

THE HUMAN ELEMENT:
A STUDY OF THE EFFECTS OF CULTURE ON CRISIS REACTIONS

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MELINDA RENE MILLER

Dr. Art Challis, Thesis Supervisor

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APPROVAL PAGE

The undersigned, appointed by the dean of Humanities and Social Science, have examined the thesis entitled

THE HUMAN ELEMENT:
A STUDY OF THE EFFECTS OF CULTURE ON CRISIS REACTIONS

Presented by Melinda Rene Miller,

a candidate for the degree of Master of Art in Professional Communication,

and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

Professor Art Challis

Professor Pat Paystrup

Professor Stan Gwin
Interim Graduate Director

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Abstract

Crisis communication research has failed to fully unearth possible explanations for its own shortcomings in matching appropriate crisis responses to types of crises. This paper provides a reasonable explanation and solution to this phenomenon, through the exploration of the affects of community cultures on crisis reactions.

Crisis situations are merely social constructs that are brought about as a reaction to a trigger event. And while each individual person within a given community will react to a potential crisis situation in their individual ways, as a whole their reactions will never vary too greatly, as their behaviors and attitudes are largely based upon their learned cultural values. Thus, as a group their behaviors can, to an extent, be predicted by thoroughly understanding their culture.

This hypothesis led to the development of a line of research questioning that directed a course of study to determine if there is any correlation between learned cultural values and reactions to crisis trigger events, as well as to develop a model for understanding the culture of an organization's various publics. The resulting model, as laid forth and proven in this paper, helps to predict the reactions that publics will have to a crisis trigger event.

In summary, the model first demands the creation of a list of all prominent publics and an understanding of their expectations from the organization. The next step necessitates an in depth look into each public's culture so as to predict, based on their values, what their behavioral and attitudinal reactions would be to a break in the fulfillment of their expectations.

Chapter 1

Introduction

On Monday, April 16, 2007, Virginia Tech faced what is being referred to as, “the worst shooting spree in modern U.S. history,” (Apuzzo). Within hours, the school’s response to this apparent crisis came under extreme scrutiny from the media—not the students, nor the faculty, nor the parents, nor the police (Apuzzo). The media appeared to be concerned with the students’ well-being, believing that they could have been saved if not for the school’s administrative decision making—they were trying to speak for them. However, the students spoke for themselves the day after the tragedy, through their actions, when thousands of students attended the convocation in support of their school, nearly all of them proudly wearing Hokies memorabilia (Virginia Tech). While the world looks for somewhere to place blame, the students, both current and past, have actually bonded together and become stronger as they have reached out to support each other and the school they love. However, this reaction comes as no surprise considering the amount of school spirit and pride that existed within the university community.

On Monday, October 2, 2006, the nation watched in shock as an entire Amish community came together to mourn not only the five girls that were killed in a school shooting in their community, but also the man who was responsible for their deaths. Where other victims of similar tragedies have lobbied for stronger gun laws and lashed out at anyone connected to the killer, these people turned a forgiving heart and embraced the shooter’s family (Associated Press). Again however, this community’s reaction is considered normal for them based upon the lessons of forgiveness and peace that are taught in their culture.

Yet another public shooting that recently took place was at Trolley Square, in Salt Lake City. Here the community's culture involved placing people in leadership positions from early adolescents on. This resulted in a unique response as people immediately reacted to the situation. Some individuals stepped up and made management decisions, while others fulfilled another aspect of their culture and followed orders without question. The culture's strong emphasis on family also became apparent as child counseling became an immediate concern. The culture's strong bond and love for neighbors shone through when during the actual shooting people chose to put their own lives at risk for those around them. And, unlike many mass shootings, people volunteered more than their money and actually came out to volunteer their time for the victims, all an apparent result of their learned cultural values (Associated Press, Winslow and Nailen).

In the 1980's Salt Lake City experienced intense flooding; in the eyes of government officials the city was in a crisis situation. However, where people from other parts of the country are often quick to submit for federal aid to fix the problem, Utahans joined together through their faith and volunteered thousands of man-hours sandbagging and aiding with other preventative measures and then came back to help with clean up efforts (Collins, 1998). Any other reaction from the Salt Lake community, with its heavily LDS cultural influence, would have seemed out of the norm for this group of people, who are taught to always be prepared and practice self-reliance while reaching out to serve and fellowship those around them.

In all of these crisis situations, the people involved reacted differently than people expected, especially when compared to others in the past, even when placed in nearly

identical situations. When taking a deeper look into the circumstances surrounding the situation and the culture of those people involved, it is not so hard to see why they reacted the way they did. Not every type of person will react the same way to the same situation; human nature varies too greatly among different groups of people.

But what causes that variation? The most notable difference between different groups of people, in different places, is their values, which direct their behavior and are influenced heavily by their culture. So could isolating cultures allow one to isolate values, and thereby determine behavior? And if so, could understanding general patterns of normal behavior allow one to extrapolate that understanding and predict behavior in a crisis situation?

In other words, had crisis planners gone ahead and studied each of these cultures in advance, documenting their normal behavior patterns and identifying where they place their values, could they have accurately predicted how they would react, even in an intense crisis situation?

For example, one could not have known that a school shooting was about to occur in the Amish community, however, one easily could have understood that the Amish value living a righteous life above even death. While they certainly mourn those they have lost, it is easy to see that revenge is not a part of their culture. So, to expect them to lash out in anger following an unexpected death is not reasonable.

Rather, knowing their culture and value placement one would assume they would react in a righteous Christian manner and hate only the sin, but not the sinner. Knowing this would then allow the crisis planner to better prepare for crisis situations by having a more fitting response ready.

In this example, gathering in the community, and uniting them as one while emphasizing the religious aspects of the community, such as life after death, mankind's purpose on earth, the importance of righteous living, etc. would have adequately fulfilled any needed response.

Without a knowledge of the community culture, one may have attempted to respond with increased safety laws and regulations, an extensive, public trial and investigation, monetary donations, etc. that really would have been quite ineffective to help the families overcome the situation.

However, hindsight is 20/20 and it is easy to see these cultural elements when reviewing an incident of the past. The real question is whether one can not only isolate the cultural elements following a crisis, but can also predict the behaviors ahead of time. While human behavior is unique and can never be fully predicted, overall reactions can, using a simple cultural model, as is presented in the following paper.

Chapter 2

Proposal

From the onset of crisis communication research, scholars have been eager to identify and categorize crises into groups or types, based on the event that leads to the crisis. Later, Benson (1988) challenged scholars to expand crisis communication knowledge and try to discover the range of crisis response strategies that organizations use, as well as determine which strategy is best suited for each particular crisis category.

Fueled by the work of Caillouet (1994), Benoit (1992), Hobbs (1995), and Ice (1991), the first stage of inquiry has produced a rapidly growing body of literature that identifies and analyzes various response strategies used during crisis situations.

Numerous approaches have emerged and have been identified as appropriate responses, such as apologies, excuses, accounts, responses to embarrassment, image restoration, and impression management, among others (Coombs & Schmidt, 2000).

Research is now slowly starting to move into a second developmental stage. Though still limited, researchers appear to have shifted their focus towards identifying characteristics of crises that determine what response strategy would be most appropriate, for each type of crisis (Lee, 2005). However, Benson's second challenge has largely gone unanswered (Coombs & Holladay, 1996, p 279).

Perhaps this is because current research says that crisis responses should be selected based on the type or severity of the event (Heath, 1997) and on the locus of responsibility, be it internal or external and whether the cause was intentional or unintentional (Coombs, 1994, p 7-8). This appears to be an increasingly difficult task, as

each new crisis brings a new response with little consistency or any type of pattern developing.

Haruta and Hallahan (2003) offer an explanation for this extreme difficulty when they present the idea that these events being used as organizers are merely triggers, and that the actual crisis itself centers on the uncertainty created in response to the trigger event. Crises are nothing more than social constructs created through extreme scrutiny in the minds of those closely surrounding the event—not the actual event (p 124). Thus, researchers should be studying these social constructs to determine their response pattern, rather than the event, since it is the reaction that creates conflict.

Similarly, Bechler (1995) concluded that a significant area being overlooked in crisis research involved the impact of culture of those involved in the creation of crisis. He concluded that analyzing culture can reveal elements that contribute to the occurrence and escalation of a crisis situation (p 1). He also points out that research has concluded very little about the cultural variables that helped to predict the onset and escalation of a crisis (p 4).

Culture is nothing more than the collective values, ideas and experience of a community. Communities exist in and around organizations, so to better understand culture is to understand the individuals within the society and should allow a sense of predictability based on those shared values.

Lee (2005) says that unpredictability or suddenness is a part of a crisis that all practitioners must face. He goes on to list specific aspects of crises that he says are largely unpredictable, including, public reaction (p 227). But understanding the culture

of the surrounding public could eliminate this element of unpredictability with the community's reaction.

One could better respond to the development of a crisis situation within their organization by knowing in advance how the organization's key publics will likely react to any given situation.

The overall purpose of this study then, is to demonstrate that crisis managers should be studying the cultural values leading to the response of those individuals immediately surrounding trigger events—not the events themselves—in order to determine the best possible response to what could become a crisis situation. Situations should not influence selection of strategies, people should.

For example, say a company is facing a crisis situation, manufacturing costs have risen above their ability to compete in the eastern market, forcing the company to move its operations to the west coast, where industrial land is cheaper and they can cut costs in other areas allowing them to pay their workers.

For some members of the employee public this can come as a crushing blow. Perhaps their families have lived in the area for generations and they cannot bear to leave the only home they have ever known and move with the company, but staying would leave them completely desolate and without means to provide for their families. Whereas, for others who's cultural values are not as deeply tied to the geographic location, being offered a chance to relocate may be considered a huge blessing. Perhaps the workers are all older and planned to shortly retire to a new area anyway, perhaps they are middle-aged and have children who do not want to move schools, perhaps they are young and welcome the opportunity to get out and see the world.

These are just some of the aspects that one would need to understand in order to create a fitting response plan to deal with the workers. Knowing which of the cultural attitudes is most heavily present within this given company would allow upper management personnel to determine whether to offer relocation packages or work out some form of early retirement benefits package and then hire all new employees at the new location, a decision that would have a huge impact on the future success of the entire operation.

Clearly the cultural desires of the individuals involved should be the primary consideration when determining the most appropriate course of action. Trying to blanket the situation with a “one-size fits all” response could be catastrophic, because not all relocation crises call for the same plan of action. Thus, when planning for the best response possible, the event does not matter nearly as much as the individuals involved.

Specifically this study poses the following research questions:

R1: Is there a correlation between learned cultural values and reactions to crisis trigger events?

R2: Can understanding the culture of an organization’s various publics help predict the reactions that these publics will have to a crisis trigger event?

The researcher then hypothesizes that:

The following model will prove successful in helping predict crisis response. The proposed model will determine what situations qualify as a crisis that demands attention and how an organization’s publics will react to a given situation.

First one should compile a list of all of the organization's publics and rank the importance of the relationship to each public. Next the organization's crisis planner should create a list of what each public expects from the organization (ie: safe work environment, quality product, low costs, environmentally friendly production methods, reliable employment, quality service, etc.).

Then, one would use ethnographic research methods to study each of the publics' culture. This cultural study should analyze, and include a description of the culture's history, demographical elements and attitudes and behaviors within the culture of each public. Upon development of a clear understanding of the culture, one can then, using historical comparisons and rational scrutiny, predict each public's probable reaction to a loss or disappointment in expectation.

This would allow the planner to rate the importance of each expectation and note the affect of not fulfilling the expectation in terms of the relationship. (If the expectation is not met, will that public terminate the relationship altogether, high importance; lose trust in the relationship, medium importance; respond with minimal annoyance, but not change any behavior, low importance, etc.) Since it is not feasible to prepare for every possible contingency, the most important expectations of the most important publics become the main priority.

