisis response acceptance. H3.1 hypothesized that defensive crisis responses (attack, denial, scapegoat, excuse, and justification) will be more acceptable when
the crisis situation evokes more anger than sympathy. In the measurement of denial response, significant main effects, $F(3, 158) = 3.53, p < .10$, par. $\eta^2 = .022$, were found: Participants were more likely to accept the organization’s denial crisis response when they felt more anger ($M = 2.06, SD = 1.64$) than sympathy ($M = 1.65, SD = 1.17$, $p < .10$). In the measurement of scapegoat response, significant main effects, $F(3, 158) = 14.84, p < .001$, par. $\eta^2 = .086$ were found: Participants were more likely to accept the organization’s scapegoat crisis response when they felt more anger ($M = 3.13, SD = 2.20$) than sympathy ($M = 2.12, SD = 1.45, p < .001$). There were no significant main effects in the measurement of attack, excuse and justification crisis response acceptance. Therefore, H3.1 was partially supported.

H3.2 hypothesized that accommodative crisis responses (ingratiation and full apology) will be more acceptable will be preferred when the crisis situation evokes more sympathy than anger. In the measurement of full apology response, significant main effects, $F(3, 158) = 7.28, p < .01$, par. $\eta^2 = .044$, were found: Participants were more likely to accept the organization’s full apology crisis response when they felt more sympathy ($M = 5.46, SD = 1.85$) than anger ($M = 4.56, SD = 2.26, p < .01$). There were no significant main effects in the measurement of ingratiatation crisis response acceptance. Therefore, H3.2 was partially supported.

**Effects of emotional intensity on crisis response acceptance.** H4.1 hypothesized that defensive crisis responses (attack, denial, scapegoat, excuse, and justification) will be more acceptable when the crisis-evoked emotional responses are of high intensity. In the measurement of scapegoat response, significant main effects, $F(3, 158) = 27.29, p < .001$, par. $\eta^2 = .147$, were found: Participants were more likely to accept the organization’s scapegoat crisis response when their feelings were of high intensity ($M = 3.31, SD = 2.12$) than when they were of low intensity ($M = 1.96, SD = 1.44, p < .001$). In the measurement of excuse response, significant main effects, $F(3, 158) = 7.44, p < .01$, par. $\eta^2 = .045$, were found: Participants were more likely to accept the organization’s justification crisis response when their feelings were of high intensity ($M = 2.97, SD = 1.94$) than when they were of low intensity ($M = 2.20, SD = 1.62, p < .01$). In the measurement of justification response, significant main effects, $F(3, 158) = 6.12, p < .05$, par. $\eta^2 = .037$, were found: Participants were more likely to accept the organization’s excuse crisis response when their feelings were of high intensity ($M = 2.44, SD = 1.68$) than when they were of low intensity ($M = 1.83, SD = 1.37, p < .05$). There were no significant main effects in the measurement of attack and denial crisis response acceptance. Therefore, H4.1 was largely supported.

H4.2 hypothesized that accommodative crisis responses (ingratiation and full apology) will be more acceptable when the crisis-evoked emotional responses are of low intensity. In the measurement of full apology response, significant main effects, $F(3, 158) = 30.80, p < .001$, par. $\eta^2 = .163$, were found: Participants were more likely to accept the organization’s full apology crisis response when their feelings were of low intensity ($M = 5.83, SD = 1.58$) than when they were of high intensity ($M = 4.14, SD = 2.25, p < .001$). There were no significant main effects in the measurement of ingratiatation crisis response acceptance. Therefore, H4.2 was partially supported.

**Interaction Effects of Emotion Type and Emotional Intensity**

Regarding the RQ whether there were any interaction effects between emotional type (anger vs. sympathy) and emotional intensity (high vs. low), five interaction effects were detected (see
Table 2): For public’s coping strategy preference (see Figure 1), more intense sympathy contributed to the highest preference of taking action coping \((M = 5.46, SD = 1.01), F(1, 149) = 5.08, p < .05, \text{par. } \eta^2 = .033\), although more sympathy with the low intensity led to the highest preference of using rational thinking \((M = 5.63, SD = .89), F(1, 149) = 5.57, p < .05, \text{par. } \eta^2 = .036\). For public’s acceptance of organizational crisis responses (see Figure 2), more intense anger contributed to the highest acceptance of scapegoat response \((M = 4.46, SD = 2.03), F(3, 158) = 34.89, p < .001, \text{par. } \eta^2 = .181\), and sympathy with the low intensity led to the highest acceptance of both ingratiation \((M = 45.02, SD = 21.90), F(3, 158) = 11.21, p < .05, \text{par. } \eta^2 = .066\), and full apology responses \((M = 5.93, SD = 1.60), F(3, 158) = 3.78, p < .10, \text{par. } \eta^2 = .023\).

FIGURE 1 Interactions on Coping (color figure available online).
FIGURE 2 Interactions on Acceptance of Organizational Crisis Response (color figure available online).
DISCUSSION

Integrating the major emotional research theoretical frameworks (discrete emotions vs. emotional dimensionality), this study examined publics’ coping strategy preferences and their different levels of organizational crisis response acceptance, as a function of whether there was more self-reported anger or sympathy, representing negatively- and positively-valenced emotions in crisis, at different emotional intensity level. The results of this study shed light on the key role emotions play in publics’ reaction to crisis situations and their expectation of how organizations should handle crisis situations.