Finally, they would use the understanding of the culture to predict which values will be affected when each expectation is no longer being met. And determine how the public will enact those values in the form of an immediate response to whatever trigger event presents, causing those expectations to fail—it does not matter what form the trigger event takes, only what expectations are no longer being fulfilled as a result of it

and what values that failure affects. For example: an important public, such as an organization's employees, have an expectation of receiving competitive wages. This expectation is of great importance to them and they will terminate their relationship with the organization if the expectation fails to be met. This expectation is a manifestation of their value placed on providing for their families. This value of providing a comfortable lifestyle for their families is ranked high within their culture. And based on previous experiences where this expectation was not fulfilled and this value was not being met, for whatever reason, should they no longer be able to provide for their family the employees will likely all leave the organization together to find better work.

Thus, organizational response will not vary based on the "type" of crisis, be it natural disaster, terrorist attack, hostile take-over, or industrial accident. Rather response is determined by what needs and expectations are not being met, such as personal safety, financial security, reliable service, etc., and by each public's level of involvement and degree of intensity (meaning, to what extent were they harmed or dissatisfied).

For example, the trigger event could be a natural disaster where lightning causes a massive power outage. For some organizations this situation would not be considered important enough to worry about. The office closes down early and everyone gets the rest of the afternoon off.

Whereas for another organization, entire relationships could potentially falter if medical equipment stopped working, causing unnecessary deaths. Thus, the actual event plays no part, rather the expectation that a hospital will do whatever necessary to provide quality, life-saving care, is where the focus should be. The crisis managers need to plan for contingencies related to fulfilling those expectations by keeping the equipment

working in unexpected situations and how to deal with the ultimate catastrophe of actual equipment failure. They also need to be aware of the culture of their publics. Response to an accidental death would vary if one was dealing with a children's hospital versus a nursing home. All of these elements need to be considered, and thus far have been largely ignored by crisis researchers.

Literature Review

Freeman's (1984) stakeholder theory has demonstrated and highlighted the danger of not recognizing stakeholders' power over an organization's success and acting to meet their needs and responding appropriately to their interests. System's theory expands on this working relationship between an organization and its environment, and outlines basic assumptions that must be present in establishing an effective organization, including proactively existing within its environment or community (Von Bertalanffy, 1968).

Lee's (2005) interpretation of Vasquez's (1993, 1994) homo narrans theory in the context of crisis communication is that "stakeholders are interpretive communities" (Lee, 2005, p 296). Based on this interpretation, it can be assumed that in applying Freeman's (1984) theory, communities also have power over an organization's success and acting to meet their needs and responding appropriately to their interests is equally important during the time of a crisis trigger event.

Lee (2005) points out that, as a field, public relations research reveals very little about what stakeholders in various cultures expect (p 288). This is because many practitioners overlook the fact that all aspects of a community are observable, including

their expectations. Referring back to humanities' original roots in anthropology creates a better and deeper understanding of how communities function.

According to Andrews (2002), using the age-old art of ethnographic research can help practitioners build, "cultural interpretations that allow them to understand the complexity of local rhetorical patterns and preferences," (p. 8). In other words, it is a valuable research method that can help, "to further understand human cultures and social behavior," (Durante & Feehan, 2005, p. 11) and reveal, "why people do what they do where they do it," (Andrews, 2002, p. 8).

In the past, a variance in traditions has separated behavioral and cultural scholars, which has created a gap between the knowledge of culture within communities and audience behavior (McLeod, 2000). But by combining an understanding of both fields, or methods of study, an observer can come to understand what drives behaviors within the culture by understanding the shared experiences and assumptions (Schein, 1992).

Therefore, this study proposes the use of ethnographic research within the field of public relations to create a better understanding of the communities in which organizations operate. And suggests that professional practitioners should then incorporate that understanding into their responses to trigger events in an effort to eliminate, or at least control, the escalation from an event into a perceived crisis.

Method

The most evident method for testing the hypothesized model is simple trial and error, where continual confirmation over time will generate increased support and eventually lead to acceptance. Thus, this research will consist of a case study method

which will take an in depth look into a given group of people's reaction to a crisis event, specifically looking at how their culture played a substantive role in determining their overall reaction. In addition, the reaction of a culturally separate group of individuals to the same incident will be documented for purpose of comparison, thus proving that it is the people, and not the event that directed the human reaction. The crisis situation that will be examined is the disaster surrounding Hurricane Katrina. The full proposed model will be carried out from the perspective of the government's relationship to the New Orleans Ninth Ward community, a portion of its constituent public. The comparison group will be the Mississippi Gulf Coast community.

The Ninth Ward community will be guided through the entire model using pre-trigger event consideration. Cultural information will be gathered primarily from printed materials, such as newspapers and almanacs, interviews, census information and observation. Once a clear understanding of the culture has been presented, elements of the culture will be compared to the behavioral reactions and attitudes of the community members using post-trigger event information, as presented in major newspapers. The data will then be analyzed to look for connections between the immediate reactions and the publics' innate culture. Then in an effort to increase control, the reactions of the people living on the Mississippi Gulf Coast will be analyzed for comparison to show that different people, in different places, have different reactions to the same event. If enough substantial connections can be drawn then the proposed model will gain its preliminary support by having worked backwards to prove that the behaviors exhibited were in fact, predictable.

Anticipated Results

It is anticipated that following an analysis of the cultures the information discovered will demonstrate a strong correlation between preexisting cultural values and certain reactions, revealing that the initial reaction to the trigger event was highly predictable based on cultural factors. In other words, it is predicted that scrutinizing the community culture will reveal predisposed attitudes that can foreshadow likely reactions.

The reactive behavior exhibited following a trigger event will have its roots traced back to ideals and values learned through the community culture. Reviewing the data that this study will generate should display links between learned cultural traits and individual reactions. Understanding these links and scrutinizing cultural norms will allow future practitioners to predict behaviors.

Discussion and Conclusion

The idea of studying people instead of events to predict crisis reactions and select appropriate responses is highly theorized and is becoming more evident in current research; however it still lacks the support of accurate research. Pending the results of this study, scholars may be closer to proving this phenomenon as a fully accurate method of practice.

This study has the potential to demonstrate that through organizational profiles, cultural typologies can be revealed that increase the understanding of how certain cultures will react to certain trigger events. This study will uncover further knowledge about how to predict public response and thereby select the most appropriate

communication response to a crisis trigger event, allowing public relations practitioners more knowledge and control over their organizations.

Being able to make the claim that a community's culture has a greater effect on the public's reaction to a crisis trigger event than the event itself, will aid future research in focusing more on creating a list of cultural aspects that match with crisis response strategies.

Chapter 3

Literature Review

Defining a Crisis

Crisis situations are an unfortunate reality that every organization must face. Research has shown that the better prepared an organization is for a crisis situation, the better able they will be to handle the crisis. Within crisis literature a precise, agreed upon, clear-cut definition of the term itself does not appear to exist. Rather researchers have made exhaustive attempts to explain what a crisis is or is not, in an effort to gain their own working definition and understanding. In an attempt to unite researchers across the discipline, Heath and Millar (2004, p. 4-5) have compiled a lengthy and fairly comprehensive list of these working definitions as follows:

- Crisis interrupts normal business activities. Crisis management/communication is a corporate strategy for dealing with a major business interruption.
- Crisis may result from management decisions to implement the organization's strategic plan, such as the crisis resulting from a major layoff of employees. Although the kind of event that results in a crisis can be predicted, the specific time of the occurrence may not be foretold. Some events, such as massive layoffs can be foretold and even timed.
- Crisis can damage the reputation of the organization and prevent management from accomplishing its mission and strategic plan.
- Crisis can harm the organization's efforts to create understanding and foster mutually favorable relationships with stakeholders.

- Crisis can mature into a public policy issue. Conversely, a public policy issue can become a crisis.
- Crisis can weaken the organization's ability to compete in the marketplace.
- Crisis can be described by several characteristics: magnitude, duration, locus of cause, locus of responsibility, emergency response (timely and effective), and restoration/resolution.
- Crisis can result in damage that is actual, an explosion, or merely apparent, as in the case of an unfounded rumor.
- Crisis often prompts an emotional response by key stakeholders. A crisis evokes emotion because interests are damaged—or at least appear to be (Mitroff and Pearson, 1993; Pauchant and Mitroff, 1992).
- Crisis is an extraordinary event that results in “an unstable time or state of affairs in which a decisive change is impending,” (Fink, 1986, p. 15).
- “Crises are characterized by low probability of high consequence events that threaten the most fundamental goal of an organization,” (Weick, 1988, p. 305).
- “A critical incident or a crisis is simply a sudden, unexpected event that poses an institutional threat suggesting the need for rapid, high level decision-making,” (Paschall, 1992, p.4).
- Crisis entails events and outcomes about which key stakeholders make attributions regarding cause and responsibility (Coombs and Holladay, 1996). “Crises are threats, meaning that they actually do or have the potential to create negative or undesirable outcomes,” (Coombs, 1999, p. 2). “Crisis management

represents a set of factors designed to combat crises and lessen the actual damage inflicted by the crisis,” (Coombs, 1999, p. 4).

- “A crisis is a major occurrence with a potentially negative outcome affecting an organization, company, industry, as well as its publics, products, services, or good name,” (Fearn-Banks, 1996, p.1).
- A crisis “is an event that brings, or has the potential for bringing, an organization into disrepute and imperils its future profitability,” (Lerbinger, 1997, p. 4).
- Crisis is a strain on the reward-cost balance between an organization and key stakeholders who can work to impose constraints on the organization’s activities thereby costing it additional resources (Stanley, 1985).
- A crisis is a major business (organization) disruption which generates intense media interest and public scrutiny (Irvine and Millar, 1998).

In summary, “a crisis suddenly occurs, demands quick reaction, interferes with organizational performance, creates uncertainty and stress, threatens the reputation, assets of the organization, escalates in intensity, causes outsiders to scrutinize the organization, and permanently alters the organization,” (Millar, 2004, p. 19). If scholarly researchers have such a hard time deciding what is and is not a crisis, how can professionals, attempting to apply their theories in the field, possibly be expected to know for their own organizations? Let alone prepare for, or respond to a potential crisis?

The obvious reason that creating a broad, all encompassing definition seems to be such a daunting task is that what is a crisis for someone, may not be for someone else. And when a trigger event first occurs, without knowing how the public will respond one can not be sure whether the organization will be permanently altered, come under public

scrutiny, and so on. And when creating an immediate response, one really does not have time to wait until these details are made clearer.

Attempting to define a crisis almost seems comparable to Justice Stewart's attempt to define obscenity, "I shall not today attempt further to define [a crisis]; and perhaps I could never succeed in intelligibly doing so. But I know it when I see it," (FindLaw). While pinning down a concrete definition seems impossible—every organization knows when it is in crisis and how harmful it potentially is.

Stewart's idea fits because most organizations, without any intentional efforts, know their publics enough to foresee that whatever just happened will not go over well with them, and whether they are permanently altered in the long run or not, they know they need to respond immediately and appropriately. And in the long run, who really cares if the organization came under media scrutiny, as long as their important publics were pleased with their response?

Thus, a simple definition of a crisis is: when an organization fails to live up to the expectations of its various publics. And with that definition, would come an understanding that crises have varying degrees of intensity, some so low they do not merit any attention or planned response.

Understanding a Crisis

Current crisis research is largely based on general systems theory frameworks. Most theoretical approaches attempt to "understand the factors associated with the onset of crisis, how organizations and social structures respond to and make sense of a crisis, and the impact of crisis on stakeholders, social systems, and on larger understandings of

threat and risk,” (Seeger, Sellnow, and Ulmer, 2003, p. 21). Among these approaches are: sensemaking, chaos theory, and organizational learning theory. By combining the theory behind all of these different, various approaches one can develop an overall, better understanding of the inter workings of a crisis situation. This understanding then builds support for this study’s proposed model.

Sensemaking attempts to explain the process of how people create situational awareness in situations of uncertainty. It briefly touches on how human behavior plays a role in adapting and responding to unexpected situations, such as a crisis situation. (Weick, 1995). However, unlike the proposed model, sensemaking theory largely calls for an analysis and evaluation following the event, which results in an explanation of why people reacted the way they did. It does not offer a predictive option. The model then feeds off of some of the theory behind sensemaking, such as the idea that crisis situations are simply social constructs following a trigger event. The model incorporates a predictive aspect that will allow practitioners to perform the analysis and evaluation prior to the events occurrence.

Chaos theory is said to have the potential to clarify the role of uncertainty, equivocality, and predictability. Chaos theory applies to systems that experience some element of pandemonium, such as an organization in a crisis (Keil, 1994; Sellnow, Seeger and Ulmer, 2002). Just as sensemaking theory touches on the human element of crisis situations, chaos theory helps to isolate the element of surprise that is so common with crisis situations. It supports the proposed model by shedding light on how to understand behavioral patterns that attempt to restore a sense of reality and normalcy that is often lost following a trigger event. Understanding how humans have patterned their behavior

to work to eliminate chaos from their lives can be used to help predict similar behavior in the future.

Organizational learning theory touches on the way organizations learn and adapt over time. This theory involves looking at values and expectations and then considering what happens when actual outcomes differ (Huber, 1991). Organizational learning theory is important to consider when drafting the proposed model because it helps to explain the organization's role in a crisis situation. It highlights the necessary influence of each individual organization's culture on the outcome of the crisis. By understanding that each organization and its publics will learn and adapt together over time and in their own unique way brings needed support to the ideas behind the model.

These theoretical approaches to examining crises seek to undo some of the inherent confusion and variable components so often associated with crisis situations. Any effort taken to develop a deeper understanding of crises overall will only help in creating a better response. However, in an effort to not only better understand, but also plan for crises, an entire subset of research, known as crisis typology has emerged.

Identifying a Crisis

According to Seeger, Sellnow, and Ulmer, (2003) typology research classifies events according to their common features to help detail the range of potential threats, describe the common features, outline general structures, and clarify the range of response strategies. They claim that, "naming and classifying a crisis is important to addressing the uncertainty and confusion regarding causes and responsibility" (p. 45).

Thus, the field has an ever growing body of literature that outlines numerous different ways to categorize crises.

The Institute for Crisis Management (ICM) offers 16 categories of crisis types: “business catastrophe, class action suits, defects/recalls, environmental damage, financial damages, labor disputes, sexual harassment, white collar crime, casualty accident, consumer action, discrimination, executive dismissal, hostile takeover, mismanagement, whistle blowing, and workplace violence,” (Millar, 2004, p. 21).

Meyers and Holusha (1986) identify nine business crises as: public perception, sudden market shift, product failure, top management succession, cash crises, industrial relations, hostile takeover, adverse international events, and regulation/deregulation. Coombs (1999) classifies crises as: natural disasters, malevolence, technical breakdowns, human breakdowns, challenges, megadamage, organizational misdeeds, workplace violence, and rumors. And Mitroff and Anagnos (2001) claim: economic, informational, physical-loss of key plants and facilities, human resource, reputation, psychopathic acts, and natural disasters. These researchers, along with a host of other scholars who have their own categories, suggest that defining the type of crisis an organization is experiencing will lead to a more correct response on the part of the organization.

The challenge for practitioners then becomes determining which researchers have the “correct” categories and then determining how to use their newly identified category to actually improve their crisis response. However, the best practical application of these numerous categories is simply to help identify potential crises within a given organization.

Thus, while in theory these typologies are good to understand, in practice they provide little actual benefit. They serve as a glorified brainstorm list that allows practitioners to consider possible crisis events that they may have not otherwise considered. Contrary to Seeger, Sellnow and Ulmer's (2003) claim, categorizing a crisis does not realistically help to clarify the range of response strategies. For example, knowing that a particular crisis qualifies as a natural disaster does not automatically supply an appropriate response strategy, every natural disaster does not automatically call for a defensive approach, implementing strategic ambiguity. This is because a crisis consists of more than the event itself, and therefore consideration when selecting an appropriate response needs to be given to more than the event itself.

The largest problem with all of these lists is that they focus solely on the event, and not the result of the event. For example, identifying the source of an organization's crisis as, a natural disaster type of problem does no real good. This is because not every natural disaster results in the same end situation; so in that sense it is really not even the same kind of crisis. A natural disaster that kills people associated with the organization should be dealt with much differently than a natural disaster that causes massive power outages and shuts down technological operations within the organization. Furthermore, a massive power outage for some organizations could be a horrible crisis, where as for others, it may not phase them.

Haruta and Hallahan (2003) present the idea that these events being used as organizers are merely triggers, and that the actual crisis itself centers on the uncertainty created in response to the trigger event. Crises are nothing more than social constructs created through extreme scrutiny in the minds of those closely surrounding the event—

not the actual event (p. 124). So in reality, researchers should be studying the social constructs surrounding trigger events as well, rather than just the events themselves, since it is the reaction that creates conflict.

Public Expectations

Within the frameworks of the social exchange theory Thibaut and Kelley (1959) reasoned that personal relationships are the result of weighing costs versus benefits that arise from the relationship. Economists present a similar theory from a fiscal perspective known as a cost-benefit analysis (Hornigren, Datar, and Foster, 2006, pg. 11).

Applying the same idea presented in these two theories to an organization's relationships with its various publics reveals a new theory of expectations. Any given organization, functions as a result of its working relationships with its publics. Either side of the relationship enters into the association with certain expectations of what they hope will be a positive result. They perform a mental cost-benefit analysis to determine whether or not the costs of the association will outweigh the expected benefits.

For example, an employee public makes a list of the pros and cons of working for the organization to determine if they want to enter into the relationship. By determining that the pros outweigh the cons they accept the relationship, but maintain a certain set of expectations, what they anticipate receiving from the organization in exchange for their contributions (such as a safe work environment, a reliable source of income, a promising future with the company, opportunities for advancement, etc.).

Should something happen and their expectations not be met, their willingness to maintain the relationship may falter. This leaves the organization with the responsibility

of responding in some manner to restore “normal operations” and ensure that the publics’ expectations are being met in order to avoid any permanent termination or damage to the relationship.

Maintaining this higher level of relationship requires that the organization have a higher level of understanding towards its publics. Knowing their expectations and cultural styles will allow the organization to maintain those working relationships.

Culture

Edward B. Taylor (1871) first defined culture as “that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society,” (cited in Sackmann, 1991, p. 8). Since then, anthropologists, sociologists, economists, psychologists, scholars and laymen alike have created their own definitions. Despite their slight differences, all understandings appear to include some form of identifying, “what people do (cultural behavior), what people know (cultural knowledge), and the things people make and use (cultural artifacts),” (Westby and Ford, 1993, p. 320). Isolating these components from within a society will allow for an understanding of the culture’s values, beliefs and assumptions.

Ott (1989) proposed that “culture is to the organization what personality is to the individual—a hidden, yet unifying theme that provides meaning, direction and mobilization,” (p. 1). Westby and Ford (1993) interpret this to mean that culture provides members with a way to frame their roles and experiences. According to Ott, culture is essentially the driving force behind all activities. Thus, knowing as much as possible about the desired publics’ cultures will allow practitioners to foresee what direction this

force is driving its publics. It is through the study of culture that practitioners can gain a higher level of understanding for their publics. Crisis literature presented the need for better forecasting and understanding, and culture provides the big ‘how’ portion of the model. Through its tried and tested analytical process of information gathering the study of culture becomes the key to allowing practitioners to remedy the current shortcoming within crisis research, namely better prediction and understanding of human behavior. Its influence, clearly, cannot be overlooked.

Many scholars embrace Collier’s (1989) notion that culture is, “one’s identification with and acceptance into a group that shares symbols, meanings, experiences, and behavior,” (Dainton and Zelle, 2005, p. 74-75).

Culture represents the, “beliefs, attitudes, values, myths, ideologies, routines, and other behaviors that define a people and their relationships to others. A culture binds together people who are united by a common set of experiences, beliefs, and values,” (Sillars and Gronbeck, 2001, p. 201).

According to Keesing (1974), culture is a system of practices by which humans have solved problems of adaptation through the formation of concepts and ideas.

Lincoln (2000) explains that culture refers to a group of people and to some factor X that defines the group, while the group also defines the X. He suggests that the X could include communication, artifacts, modes of behavior, and various kinds of preferences. In other words it is entirely circular: for example, the Ninth Ward culture is whatever the Ninth Warders do and make, say and think, and what the Ninth Warders do and make, say and think is influenced by the Ninth Ward culture.

Fiske, Kitayama, Markus, and Nisbett (1998) define culture as the accumulation of values, rules of behavior, forms of expression, norms, values, religious beliefs, occupational choices, and other human-made elements for a group of people who share a common language and environment at approximately the same period of time.

According to Schwartz (1999), values are, “conceptions of the desirable that guide the way social actors (e.g., organizational leaders, policymakers, individual persons) select actions, evaluate people and events, and explain their actions and evaluations,” (p. 29). This understanding becomes key because if values are what cause people to select their actions, knowing their values in advance will allow the observer to foretell what actions they will likely select.

For example, without knowing anything about a person, one will likely be unable to determine how that person will react to a massive flooding situation. However, knowing that the person values his or her family above all else, and next God, and then his or her home, will allow the observer to predict that they will be most strongly affected if their family is taken from them, then if their religion is attacked and then if their home is destroyed.

This knowledge will allow crisis planners to be ready for a massive flooding situation by allowing them to better handle the person’s loss. They will want to recognize and mourn for the loss of the property, but focus on the fact that they still have their belief in God to lean on and put all initial efforts into helping them locate their loved ones.

Understanding Schwartz’s theories builds support for the idea that values are what people use to cope with situations and are what provide the driving force for their actions.

Knowing the underlying force behind one's actions, along with understanding what they will rely on in order to deal with difficult situations, in advance of the situation actually taking place, is a huge advantage to anyone attempting to remedy these crisis situations.

Viewing Publics as Communities

“A community usually refers to a group of people who interact and share certain things as a group...intent, belief, resources, preference, needs, and risks,” (Wikipedia, 2006, para. 1). In other words, a community is simply a collection of people with similar values, working towards common goals.

However, public relations practitioners are largely unfamiliar in dealing with communities. The field's jargon lends itself more appropriately to the term public when dealing with these types of groups. Thus this definition becomes important as it allows professionals to see how in this case, the two terms can be used synonymously—a public is a community for all intensive purposes, and therefore any relevant research on communities can be applied to publics as well.

While understanding of community focuses on individuals, it is important to realize that organizations also belong to communities. In particular, to realize that an organization interacts with and shares the same things as the individuals within the community to which they belong. For this reason, it is of vital importance that organizations make an effort to identify with the members of their community, as a community plays such a key role in affecting the lives of its members.

Newman (2006) claims that people develop individual and group identities through associations that connect them to their life-long community experiences. And

that as people grow, they learn about and form perceptions of social structures. This process of learning to adopt the behavioral patterns of the community is called socialization and allows individuals to develop the skills and knowledge and learn the roles necessary to function within their culture and social environment.

This then becomes the leading distinction, and the great advantage of communities over publics. When viewing a group as a community not only does one isolate the similarities between the individuals and use that to better understand the group dynamics, but the organization itself becomes a part of the group. Unlike publics which create a separation between the group, be it employees, customers, etc., communities not only separate those same people into groups, but also allow them to become a part of the group dynamic. And since communities develop their identities through associations within the group, viewing groups as communities allows the organization itself to become part of the influence in shaping those identities.