Effects of Anger and Sympathy on Coping and Organizational Response Acceptance

Positive emotion, in this study’s case, sympathy, seems to contribute to more proactive coping at all levels. First, the emotion of sympathy seems to lead to more usage of affective and conative coping strategies. In crisis situations that evoke more sympathy than anger, publics tend to look for emotional support or vent their emotions so as to cope effectively. In the meanwhile, publics feeling more sympathy than anger also have the tendency to take actions or look for instrumental support so as to figure out how to find a way out of the stressful situation. This corresponds to previous finding that the emotion sympathy contributes to higher tendency to offer help and support. Given this finding, in dealing with mainly sympathy-charged publics, crisis managers should provide more forums or outlets for publics to share their sympathy and concerns, and supply with timely instructions on what steps the publics should take to solve the problems. Second, it seems more challenging when it comes to understanding publics' cognitive coping when they are affectively engaged in crises. Based on previous theory on the cognition-broadening effects of positive emotions, it is not surprising to find that publics feeling more sympathy tend to use more rational thinking to figure out what is going on during a crisis. In contrast, negative feelings such as anger tend to take over much cognitive space and allow less room for cognitive coping.

In terms of publics’ acceptance of various organizational crisis responses, the emotion of anger contributes to more preference toward both defensive and accommodative strategies. On one hand, when the crisis situation triggers more anger than sympathy, publics are more likely to accept the organizations’ use of denial and scapegoat responses. On the other hand, in more anger-triggering situation, publics tend to accept an organization’s full apology. The second finding might seem counterintuitive and different from Coombs and Holladay’s (2005) recommendation that less accommodative strategies could be used effectively in dealing with angry public. However, Coombs and Holladay (2005) also pointed out that their recommendation applied to situations when the perceived crisis responsibility is low. Although crisis responsibility was not included in the design of this study, it might play a key role in explaining the mixed bag of crisis responses that could be used to address angry publics’ needs. In situations where the perceived crisis responsibility is high (for instance, the publics believe that the organization is responsible for a given crisis), publics hold the blame against the organization and might demand nothing but complete accommodation.

These findings provide practical implications for crisis managers based on emotion theories: Because the emotion of anger is always associated with clear attribution of responsibility to
someone (whether the organization or another agent is involved) and involves the action of blame, the best move for crisis managers might be to comply to angry publics’ expectation by taking a clear organizational stance against what happened and provide any legitimate source to blame. By doing so, the organization might help channel out the publics’ anger. Specifically, if the responsibility lies with someone other than the organization, denial and scapegoat can be effectively used; if the responsibility actually is due to the organization’s misbehavior, full apology might be taken to mitigate the surging public anger.

Effects of Emotional Intensity on Coping and Organizational Crisis Response Acceptance

Based on the findings of limited-capacity stream of emotional research, it is not surprising for this study to find the reverse association between publics’ emotional intensity and their likelihood of using cognitive coping strategies. Because of individuals’ limited information processing capacity, one can only deal with certain amount of thought processes at any given time. When publics’ emotional reactions are intense, their emotions occupy more mental capacity and allow less resource allocation to think and rationalize. This might explain why, when low emotional intensity is felt, publics seem to have more capability to not only think positively but also use more denial in handling their negative feelings. Therefore, crisis managers might consider reducing the rational appeal or overwhelming factual information when publics are drowned in overwhelming emotions, because publics of high emotional intensity might not be able to pay attention to or understand the information.

When it comes to publics’ acceptance of organizational crisis responses, a strong positive association between emotional intensity and support of defensive strategies is suggested by the results of this study. When publics are charged with intense feelings, they demand quick and firm organizational responses, and are more likely to endorse an organization’s use of scapegoat, excuse, and justification, but not attack and denial. On the other hand, when not feeling too intense, publics are more likely to accept the organization’s full apology as a quick solution to handle the crisis. Given these findings, crisis managers might consider employing more defensive communicative approaches in dealing with situations charged with high emotional intensity, whereas they might consider using full apology when the emotional intensity is not high and the responsibility actually lies with the organization.

Interplay of Emotional Type and Emotional Intensity

Integrating the perspectives on the emotional type and intensity, interesting interactions are suggested by this study, which have practical insights for crisis managers in handling publics’ discrete emotions at different levels of intensity. First, in terms of sympathy: (a) More intense sympathetic feelings lead to the high likelihood of using action-based coping and (b) more sympathy at low intensity contributes to more preference of using rational thinking to cope cognitively, as well as more acceptance of an organization’s accommodative crisis responses such as ingratiation and full apology. Second, when feeling very angry, publics are more likely to accept an organization’s scapegoat crisis response.
From a crisis manager’s view, if the situation is filled with strong sympathy, the organization might want to act as the action-facilitator to guide the publics on how to take constructive actions and get out of the current crisis. If sympathy is evident but not overly intense, at least the organization could supply factual information to help publics’ understanding of any crisis handling progress. The scapegoat response should be used cautiously. To ensure its properness from the publics’ perspective, it might be most likely to be accepted by very angry publics when clear attribution and blame are needed.