Publics lead practitioners to focus on developing the relationship between groups—the organization and the employees, the organization and the customers, etc.—communities allow practitioners to focus on building an identity for the joint group.

This realization is important for public relations practitioners in organizations to understand and to consider, “how ideas and values are communicated within communities are important to the induction of new members, the formulation of agendas, the selection of leaders and many other aspects,” (Wikipedia, 2006, para. 13).

Most organizations desire to have influence in determining the induction of new members, formulation of agendas, and the selection of leaders, in the communities in which they exist and conduct business. If left to their own devices, community members

will naturally develop their own intents, beliefs, resources, preferences, needs, and risks. Too many organizations rely solely on good-faith relationships between themselves and their communities, rather than working to establish and build community relations. And where good-faith negotiations fail, community members often seek to pressure organizations through a variety of means, “including picketing, boycotting, sit-ins, petitioning, and electoral politics,” (Wikipedia, 2006, para. 24), all undesirable outcomes for any organization.

Kruckeberg and Starck (1988) suggest that public relations is best defined and practiced as, the active attempt to restore and maintain a sense of community and that, “the public relations practitioner’s role as a communicator, and more specifically as a communication facilitator, should be his or her highest calling. Being a facilitator of communication in the traditional sense—that is, seeking out and promoting discourse along all avenues—is a role of critical importance today, which can help to build a sense of community among organizations and their geographic publics,” (p. 112).

They argue that only with community building as its primary objective can, “public relations become a full partner in the information and communication milieu that forms the lifeblood of U.S. society and, to a growing extent, the world,” (p. xi). In other words, it is through community-building efforts that public relations can best serve society as well as the organizations it represents.

There are three basic types of community building campaigns; “grassroots organizing, coalition building, and faith-based community organizing,” (Wikipedia, 2006, para. 26).

In addition to these campaign types, Kruckeberg and Starck (1988) define eight ways in which public relations practitioners can restore and maintain a sense of community in their organizations and among their stakeholders:

“practitioners can help community members and the organizations they represent become conscious of common interests that are the basis for both their contentions and their solutions; practitioners can help individuals in the community to overcome alienation in its several forms; practitioners can help their organizations... to create a sense of community; public relations practitioners should encourage leisure-time activities of citizens to enhance their sense of community; practitioners who are concerned with persuasion and advocacy should encourage consummately communication, that is, self-fulfilling communication; practitioners can help individuals find security and protection through association with others; practitioners can address interest in community welfare, social order, and progress; and practitioners can help foster personal friendships,” (p. 112-117).

Again, by becoming involved in the community the organization actually plays a role in building an identity for the group and increases the overall sense of community within the group.

This then becomes an advantage in a crisis situation because the practitioner is not attempting to build something from nothing. That is they have a strong foundation already in place which they can use to create a fitting response.

In the case of the flooding that occurred in Salt Lake City, here the people had a strong sense of community and already heavily trusted and relied on each other in their normal day to day operations. This made it much easier for city practitioners to help the community cope with the disaster by utilizing existing communication networks, welfare practices and friendships.

By supporting and attempting to further build the relationships within the community, these existing resources become stronger and provide an even greater advantage to everyone within the group, including any organizations.

The key to finding success with any type of community building effort is recognizing the importance that, “community development practitioners...understand both how to work with individuals and how to affect communities’ positions within the context of larger social institutions,” (Wikipedia, 2006, para.18).

To do so, one should begin by examining the interchange within a group and between its individual members. “Organizational communication is the study of how people communicate within an organizational context and the influences and interactions within organizational structures,” (Wikipedia, 2006, para. 13). And although organizational communication, as a division of public relations, is typically geared solely toward companies and business groups, based on the definition, it may also be utilized as a tool for studying communities.

In an effort to better assess organizational communication within communities the Asset Based Community Development Institute of Northwestern University has created a document that will, “help any organization strengthen its own organization by enhancing connections with the community’s assets, strengthen the community by investing in the

community's assets, and strengthen current and future community based projects, activities, and proposals," (Kretzmann & McKnight, 2005, p. 1). This document provides various worksheets for analyzing the communication efforts and goals of organizations in dealing with their surrounding communities. Once an organization has a clear understanding of how to affect communities it can begin to advocate and work towards shaping the community in a manner that will best aid in meeting its own goals and desires.

The ABCDI at Northwestern has provided a practical means of taking the study of culture beyond the mere theoretical standpoint by demonstrating how to document and analyze culture in a methodical and systematic manner. This document then became a part of the inspiration for the proposed model.

However the proposed model accomplishes much more than the ABCDI's document because it not only allows practitioners to enhance its organization's communities, but also to use those now strong community assets and resources to generate an effective crisis response. It takes the good of community understanding and ties it in with crisis research considerations to create a multifaceted plan of action.

In order to help evaluate an organization's efforts, Chavis, Hogge, McMillian, and Wandersman (1986) developed a Sense of Community Index (SCI) that allows researchers to measure the sense of community that exists within a group. This "sense of community" that Chavis, Hogge, McMillian, and Wandersman refer to is also known as "synergy" within a group.

"The sum of the creative energy and the strength of the mechanisms that maintain this balance is manifest as an observable and resilient sense of community," (Wikipedia,

2006, para. 9). The key word here is observable. Many practitioners overlook the fact that all aspects of a community are observable. And that they can refer back to humanities' original roots in anthropology to gain a better and deeper understanding of how communities function.

Ethnography

Thus far the literature has revealed that behavior is based on values and that values are molded by the community. Thus the only unanswered piece to predicting group's reaction to a crisis is finding a means to discover a community's values. This is where the methodology of ethnography comes into play. As the literature will show, ethnographic methods of observation are key to understanding human behavior. And thereby support for the proposed model.

According to Andrews (2002), using the age-old art of ethnographic research can help practitioners build, "cultural interpretations that allow them to understand the complexity of local rhetorical patterns and preferences," (p. 8). In other words, it is a valuable research method that can help, "to further understand human cultures and social behavior," (Durante & Feehan, 2005, p. 11) and reveal, "why people do what they do where they do it," (Andrews, 2002, p. 8). Using this research method can help the researcher to identify the essential story that is emerging from the data (Durante & Feehan, 2005, p. 13).

For example, in trying to gain an understanding of the dominate LDS culture in Salt Lake City, merely distributing mass surveys will not lend itself to the type of deep understanding that ethnographic research can uncover. A survey could tell the

practitioner, on paper, what a community's list of favorite values are, but by observing the people interacting with one another and the organization itself will reveal how they act out and act upon those values. It will reveal how intensely those values affect their everyday lives and how heavily they rely on those values and those relationships. So much more valuable depth can be achieved through this method.

This is a key understanding deeply embedded in aiding community-relation development between an organization and its surrounding community. Ethnography allows researchers to answer lingering questions that can remain even after an intense quantitative study, such as why respondents answered the way that they did. Quantitative methods rely almost solely on individual retrospection, because they ask respondents to recall their behavior and that of others. "They are subject to the vagaries and biases of human memory," (Durante & Feehan, 2005, p. 12) a major shortcoming in academic research.

For example on a questionnaire someone might likely respond with what values they think are good, but they may not have fully adopted those behaviors in their lives. It is much easier to check a box saying that service is important to an individual than it is for that same person to go out and actually volunteer their time. Or a person may honestly believe their family is the most important to them, but they do not necessarily show that. And in the case of predicting behavior, what a person actually does and where they devote their time and energies is much more important than what they think about life—though their thoughts are still important too.

However, ethnographic research is a complex qualitative method that even advanced research managers can find to be, "less than crystal clear," (Durante & Feehan,

2005, p. 11). So, in conducting this type of study, one of the first things that researchers need to understand is that, “ethnography is not one research approach, but is a qualitative research paradigm that encompasses a variety of methods, data sources, and analytic approaches. It relies on the direct observation of individuals in their natural environments,” (Durante & Feehan, 2005, p. 11).

Since individuals behave in response to their environment and the direct actions of others surrounding them, they should be observed in their natural environment, in order to fully understand their complete conduct and thought. “This invokes asking people—in that setting—why they’re acting a particular way, not asking them to later recall what they did, said, or thought,” (Durante & Feehan, 2005, p. 12) because in complex human interactions there is, “a wealth of important verbal and nonverbal information exchanged—which respondents might not ever perceive, much less recall.”

And as ethnography, “leverages direct observation (avoiding the capriciousness of human memory)...this commonly underutilized and misunderstood approach can provide invaluable marketing insights, and is the only way to truly understand interactions between a company and its customers,” (Durante & Feehan, 2005, p. 12).

Unbiased by the recall of respondents, observers can then record these invaluable insights into interactions as they occur, documenting, “what is happening, including what objects are being created or manipulated, where it is happening, flow of what is happening, order of what is happening, time spent on what is happening, who is doing what, what is being communicated verbally and nonverbally, and reactions of the various participants, which are critical.” And because individuals generally adapt quickly to an observer’s presence, their behavior becomes relatively routine, resulting in a more

accurate characterization of behavior than what the respondent likely would have reported.

Ethnographic research then begins at a holistic level where information is recorded on the environmental context of the situation as well as the nonverbal behaviors that are occurring. Although the ethnographic researcher's principal activity is observing behavior, active interviews or discussion with respondents is a key component. Getting respondents' perspectives on actions, through dialogue, is informative. Furthermore, the ethnographic data can be utilized in mixed method studies, for comparing and contrasting it with data from other sources. So, field notes can be supplemented with follow-up interviews with key individuals. Also, often times any permanent products—that is tangible items, such as brochures, recordings of conversations, etc.—are collected for future analysis as well (Durante & Feehan, 2005, p. 13).

Following the collection of all relevant data the researcher moves into the actual analysis. This phase begins with identification. Here the focus is on the message or narrative delivered, and the response from the community members. Then the diagnostic phase follows as the researcher attempts to understand the source of any miscommunication in the message delivery. Finally information from the ethnographic study is analyzed using structured and systematic processes which “reduce[s] massive amounts of data to the pieces that are most relevant to the strategic issue,” (Durante & Feehan, 2005, p. 13).

In order to truly be effective, ethnography research must not be simply a journal writing experience. Rather, it must be grounded in a strategic issue, and the researchers

must be able to provide “concrete strategic and tactical recommendations,” (Durante & Feehan, 2005, p. 13). The empirical world consists of

“the minute by minute, day to day social life of individuals as they interact together, as they develop understandings and meanings, as they engage in joint action and respond to each other as they adapt to situations, and as they encounter and move to resolve problems that arise through their circumstances,” (Woods, 1996, p.37).

It is how these problems are resolved and the meanings and understandings that are created that the researcher should be interested in and attempting to discover.

To study the empirical world through observation then is to study:

“how understandings are formed, how meanings are negotiated, how roles are developed. These are processual matters, not products. Social life is ongoing, developing, fluctuating, becoming. It never arrives or ends. Some forms of behavior may be fairly stable, others variable, others emergent. Some forms of interaction proceed in stages or phases. This again emphasizes the need for long sustained research immersion in the field in order to cover whole processes and produce ‘thick description’ that will encompass this richness. Processes, for example, of cultural induction, labeling, identity formation, differentiation and polarization...friendship formation—all require lengthy involvement in the research field, otherwise only part of the process will be sampled, leading to misleading analyses,” (Woods, 1994, p. 5).

Overall ethnography allows a practitioner to learn enough about a community's culture to understand those processual matters, not products. In other words, the practitioner learns about the community's thought process, rather than just the end result, or product. This means that rather than simply being able to reflect on a situation after it has occurred and draw parallels from previous events to what happened, the practitioner can actually understand the culture and draw parallels from their values to what happened, and as a result also be able to foresee where those same parallels will come into play in the future, somewhat predicting their behavior in a given situation.

Just like one might know those they are close to and associate with frequently enough to know what they will do when confronted with a certain circumstance, practitioners who likewise observe their communities, or publics, will also be able to know the core values well enough to predict their most likely behaviors and attitudes.

This depth of understanding takes much more than laboratory research, it demands onsite observation, ethnographic research methods. Understanding the process by which they choose their thoughts and actions is the key to predicting crisis behavior, which is the key to crisis planning.

Chapter 4

Method

In an attempt to isolate and reveal variance among separate cultures, researchers have identified numerous dimensions of cultures. Hall (1976) introduced the continuum structure for understanding dimensions, which allows people to place a culture along a spectrum ranging from one extreme to the other. Hofstede's (1980) original study of IBM employees in 53 different countries supported this structure while yielding four cultural dimensions for study: individualism-collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity-femininity. In a collaborative effort with Bond, (1984) he later added a fifth dimension in his work, Confucian dynamism—which, while recognized here, is often overlooked in the academic field and was never fully recognized with the same clout as his first four dimensions.

In a different approach, Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck's (1961) research was more value oriented, and included six cultural dimensions: the nature of people (good, bad, or mixed), the person's relationship to nature (dominant, in harmony, or subjugated), the person's relationship to others (lineal, collateral, or individualist), the modality of human activity (doing, being, or containing), the temporal focus of human activity (future, present, or past), and the conception of space (private, public, or mixed). A more modern value oriented approach comes from Trompenaars (1994), who based his findings on Parsons' (1951) sociological study about relational orientations. He was able to identify five cultural dimensions, including: universalism-particularism, individualism-collectivism, neutral-emotional, specific-diffuse, and achievement-ascription. He also adds to his list that attitudes toward time and the environment be considered as well.

A managerial approach to studying cultures comes from the work of Laurent (1983) and Victor (1992). Laurent identified four dimensions or parameters, as he refers to them: perception of organizations as political systems, authority systems, role formulation systems, and hierarchical relationship systems. Victor named his seven dimensions language, environment, social organization, contexting of messages, authority, nonverbal communication, and time issues.

In her attempt to synthesize all of the existing approaches, Beamer (2000) constructed her own list, including eight dimensions: individualist-collectivist, horizontal organizational structures-hierarchical organizational structures, form distrusted-form trusted, self in control of human activity-other(s) in control of human activity, learning from experience-learning from authority, rules observing-rules bending, explicit communication-implicit communication, uncertainty averse-uncertainty tolerant.

When considering subculture groups these dimensions seem insufficient, as most of the focus is given to macro aspects of the culture. All of these approaches work well in separating large differences between drastically different groups, such as when determining the cultural differences between American and Japanese cultures. However, when attempting to determine micro differences between subcultures within the United States, as well as attempting to define the relationship between the subculture and an organization connected to it, a different approach must be used.

Thus, this model proposes that subcultures be identified by looking for demographic characteristics that distinguish them from the primary culture. In addition, to help identify the subculture's relationship to the parent organization various dimensions related to behavioral and attitudinal responses to crises will need to be

analyzed. These dimensions include communication styles, authority associations, unity within the group, community roles, loyalty to the organization, relationship to the environment, and placement of values.

The model was tested through a case study and supported by additional references mentioned in the discussion, helping to build initial support for the model theory. In this study, the model was tested by analyzing the Hurricane Katrina crisis case. After reviewing all of the government organization's relevant publics, the New Orleans Ninth Ward community was selected for analysis due to its unique and highly distinctive culture.

The initial analysis was conducted using only comments¹ and materials generated prior to the arrival of the hurricane. Once a general understanding of the culture of the Ninth Ward was established and conclusive statements about their expected behaviors were drawn, a review of post hurricane information was conducted. The discussion then, reviews documented reactions that were studied, highlighting parallels between expected behaviors and actual reactions, demonstrating that the main weakness in the government's crisis planning was simply a lack of ethnographically researched, cultural knowledge concerning the targeted public.

In an effort to control the situation and prove that culture was the key variable in causing the difference in the reactions of the people and not the trigger event, or any other extenuating variable, a second culture was reviewed. The second culture that was scrutinized was the Mississippi Gulf Coast community. This community experienced the same trigger event and faced the same federal government's fundamental response as the Ninth Ward community. However, the reaction in Mississippi was not the same, and

since the only significant difference between the two communities is their culture, additional support for the model's practical application can be applied. Details and proof of these differences were noted in the study and are supplied following the Ninth Ward response.

The thesis is supported, based on observance through the written messages studied, because the only substantial differences between these two groups are cultural. By including the reactions of those on the Mississippi Gulf Coast, outside variables can be reduced and reaction to the events can be linked directly to the cultural influences on behaviors.

The Model

The proposed model consists of first identifying all of the given organization's prevalent publics and potentially threatening, probable crises. (To consider contingency plans for every possible public and every possible trigger event would prove to be ineffectual, as the unimportance of the relationship, the insignificance of any potential reaction and/or the unlikelihood of the crisis, cause some considerations to become trivial.)

Then each public's demographics, communication styles, authority associations, unity within the group, community roles, loyalty to the organization, relationship to the environment, and placement of values will need to be analyzed to establish an understanding of the culture. This understanding provides the insight to predict the public's general response to trigger events, allowing for the creation of a more accurate and successful crisis plan.

Chapter 5

Analysis: Pre-Katrina Consideration

History of the Ninth Ward

New Orleans is said to be one of the “most distinctive and culturally diverse cities” in North America (Haas, n.d., para. 1). In 2004 the city’s population was close to a half of a million. The citizens of New Orleans are divided into 17 distinct Wards. These boundaries were originally drawn in 1852 when the city was reconstructed from three municipalities into one. Under previous government structures, representatives were elected from each Ward. This structure has since changed, “but the ward designations remain a part of New Orleans’ fabric. Socially, it is not uncommon for the New Orleanians to identify where they are from by their ward number,” (Wards, n.d., para. 1).

In 1954 a mayor and city council governmental structure was adopted. A mayor serves as the head of the executive branch, while the council, consisting of seven members, serves as the legislative branch. In addition, several boards and commissions have been established to oversee specialized functions (Haas, n.d.).

The New Orleans economy was originally built around manufacturing and shipping, and as time has progressed, the tourism and gambling industries have grown rapidly (Haas, n.d.).

Located in an area predominately below sea level, between the Mississippi River and Lake Pontchartrain, approximately 110 miles from the Gulf Coast, it is a hurricane-prone area. Levees have been built to shield the city from Mississippi river flood waters, but protection from the entire Gulf Coast is difficult (Haas, n.d.).

The most commonly known and geographically the largest New Orleans Ward is the Ninth. This ward includes the area between the Mississippi River, Franklin Avenue, Almonaster Avenue, People's Avenue, Lake Ponchartrain, Saint Bernard Parish, Lake Bourne, and the Orleans Parish, making it the most susceptible to flooding (Wards, n.d.).

Three times in the past 40 years, hurricanes have flooded New Orleans' Ninth Ward. And after all three major storms the, "generations of blacks who called it home have vowed to rebuild," (Hill, Hone-McMahan and Ott, 2005).

The Ninth Ward is, "a neighborhood known for its poverty and its artists, its bad luck and its bounce-back resilience," (Connolly, 2005, p. A01). These people are the maids, bellhops, clerks, cops, carpenters, and busboys of the city. This neighborhood also houses sculptors, musicians and retirees. "It's a scrappy place where people don't take a lot of gruff, but a place where people really respect each other," said Pam Dashiell, president of the Holy Cross Neighborhood Association. "It has heart and soul and beauty," (as cited in Connolly, 2005, p. A01).

Stephen Rue's film depicts what every day life in the Ninth Ward was like:

"there were a lot of matriarchal figures, ladies who helped raise the neighborhood children down the street. They were people proud of their homeownership who worked hard for their homes and had lived there for a long time. They were concerned about the youth falling into despair and hopelessness because they were seeing a lot of kids going into drugs and a life of crime. They were used to murders in their neighborhoods. But there was a tremendous feel that the government didn't care, the mayor didn't care, politicians as a whole were corrupt, and that the affluent African-

American people as well as Caucasians didn't care about them," (Webster, 2006).

Demographics: People and Household Characteristics

In 2000, the ninth ward consisted of 14,008 people, living in 4,820 households; 53.7 percent are female and 46.3 percent are male. Thirty-point-seven percent are children under the age of 18, 55.3 percent are adults between the ages of 18 and 65, and 14 percent are elderly over the age of 65. Ninety-eight-point-three percent are black, point-five percent are white, point-five percent are Hispanic, point-one percent are of some other ethnicity and point-six percent are of mixed ethnicity. The average percent of blacks nation-wide is 12.1 and 69.2 percent for whites. Even compared to the city of New Orleans as a whole, the average is 66.6 percent black and 26.6 percent white.

Of adults, 36.9 percent have never married, 31.8 percent are married (compared to the national average of 54.4 percent), six-point-three percent are separated (compared to the national average of two-point-two percent), 10.8 percent are widowed (compared to the national average of six-point-six percent), and 14.2 percent are divorced (compared to the national average of nine-point-seven percent) (GNOCDC).

Fifty-six-point-seven percent of households have no children. Of those with children in the house, 40.7 percent are living with their mother only (compared to the national average of 18.5 percent), 25.4 percent are living with both parents (compared to the national average of 66.2 percent), and 23 percent are living with grandparents. Why? "Poverty. Dad's been incarcerated, mama's found a new man, and the new man doesn't want the children," said a 53-year-old African American laborer (GNOCDC).

“Generally their parents are incarcerated, or on drugs. There are a small percentage of parents going to school or away for employment. So they leave the children with the grandparents. The positive thing is that they are not going into the foster homes when the family breaks down.

Grandmothers can take and raise them. The negative thing is that it is a deteriorated younger family that should have been functional. But because of the lack of services, support and opportunities, Daddy's in jail. You see them going to jail for all kinds of things. It's about survival. It's not about extravagant things. They rob someone to buy food or pay the rent,” said a 75-year old African American social worker (GNOCDC).

In 2000, 30.9 percent were disabled (compared to the national average of 19.3 percent) (GNOCDC).

From this analysis practitioners should realize that they are dealing with heated racial issues, where the majority of the community is African American and do not easily accept outsiders. There are many broken homes, where individual's cling to the few family members they do still have intact, and where it is difficult to determine who is providing the greatest influence over the children. And special accommodations need to be made when considering the high number of disabled persons.

Demographics: Housing

In 2000, 86.1 percent of housing units are occupied, 13.9 percent are vacant. Of those occupied, 59 percent are owned (compared to the entire New Orleans city average of 46.5 percent), and 41 percent are rented. Eighty-three-point-three percent are built prior to the 1970's or are at least 30 years old. Fifty- three-point-nine percent have lived

in the same housing unit for ten years or longer (compared to the national average of 35.1 percent).

Average rent runs \$280 (compared to the national average of \$565). Twenty-four point-eight percent of mortgages amount to 50 percent or more of the household income (compared to the national average of nine-point-one percent of mortgages) (GNOCDC).

In 2000, 100 percent of the households were considered urban. Ninety-seven point seven percent had lived in the Ninth Ward for at least five years (GNOCDC).

This examination reveals that people living in the Ninth Ward have a long, rich history there. They take extreme pride in homeownership, and struggle far more than the average American to maintain that status, sacrificing greatly to afford their homes and avoid renting.

Demographics: Employment and Standard of Living

In 2000, the average household income for the Ninth Ward was \$27,499, for the entire city of New Orleans is \$43,176, and for the nation is \$56,644. Twenty-five percent of households made less than \$10,000 (compared to the national average of 9.5), 50.4 percent made less than \$20,000 (compared to the national average of 22.1 percent). Thirty-six-point-four percent live in poverty in the Ninth Ward, 27.9 percent in New Orleans, and 12.4 percent in the nation (GNOCDC). “I think that I should be happy about having a job but it's hard to be when you never seem to have any money in your pocket,” (Harris).