Conclusion

**Limitations.** Given the complex nature of crisis communication practice, there are several limitations of this study that suggest much room for future research to revise and refine emotional research in this area. First, this study only focused on two emotions, sympathy and anger. Other important emotions in crisis situations need to be further examined, such as guilt (Kim, Perrin, Cooper, & Dirks, 2004), etc. Second, this study focused on nonvictim publics and used actual crises as the stimuli to test publics’ responses. Although the usage of actual crisis news story was recommended by researchers (e.g., Coombs & Holladay, 2005), one of the disadvantages lies in those crisis stories’ contextual baggage, the notoriety and wide media coverage of which might impact on the results. Also, using actual crisis does not allow researchers to measure crisis victims’ responses in a real time. Therefore, further tracking of emotional responses of victims exposed to real crisis or testing via simulating victim crisis responses using hypothetical stimuli would be an important addition to current research. Third, this experimental design controlled out the effect of organizational crisis responsibility by choosing crisis news stimuli, in which none of the organizations knowingly triggered the crisis. It would be interesting to add organizational crisis responsibility as a key stage of crisis appraisal and further test its moderating effects in publics’ emotional responses. Fourth, existing one-item measures were used for anger and sympathy, which might limit the reliability and interpretations of the results. When possible and feasible, future research should further develop and use multiple-item measures for individual emotions in crisis situations. Fifth, the influence of demographic variables might be further explored in survey research on how individuals with different backgrounds perceive and feel about crises differently. Sixth, in comparing the effectiveness of organizational crisis responses, other intervening variables need to be taken into consideration in future studies. For instance, Kim et al. (2004) found that guilt, as related to violation type and response, is an important issue in understanding the effects of apology versus denial. In their study, denial appears to be a better strategy because it indicates there is no crisis. Future research should integrate emotional factors and trust issues to further unearth the effectiveness of different crisis responses.

**Implications.** The integrated affective approach to understanding the effects of publics’ emotions on crisis responses contributes to crisis communication theories and practices. Built upon the cognitive appraisal approach from the publics’ perspective (Jin, 2009, 2010; Jin et al., 2007), this study advances the theoretical framework of emotional theories in public relations, which highlighted the need for crisis managers to understand both organizations and publics’ crisis situation assessments and crisis handling expectations.

The findings of this study shed light on one key aspect of best practice of crisis communication, which aims at maximizing mutual understanding and closing gaps between publics’
coping strategies and organization’s responses. Organizations should identify different emotions with different intensity experienced by publics in various crises and understand publics’ emotional needs and coping strategy preference, so as to strategically choose the most effective response and tailor crisis-handling messages. Organizations should play the role as coping facilitators in the eyes of the publics and utilize both sensible and reasonable strategies.

A few suggestions for crisis managers on how to apply the emotion research findings to crisis communication practice: First, to understand publics’ emotions, a crisis manager must be mindful of his or her own empathy in conducing crisis communication to feel in publics’ shoes and translate the emotional languages to the organization’s top management. Second, it is critical for crisis managers to communicate with publics with genuine sensitivity, the accomplishment of which lies in more accurate assessment of the emotional tone and temperature among a given public at a given time. A crisis manager should keep track of any available indicator of the publics’ affective manifestations, such as emotional expressions in the news coverage, emotionally charged posts on an organization’s blog or any third-party forums, as well as Facebook comments and Twitter tweets as related to a crisis situation. Real-time emotion-laden information updates via new technology help crisis managers make timely and sensitive crisis response decisions. Third, these research findings can also help crisis managers predict or estimate what kind of coping strategy a given public in a given situation is likely to resort to as well as which organizational response might be more acceptable, once the dominant emotions are identified and assessed through public responses reflected in the media and evident in other public forums.

Future directions. The mechanism and function of emotions in crisis needs to be further explored in further studies. For example, by far it is still not clear how different types of emotion might impact cognitive coping strategies such as avoidance and denial, depending on whether they feel more anger or sympathy. There is also no evidence in terms of whether publics feeling different emotional intensity might prefer conative and affective coping differently. These remaining questions could be further tested using different experiment stimuli (e.g., real crisis vs. hypothetical situations) with victim group and across different crisis clusters. Surveys with large random sample can also be used to describe the patterns of crisis responses as associated with other factors such as demographics. Qualitative research methods such as depth interviews and focus groups may provide more insights and richer data in understanding how publics cope with their feelings in specific crisis situations.

According to Heath and Coombs (2006), crisis communication is to address the need for organizations to respond to a crisis by choosing the most appropriate response so as to protect the organization’s reputation from crisis managers’ perspective. Future crisis researchers should not only provide insights for crisis managers on how to make effective decisions but also examine the ethics and social responsibility dimension of crisis communication. With more in-depth understanding of publics’ needs and feelings through research, it is an imperative for crisis managers to recommend not only the most effective but also the most ethical organizational responses to publics in different crisis situations.

REFERENCES