In 2000, 52.1 percent of adult Ninth Warders, 42.2 percent of New Orleanians, and 36.1 percent of Americans are not in the labor force (discouraged workers who have

stopped seeking employment, students, stay-at-home parents and retirees). Forty-one-point-two percent of adult Ninth Warders, 51.8 percent of New Orleanians, and 59.7 percent of Americans are employed. Six-point-five percent of adult Ninth Warders, five-point-five percent of New Orleanians, and three-point-seven percent of Americans are unemployed (GNOCDC).

In 2000, 32.4 percent of households did not own a vehicle, 42.3 percent only own one to share among all household members. Seventeen-point-four percent of working adults have to rely on a bus to get to work (compared to the national average of two-point-five percent), 42.1 percent spend over an hour commuting to work. Why? “We’ve got three bridges, with one working sometimes, one that’s in repair and we don’t know how that’s going to end. This cuts us off from the city,” said a 75-year-old African American social worker (GNOCDC).

In summary, the Ninth Ward is an extremely poor community where good work is so hard to find that many have ‘given up’ and resolved themselves to working in low wage jobs or even accepted that they will never have a steady, reliable job of any kind. Not only do they mentally feel cut off from quality work, but they also are physically separated from the rest of the city, forcing them to rely heavily on the government programs to get them where they need to go and taking them away from their families for longer periods each day.

Attitudes and Behaviors: Communication Styles

The people in the New Orleans's Ninth Ward do not appear to put very much effort into seeking out information. However, they do want to be informed, they just expect those whom they are relying on to make the effort to contact them.

“I have been waiting on a phone call from a job opportunity and it hasn't come. A letter saying I wasn't hired hasn't come either. Why are people expected to send a resume, cover letter, thank you letter and everything else, but it is ok for a company to not tell you anything without having to call them every five minutes. I'm not calling anymore,” (Harris).

Generally when they are contacted they tend to follow instructions, “Hurricane Ivan ran more people out of South Louisiana than the Union Army. It's no surprise that many people left considering the fact that Mayor Nagin made it seem like Armageddon,” (Harris). However, they do appear to be growing leery of exaggerated commands.

This investigation reveals that the Ninth Warders have a very specific communication need. They are not unwilling to listen to and follow meaningful directions, but they will not make any effort to find out what those instructions are. Thus, anyone wishing to communicate a message to them will need to only relay the message if it is of great importance and make sure to take the message directly to the individuals.

Attitudes and Behaviors: Authority Associations

Ninth Warders see authority figures as being personally responsible for them—leaders serve those whom they lead. They expect to turn to their leaders with any problem that arises and have it fixed for them. “The lawmakers in this state need to pass a law that

would send everyone a grant to fix whatever is causing your AC in your car not to work,” (Harris). Personal problems then become the responsibility of the chain of authority that is over them, rather than of the individual person.

There does not seem to be very much of a reciprocating balance. While leaders are fully responsible to them, they do not feel any obligation to support or respect their leaders. They do not feel as though they have to earn the authorities respect in return, or really do anything for them, unless they want to.

When they believe that using the proper authority to fix a problem will present a negative situation for themselves, they choose to go against authority,

“So I get into this car accident today. I just totally lost my focus and ran a red light. I hit a young brother driving an Oldsmobile and damaged the passenger side of his ride. It's a good thing he was a working brother like myself and we handled it the old school way (without the police involved),” (Harris).

Ninth Warders are relatively ungrateful for what they are given from those in authority.

“After a week of anticipation I finally got to see what papers I needed to sign at work. It was wage increase papers. A whopping .50 raise! I don't mean to be sarcastic about it. It's hard to get too excited about a raise when I was making 12,000 dollars more the same time last year. This weekend will be a big test for me and my new attitude. I have to make it to Monday without cursing this job and all it stands for. It's not their fault my old job

sent my position to Orlando and every other comparable job I applied for didn't hire me. I do curse them and all that they stand for," (Harris).

And are quick to point out the faults, mistakes and short comings of those that are over them, "Message to all the companies and managers that made their employees stay at work Tuesday: Where you watching the news? The entire city was leaving. What makes you think that your business is so special that your employees should stick around and risk getting caught in a category four storm," (Harris).

This analysis demonstrates an overall extreme pattern of critical behavior. They appear to be the type of people that complain constantly about what authority does, but do not make any suggestions or come forth as emerging leaders themselves. In summary, they appear to want guidance and leadership to take over only when it is convenient for them, at which point they demand it.

Attitudes and Behaviors: Unity within the Group

Ninth Warders have little to no unity within their community. "When is the last time you have seen officials in this city be united about anything or any idea. Is there any issue that would cause these people to stand by each other's side in support. No there isn't," (Harris). Not only are the people strongly divided between themselves and the government officials, in this case being the organization, but they are also divided amongst themselves. There exists an 'every man for himself' attitude, which calls for action towards change on the part of the government organization in order to have any future hopes of implementing a community help effort, which is necessary during the onset of most crises.

They do not seem to care what happens to their neighbor. “Have you ever noticed how black people treat entertainers and athletes like family when they die but can watch their local news of some young unknown brother in their own community getting shot and show no concern what so ever. That's just something to think about,” (Harris).

On the rare occasion that they do help each other out, they remain leery of one another and show little trust toward each other.

“I parked my jeep for this morning and this brother came up to me asking if I had some pliers so he could work on his bike. I didn't know anything about him but I could tell that he was not doing so well. I loaned him the pliers and went inside the office thinking that I wouldn't see him or those pliers again. To my surprise he actually came in the office and brought them back,” (Harris).

Rather than respecting and helping one another this group seems to step all over others within the community in what dismal effort to get ahead that they do produce, “I got to thinking about the number of brothers I pass everyday or see out my office window that life has totally beat down. The one thing I will never understand is how black men can hurt and mess over one another when we all share the same experience,” (Harris).

Few within the area recognize the need to show respect, but even they set limiters on who should receive their respect, “We have to have respect for each other especially for the women because they have to carry our futures in their womb and the elderly because they have already paid the dues to be respected,” (Harris).

This shows the government organization that the community is capable of respect and unity; they simply have to be shown the motivation for treating others in this desired

manner. Once they are shown a reason to unite with someone or a reason to respect or even serve someone, they easily make the necessary adjustments and redraw their personal views. In other words, they simply need a reason to care and a reason to trust, supported by subsequent supporting action this unity can grow and increase in strength over time.

Attitudes and Behaviors: Community Roles

Ninth Warders view the role of government in their society as being rather inefficient. It is apparent that they do not feel government to be a productive part of their community.

“When we get a new mayor, it doesn't matter what his policies are because the city council president will disagree and fight him on anything with the purpose of making the mayor look bad so he can get into office and take care of his people. This cycle goes on and on from other council members to the school board, RTA, levee board and so on. No person is going to fully support the other because they want that position themselves in order to control more money and contracts. This is how we as citizens of this city watch the same problems get worse for the last 20 years no matter who is in office and who we vote for,” (Harris).

Regardless of what government officials do Ninth Warders believe government should be there for them, but do not necessarily feel that they are a part of that structure or that they need be there in any way. “If I am a 16-year-old kid listening to that on TV, I

am asking my parents to get me a passport in case I have to move to Canada to escape the draft,” (Harris).

Much of this group’s attitude toward their own role in life is seen through the plight of the black man. They feel that their role is harder to fill, due to the prejudice that they believe exists against their skin color. “There's allot of stress involved when a new guy starts at your job and makes more money than you. Being a black professional is a hard hustle,” (Harris).

“There isn't another man in the country that's a more perfect example of the modern day black man than Colin Powell. Here's a man that started with nothing. He joined the army as a way out. Through hard work and the right attitude he worked his way through the ranks as a respected leader. He did all of that to end up working for a man that is less qualified than he is. Not only that, he receives none of the credit and has to stand out there and take all of the blame. If that's not a black man's life then I don't know what is,” (Harris).

Perhaps the only real obstacles they must overcome are nothing more than their own perceived barricades. Their own insecurities and fears of failure prevent them from advancing as they hide behind prejudices, where expectations run low.

“I had a dream last night. In my dream, I was stuck on a boat that was docked next to a hill. All the people on the boat were trying to get off and couldn't. If you went to the top of the hill, the wind blew you back down to the boat and hurt you. If you tried to go over the side, the high tides would sweep you under and people were drowning. The people on this

boat were trying everything to get over the top or through the water.

Nobody was paying attention to the door on the boat. This went on for awhile when finally I said why don't we just open that door right there and walk off the damn boat. I opened the door, everyone got off and the dream was over. Now, I usually don't have dreams that really have any meaning but this one was different. The moral of that dream was that sometimes in our lives we get stuck in a bad situation that is out of our control. Instead of just taking the simple solution or trying to listen to other people's advice, we just go off on our own and try every stupid and dangerous idea to try and get over the hill or above water in one move. Sometimes you have to open the door to your vessel, get some new surroundings and try another hill," (Harris).

They do recognize that many of the social problems in their community stem from the disintegration of the roles of the family unit. "I think that fathers are the missing link in the community," (Harris). This argument builds support for the main idea that a community's culture does affect the actions and attitudes of the individuals within it. The majority of individual attitudes are merely reflections of social constructs, thus an undesirable outlook will lead to an undesirable attitude, will lead to an undesirable behavior. Overcoming, or even changing, these cultural limitations will allow for the government organization to effectively nurture their desired outcome.

Attitudes and Behaviors: Loyalty to the Organization

The government being the organization, Ninth Warders feel that it is the government's responsibility to learn about their culture, to be familiar with their needs and situations. "Cheney mentioned during the debate last night (Tuesday, October 5, 2004) that he didn't know black women had the highest rate of new AIDS cases in America. Shouldn't the second man in charge of the country know when a section of the population is getting a deadly disease at an alarming rate?" (Harris).

They also feel that it is the government's job to oversee the people. They should step in and aid in the development of individuals. "Is the truancy department of New Orleans working yet? There are kids walking up and down Canal St. all day long like it's summer time," (Harris).

For the most part, they do not really agree with the government. "Isn't it amazing how people in Louisiana support George Bush when none of his policies benefit this state," but their reliance on government programs guarantees some level of support. "There is a new drug that helps black patients with heart disease. I think this is great since it seems every black person has someone in their family with heart disease or high blood pressure. The only issue now is how much is this stuff going to cost and will Medicare pay for it. If not, it's a big tease for allot of people," (Harris).

Ninth Warders complain about the government, but do nothing themselves to change it.

"I will even acknowledge that most of the city's problems are self inflicted and I can understand why other areas of the state are not supporting a 500 million dollar plus project that doesn't even help change or fix the larger

problems in New Orleans. The problem is that before the Saints asked for anything, the same problems were there and not enough has been done to try and change them. I would hate for the state to take a stand against the Saints because of all the other things that need to be done and then nothing else happens and we are in the same or worse situation without the team. If somebody could make the case that the money not given to the Saints will be used to make education better, reduce crime, and help produce more jobs then I would have no choice but to support not paying them. I just don't think that's where we are headed," (Harris).

Overall they do not appear to approve of or like the government, but their heavy reliance on them almost forces them to maintain the relationship despite their distaste. Though they do not necessarily like what they are getting from the relationship, they recognize that it is more than what they are putting in, and that they need the relationship in order to maintain their desired lifestyle.

Attitudes and Behaviors: Relationship to the Environment

Ninth Warder's feel they are justified in pointing out all of the faults of their community environment. "Houston is a city that is very conscious about its' image to the rest of the world. Unfortunately I can't say the same for my own home town." These people are well aware of the opinion that the rest of the country holds of them. "The rest of the world sees this and thinks that this is the kind of place that they would not like to live. Natives of the city see this and think the exact same thing," but the Ninth Warders

also become very defensive whenever anyone else makes a negative reference to their community.

“Is there ever going to be a day when I see one good article or story about my city? The negativity is starting to kill me. I must have missed the part in the history books when it was decided that New Orleans would be the place for all things negative in America. We, the citizens of this city must be crazy to live here. After all, this is the only place with corruption, murder, drugs, crime, bad schools, and poor sports teams. The rest of America is a paradise I suppose. I guess the millions and millions of people in prisons or in poverty around this country were all born here and we shipped them off to other cities so they could have a criminal justice system,” (Harris).

And another comment along the same lines: “Everything that is coming out now is uncreative, sad, self destructive and being made overly ignorant to satisfy the lust of white suburban kids to be entertained by the plight of the black existence. It's okay to reflect the reality of your surroundings but it should be never be made to look like we enjoy the struggle,” (Harris).

In the end, the Ninth Ward consists of a group of people that identify themselves by where they live and love their community.

“I am not going to sit here and allow the national and local media to lower my self esteem just because I love the place I was born. I love this city. I can sit here and think of many things that I love about this place and they have nothing to do with sports, jobs or economics. I am talking about that

personal quality of life stuff that we do now or did as a kid that attaches us to this place. Things that you sit around and think about and it just brings a smile to your face. Today I am going to list everything I love about growing up and living in New Orleans...” (Harris).

They take pride in the areas around them and loudly claim their ownership, “Why is there a big debate about using the dome as a shelter during storms. WE PAY FOR THAT BUILDING!” (Harris).

“This message is for whoever went in my friend's house and stole his stuff while he was running from the hurricane: I hope you realize that the tv was broke and you sell it to somebody who comes back and kicks your A@! really bad! Damn shame!” (Harris).

Overall, the Ninth Warders largely feel that their community is misunderstood. They love their neighborhood, they feel connected to it, and are annoyed that others only see the negative aspects of their culture. Outsiders need to understand that though they do not see the Ninth Ward as a community worth saving, the members of the community strongly disagree. They also feel that they each, individually, own a piece of that community and everything that is in it; and thereby that they have a right to utilize everything within their community, whether others forbid it or not.

Attitudes and Behaviors: Placement of Values

The Ninth Ward community does not place very much value on education, “Every public school I went to in this city is failing and their scores are getting worse. It's amazing that I can type this post on my own. If we don't get this school thing working better, people are never coming home,” (Harris). In 2000, 11 percent of adults did not

ever finish ninth grade, 40.1 percent did not ever finish high school, 29.7 percent obtained a high school diploma only, 24.2 percent attended some college, and six percent obtained a college degree (GNOCDC).

As a whole, they do not appreciate the value of hard work. “What is up with all the brothers not working? Why are all those grown men standing and sitting around all day long in the city and no one seems like they are angry at being out of work. I'm telling you we are in trouble,” (Harris).

And they lack money management skills that allow people to maximize the value of their earnings, “I should have taken that money that I spent on three tickets and fixed my roof that just happened to start leaking this weekend from the 8 inches of rain. Maybe if I wasn't sitting in the dome watching Orlando Ruff let Ken Dilger look like John Mackie, I might have been able to keep my carpet from staining from the rain water,” (Harris). This comment demonstrates the high value that they place on sports and other entertainment venues, such as music.

These people strongly value their families and close personal relationships. “I have to start off by saying that I will really miss my godfather Leroy Baker Sr. He was a simple man who believed in hard work and taking care of his family. Following these principles can make for a rewarding life in the end. Let's move on,” (Harris).

There seems to be a high regard and level of respect given to caregivers. “I already knew that there is nobody on this Earth that I would switch parents with for Bernadine and Clifton. You are why I am who I am. You probably have more confidence in me than I had in myself some days this year and every other year. If I can give my daughter the same support you give me, then I will be doing ok,” (Harris).

Finally they seem to start out in life with high hopes and dreams and somewhere along the way growing up in the Ninth Ward crushes those dreams and people end up settling and losing their dreams.

“I once wanted to be a black hero. I’m not talking about the kind that leaps tall buildings or stops bullets with his teeth. I’m talking about a hero to my people.... I wanted to have a legacy. I dreamt of being a symbol of black progress and revolution. Then something happened. I became an average everyday brother. I’m not sure if it was the free money, dropping out of college, the long hours of drinking and strip clubs, or meeting a few cool white guys. For some reason, I became comfortable with my place in the world. I became less and less concerned with the plight of my people. It didn’t hurt to see drug addicts anymore. Record murder rates became an afterthought. The public education system was failing and I could care less. None of my kids were there. I had become the narrow minded, woman chasing, not a care brother that I used to hate. I lost my fire and passion for the cause. I’m not alone in this journey. There are many young brothers and sisters in my generation who had big intentions on bringing change to the world and making their mark in society. As we got older, lots of us became more concerned with stock options, 401K plans, and credit reports. We are self absorbed, young black adults of the ‘all about me’ era,” (Harris).

This investigation exposes the fact that there is little education, both formal and otherwise, in the Ninth Ward community. As a result the people are not very self-

sufficient and strongly lack financial management skills. This means that they are limiting themselves, and cannot break the cycle of poverty and dependence on government programs. The government officials need to recognize that they will forever need to provide above average support or become more deeply involved in developing the community and find a way to help address the larger issue of why they are limiting themselves and giving up on their futures by dropping out of school to care for loved ones and/or immediate needs.

Chapter 6

Discussion: Post-Katrina Review

After executing the necessary steps of the model, the cultural analysis revealed that the New Orleans Ninth Ward community was indeed culturally unique, and therefore required a unique and custom response, patterned after its culture. Extending the investigation into post-Katrina data further highlights and strengthens the argument that culture was the key variable to understanding the community, and forming a more fitting and appropriate response plan.

Ninth Ward Reaction

One of the unforeseen problems that arose from the response to the crisis that followed Hurricane Katrina was internal disputes and an inability to come down with unified decisions (Yen, 2006). This could have been better handled had crisis planners noted that the people in the New Orleans' Ninth Ward held preexisting beliefs regarding the inefficiency of their leaders, as seen in the community roles analysis. They clearly needed a clear and simple plan. Too many people, doing too many different things, and sending too many mixed messages to the public, confused and hurt the government's ability to execute a correct crisis plan.

Another problem that arose out of the Katrina disaster became known as "the blame game." The people wanted the government to accept responsibility for all of the problems that arose, and they did not (Prince, 2005). Hind sight is 20/20 and in the months following the crisis it became clear that the people wanted someone to accept the blame for what happened to them, but had crisis planners looked at the Ninth Ward's

culture prior to the occurrence of the crisis they could have noted this ahead of time based on an authority associations analysis.

In this analysis it is seen that this group expected the leaders to accept all of the responsibility associated with any situation. They expected the government to fix this problem for them, just as they did many other problems, and since it was their responsibility, in the eyes of the people, anything that went wrong with fixing their problems became the government's responsibility as well.

According to Fearn-Banks (2007) evacuation plans faltered because they failed to include certain segments of the population. These segments include:

“people who were too ill to evacuate, even with help from neighbors (some were mute and blind), people with pets who could not bear to leave them, some would volunteer to die rather than leave their pets (pets were not admitted to the primary shelters), people who did not have cars or money for gas to evacuate, or places to go if they had gas (U.S. Census statistics reveal that 112,000 residents did not own cars, and a great number of people who decided to sit out the storm because they had heard warnings to evacuate so many times before and each time it was unnecessary,” (p. 109).

All of these faux pas could have been avoided had planners considered the cultural impact of the Ninth Ward. For example, when analyzing the demographic influences and finding that over 30 percent of the population is disabled, plans should obviously include accommodations to help these people as well. In conducting the cultural analysis, numerous references were made about the lack of health care in the

neighborhood. Knowing that so many people qualify as disabled and that many others likely suffer from additional ailments due to a lack of proper medical care should have instigated an immediate change in evacuation plans.

It likely came as a surprise to rescue teams when people were so unwilling to give up their pets and homes in order to be saved. But this did not have to be such a surprise, since an understanding of the cultural values of the Ninth Ward reveals that this group strongly values personal relationships. Loved ones, human or otherwise, are worth fighting or even dieing for in their minds. They get very attached to what little they do have and leaving it behind becomes difficult. Examining how they perceive their own roles in society also reveals things that would foretell their unwillingness to leave. This neighborhood is one that fears change. They hid behind their own insecurities to avoid moving on to anything new or different, even if it is a better, safer option because of fear. Demographics show that many of these people have lived in the Ninth Ward their entire lives, and since it is the only thing they know, naturally they were afraid to leave and provided excuses for not doing so.

The people's unwillingness to evacuate when told could clearly be understood from a simple review of the culture in this situation. Over 30 percent of the people did not own a car. They had no way to leave the city on their own. And many of the service workers were people from the Ninth Ward themselves. This means that the bus drivers too did not value their work and had little loyalty to the other Ninth Warders as community service and unity were practically non-existent. They cared about themselves and their loved ones. Once they were safe, they were certainly not going to back in out of

a sense of duty to their jobs or to their neighbors. In their minds, it was government leaders' responsibility to be the ones to help out and assist people in need, not theirs.

This cultural trait also explains another problem facing post-crisis response, and that is the lack of police support. Following the hurricane, nearly 400 officers were missing from their posts, some may have died, but certainly part of the explanation was cowardice (Struck, 2005). But what many are referring to as cowardice is really nothing more than the predictable behavior of anyone from this particular culture. This community had little work ethic and little desire to risk any part of themselves for others. To rely on these people to become heroes as a part of the crisis plan is not reasonable, as that is not something that is typical of their culture.

One of the major issues facing the aftermath of this crisis was the sheer number of people who ignored the evacuation order, as well as orders for each individual to bring three or four days worth of food and water with them to the Superdome and Convention Center. A previous analysis of communication styles showed that these people tended to follow orders to some degree. However, it also revealed that they appeared to be growing leery of exaggerated commands. Many of the people that did not leave did not think that it was that serious. They had been told to leave before and it was not entirely necessary in their minds. And they figured that they would only be in the shelter areas for a few hours until the storm blew over and then they planned to return home (Fearn-Banks, 2007).

This is similar to the "Little Boy who Cried Wolf" story. Had planners recognized that Ninth Warders were a people not prone to seeking out information and were beginning to doubt the seriousness of evacuation orders from the city they could

have foreseen the necessity of somehow getting word out to each individual about the fierceness of Katrina over previous storms and the urgency of this particular evacuation order. The people needed to be directly told that this was no ordinary hurricane.

Another reason that people did not leave was that they literally feared losing to the looters more than losing to the storm (Fearn-Banks, 2007). This should have been evident to crisis planners in their lack of trust between one another and their history of theft, for even the most basic of supplies. History has showed that previous evacuation calls were not entirely necessary and those who did follow their instructions ended up losing their precious belongings to looters, rather than to any real storm damage. Many people stayed behind solely to protect their valuables. This should have been accounted for in crisis planning.

The immediate crisis response did seem to recognize the fact that so many of these people were living below the poverty line and likely did not have any emergency savings to tap into when the disaster hit. Using this knowledge, emergency relief organizations responded by handing out \$2,000 prepaid debit cards to cover people's basic needs for food and shelter. However they were not prepared for the fact that some people abused the hand out and spent the money on seemingly ridiculous items, such as strippers, alcohol and tattoos (Caywood, 2006). Had responders looked a little closer at the Ninth Ward culture they could have realized that many of them lacked the money management skills necessary to choose wise purchases. A much better plan would have included housing and food vouchers, rather than debit cards.

Many of the people once living in the Ninth Ward took offense following Katrina in regard to the terminology being used to describe them. Refugee, survivor, victim,

evacuee, numerous descriptive titles arose, some bring controversy with them (Hilliard, 2005). Looking back to the cultural analysis it is clearly seen that this group has always been touchy about how others refer to them. They do not seem to care about or want increased levels of respect when referring to themselves; but care deeply and are easily offended by how others refer to them. They know what they consider to be appropriate and think that others should naturally catch on. A good crisis planner should have been aware of this and taken extra caution when providing public statements to emphasize their desired reference.

As time passed following the actual hurricane, discussion over whether or not to even bother rebuilding the neighborhoods in the Ninth Ward began to surface. This outraged many of the people that once lived there (Moore, 2006). A look at their culture reveals why. Many of the people can trace their roots in the Ninth Ward back to when the country was first formed. Not only have their families lived there for generations, but the majority of them had lived in the area their entire lives. The area itself meant something to these people. Not only that, but they are known for their “bounce-back resilience,” (Connolly, 2005, p. A01). To expect this situation to be any different is absurd. It is obvious for these people to want to rebuild their neighborhood, despite what other people perceive their problems to be.

The final steps in preempting criticism towards the model are to review a community with a distinctively different culture that experienced the same physical events, yet managed their trials much differently. This phenomenon manifested itself in the Mississippi Gulf Coast community.

Mississippi Gulf Coast Reaction

The reaction of the people along the Mississippi Gulf Coast to hurricane Katrina has been drastically different than what initially came out of the Ninth Ward.

Government response was equally slow there; however the people took it upon themselves to start the cleanup on their own. This expedited the entire process and put their community rebuilding efforts 21 percent nearer completion than those in the Ninth Ward, and other places where efforts relied solely on federal help (Paying the piper, 2005).

In the Gulf Coast communities, people felt that the government was not moving fast enough and took matters into their own hands. Unlike the Ninth Warders, they adopted the philosophy that ‘if you want something done right, do it yourself’. The result is that, “as maddeningly slow as the recovery seems to trailer-bound Mississippians, it’s moving faster than in New Orleans—much faster. “The morale is higher in Mississippi about the future than in Louisiana,” says Douglas Brinkley, history professor at Tulane University and author of *The Great Deluge: Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans and the Mississippi Gulf Coast*, published in May. “There’s a can-do spirit in Mississippi that transcends what you’ll find in New Orleans,” (Copeland, 2006).

One of the things that the government did differently in Mississippi is that they recognized the importance of the gambling industry to their economy. Prior to the storm off-shore gambling was the only form permitted. The legislature acted quickly to change the law, allowing casinos to move their once floating barges on land so operations could continue, despite the destroyed ocean coast. Here they were flexible, and willing to adapt

to the changing situation as they took the time necessary to recognize their constituents' needs to rebuild their own economy, their way.

“We were literally fending for ourselves,” said Brent Warr, Gulfport’s mayor. “Sitting in a well complaining because no one will throw you a rope is not going to get you anywhere. Instead, you climb out. You hope someone gives you a hand and pulls you. But either way, we're getting out of the well,” (as cited in Jenkins, 2005). Working together, the people of the Mississippi Gulf Coast resolved to do whatever it took to ‘get out of the well’.

In drastic comparison to the immediate reaction in the Ninth Ward, in Gulfport the mayor had his entire force of police officers and firefighters stay on duty around the clock. Working in shifts they, along with many City Hall employees, remained dedicated to their service of helping others (Jenkins, 2005). Also, to prevent looting, they became resourceful and took control of the city’s resources and supplies to allow for equal distribution to the citizens.

In further contrast, a nearly identical request to that of New Orleans’ officials, came from the Mississippi government when, following the storm, they asked people to be mindful of elevation maps when rebuilding (Copeland, 2006). Yet they have not been met with the same resistance and hostility as those overseeing the Ninth Ward. Instead people have come out and expressed confidence and excitement in the restructuring, “Bay St. Louis will rebuild,” said Blanche Comiskey, who owned a vacation home in the area. “There’s no doubt about that. It’s going to rebuild even better and nicer than it was. And I hope I’m here a few more years to enjoy it,” (as cited in Copeland, 2006).

Chapter 7

Conclusion

Current crisis research has uncovered numerous successful methods for responding to a crisis situation. However the ability to correctly select a response strategy and pair it to a type of crisis still eludes researchers. This is likely because different types of people often respond differently to the same situations. Thus a more accurate method for matching responses is to look at the types of people, rather than the types of crises. This study has successfully demonstrated that a consideration of community culture can greatly increase the likely success of crisis planning efforts.

In order for an existing organization to implement the model that has been proposed and validated in this study, the organization will need to first create a comprehensive list of all of its publics, or of the communities to which it belongs. This list should then be reviewed and the most important publics chosen to undergo further planning.

The important publics are then analyzed to create a separate list for each public documenting the expectations that that public has of the organization. Next practitioners at the organization will need to conduct a thorough ethnographic study of the culture that exists within each of the selected communities. This study should include an in depth look at each public's demographics, communication styles, authority associations, unity within the group, community roles, loyalty to the organization, relationship to the environment, and placement of values.

Following the collection and analysis of this data the practitioners will have a better understanding of the culture and be able to go back over the list of expectations for

each public and determine how strong each expectation is, and predict the resulting reaction of the community should any of the expectations fail to be met. From here the practitioner can plan out a more effective and appropriate crisis plan for any given contingency.

A brief overview of the culture that existed within the Virginia Tech community reveals an extremely close knit community. Here, young individuals partially identify themselves with their school. They take pride in their surroundings and feel that they are a part of something bigger than themselves. The spirit of learning and knowledge drives them to better themselves and they look for answers to life's mysteries while trying to discover who they are.

This is the type of community that is not going to see tragedies as the end. They will not allow random acts of violence to stunt their growth. Rather they will pull together and help one another get through whatever tough situations they end up in. They are proud to be Hokies and will not abandon that identity easily. Searching for a higher level of education and understanding does not lead one to look for simple answers such as eliminating guns, but rather forces to light deeper issues about what the individual can do to make a social difference in the world. They reflect on the events that touched their lives for good or bad and try to learn from the experience. Anger and blame are elementary responses, not higher levels of thinking, such as typically exist in this community.

Knowing this about this community, school officials did not make demands upon government leaders, but rather executed plans that pulled the students together, allowed

them to reflect on the situation, as well as their own lives, and grow together from the experience. In so doing they created a proper and fitting response to the situation.

The greatest criticism that they received was in not communicating quickly enough or through the right channels with the students. This error can be attributed to not understanding the student public's desired methods of communication. Officials mistakenly thought that students always preferred to be contacted at their convenience through email, however some situations demand urgent and immediate correspondence, such as this one did. The school has since corrected this oversight by updating their future responses to include cell phone contact, which is more fitting with the cultural preferences and current lifestyles.

The Amish culture values living a righteous life and being close to God above all else. They do mourn death and a loss of loved ones, however they believe that they will yet see them again and their belief in an afterlife eases some of the pain and anguish. They encourage immediate forgiveness and shun feelings of revenge and condemn no one. To expect them to lash out in anger following an unexpected death is not reasonable. They emulate a Christ-like attitude and seek to hate only the sin, but not the sinner.

Thus, what seems so odd to outsiders becomes only natural as they reach out to the family of the man that hurt them and react with acts of love and charity, rather than hate and anger.

In the LDS culture individuals are placed in leadership positions from early adolescence. Their culture is unique in that people learn and adopt managerial behaviors early in their lives. Thus, when the situation arises, individuals are able and willing to

step in and assume that position. This was the case during the Trolley Square shooting. Certain individuals stepped in without any prompting at all and started taking control of the situation and organizing the chaos by directing their peers inside. And truly unique was the manner in which these orders were received.

The LDS culture also teaches people to, in a sense, blindly follow its leaders. Individuals are taught not to question those in authority, but to respect, honor and obey direct commands. They learn to trust those that know more than they do and to heed their advice and counsel without delay or further inquiry, making it possible for someone to not only step up and assign orders, but for those orders to be fully carried out without hesitation.

One man stepped up and very knowingly risked his own life to save as many strangers as he could. He did not wait for those whose job it was to protect them, he did what he thought was right, no matter the cost. His culture had taught him that he was a part of something greater, and to think of the big picture and act for the good of the group and not just his own good. He was willing to give everything of himself to his community.

More evidence of cultural influence on immediate reaction was seen in their response. Concern for the children arose soon after the incident as people who had grown up putting family first relied on their learned values. The culture also includes great emphasis on service and concern for their neighbor, a trait that manifested itself in the form of an outpouring of assistance as numerous volunteers lined up to give of their time and talents to help those directly affected.

Another case in which the LDS culture manifested itself through its community members was during a natural disaster. The culture has taught them to always be prepared and to keep food storage that they could rely on, decreasing the need for outside help. In addition this culture has created a communication network that was well rehearsed so that when a problem comes the individual members of the community had already been briefed on who to contact and who they could call upon for physical help. It did not take long at all for the hierarchical system to put into operation as individuals contacted established quorums and societies who divided responsibilities and took action to take care of all basic necessities and ensured that sandbags were filled and put in place.

In summary, had crisis planners studied each of these cultures in advance, documenting their normal behavior patterns and identifying where they place their values they could have accurately predicted how they would react, even in an intense crisis situation. The future may never be as clear as 20/20 but practitioners can sharpen and focus the image by isolating the cultural elements within a given community which allows for predictability of reactive behaviors. In other words, while human behavior is unique and can never be fully predicted, overall reactions can, using a simple cultural model.

This study has demonstrated that through the creation of organizational profiles cultural typologies can be revealed, which increase the understanding of how certain cultures will react to certain trigger events.

Following an analysis of the cultures presented in the Katrina case, the information discovered has demonstrated a strong correlation between preexisting cultural values and reactions, revealing that the initial reaction to the trigger event was

highly predictable based on cultural factors. In other words, evidence has been presented supporting the hypothesis that scrutinizing the community culture does reveal predisposed attitudes that can foreshadow likely reactions.

The roots of the reactive behaviors exhibited by the Ninth Warders following Hurricane Katrina can be traced back to ideals and values learned through the community culture. Extrapolating this discovery to a larger theory, which would encompass additional future cases, indicates that understanding these links and scrutinizing cultural norms prior to a trigger event will allow future practitioners to predict reactive behaviors allowing for better preparation to manage crisis situations.

Following this reasoning, questions R1 and R2 have been answered in the affirmative, although these positive results using the model are limited only to the cases discussed as the data needs to be analyzed in each case. Additional research will demonstrate the beneficial use of the theoretical model. It is believed that additional research will yield similar results emphasizing the importance of understanding cultural factors in times of crisis. Therefore, future studies should replicate the model proposed here in order to increase its credibility. By slowly building on the simple truths studied and analyzed in this research, a universal understanding of how culture effects human reaction to crisis trigger events will eventually be reached.

In addition, by claiming that a community's culture has a greater effect on the public's reaction to a crisis trigger event than the event itself, the need to redirect future crisis research to focus on creating a list of cultural characteristics that match up with crisis response strategies arises.

Additionally, the need to expand this limited exploration of the idea that crises arise out of failed expectations is necessary. The scope of this thesis can't completely address this idea. Further research needs to be conducted to solidify the role that expectations play in the creation of a crisis response plan.

Foot Notes

1. When conducting research, lack of immediate access to Ninth Ward community members, due to physical location and limited resources, necessitated the primary use of electronic correspondence. This correspondence consisted of contacting hundreds of Ninth Warders through email asking for descriptions of their community that were created prior to Hurricane Katrina. Physical journals having been largely destroyed or inaccessible, electronically stored messages on external servers, such as blogs, became heavily relied upon. Nearly all contacts responded with the same reference to Clifton Harris' blog which was created and maintained prior to, and continued following, the hurricane. Thus, the blog, "Cliff's Crib" became the primary reference for first hand reflections on the Ninth Ward community. And though it was written by only one man, it is representative of hundreds of opinions, all who acknowledged and supported his writing.

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