Expanding the Parameters of Crisis Communication Research and Practice: CERC, Meaning Making and Renewal
Traditions in Crisis Communication
Research and Practice

1. Warning & Alert Messages: Sirens, EBS
2. Coordination: Command & Control, NIMS
3. Image Repair: Apologia
Expanding the Parameters: Three New Approaches

1. CERC - Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication
2. Crisis Narratives
3. Discourse of Renewal
On December 13, 1977, at 20:22 EST, a DC-3, carrying the University of Evansville basketball team, crashed on takeoff at the Evansville Regional Airport. The plane was on its way to Nashville taking the team to play the Middle Tennessee Blue Raiders. Some 23 people died including players, coaches and staff.
Crisis:

... An event or series of events concentrated in space and time in which a society or relatively self-sufficient division of a society, undergoes severe danger incurs such losses ... That the social structure is disrupted. ... (Fritz, 1961).

... characterized by surprise/high uncertainty, threat to high priority goals, and a restricted response time (Sellnow & Seeger, 2015).
• Complex social, economic, political, and physical event
• Situated Event: Space, Time, Informational Context, Social Space, Culture, History
• Natural + Human Factors
• A time/experience of, dislocation, confusion, disruption, chaos and meaning deficit
• Epistemic moment of learning, transition and change
• Moral and Ethical Moment: Revealing core values and beliefs, Demonstrating priorities, Requiring a response
• Threat and an Opportunity
Uncertainty and Meaning Deficit

What is happening?
What should I do?
What will tomorrow look like?
Will everything / everyone be OK?
Who / what caused this?
Who is to blame?
How can this be fixed?

Things wear out
Mistakes are made
Unobserved and ignored risks
Unforeseen interactions
Poor decisions
People try to do harm
Systems become overly complex
Consensus of the scientific community is that disasters are occurring with more frequency.

- Climate change
- Population dislocation
- Societal disruption
- Interactive systems
- Aging infrastructure
- Cascading events
- Stressed natural resources and systems
- Technological and system complexity
Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication: Origins

- H5N1 Avian Influenza in Hong Kong (1997)
- Anthrax Contamination of Letters (2001)
CRISIS EMERGENCY RISK COMMUNICATION
BE FIRST. BE RIGHT. BE CREDIBLE.
Origins

- Public Health as “First Responder”
- Public Health and Risk Communication
- Little attention to Crisis Communication
- Communication essential to effective public health response
I don't see developmental models in slides, but don't think we need either since we have only 1 hour and plenty of slides to get through.
Laura Pechta, 3/27/2011


CERC
Crisis + Risk

• CDC developed CERC “to address the emergency risk communication response and training needs of the public health infrastructure” (Courtney, Cole, & Reynolds, 2003).

• Trained to over 100,000 public health professionals

• CERC is an integrative framework
  – Risk and Crisis
  – Practice and Theory (Tool kits)
  – Public Health and Response Network
Crisis + Risk = CERC

• Connects risk and crisis communication within a developmental approach to crisis events impacting public health

• Offers a comprehensive and integrated approach to preparedness, response and recovery

• Includes research informed tools, templates and checklists

• Provides a larger conceptual framework for public health crises preparedness and response
removed periods from points since not sentences
Zemmel, Dany, 2/3/2022
Risk Communication

• Messages of known probabilities of negative consequences, how they may be reduced; addressing technical understandings (hazards), cultural beliefs (outrage)
• Principally persuasive, i.e., advertising, education campaigns
• Frequent/routine
• Sender/message centered
• Based on what is currently known, i.e., scientific projections
• Long-term (pre-crisis) Message preparation, i.e., campaign
• Technical expert, scientist
• Personal scope
• Mediated; commercials, ads, brochures, pamphlets
• Controlled and structured
Crisis Communication

• Messages regarding current conditions regarding an event; magnitude, immediacy duration and control/remediation; cause, blame, consequences

• Principally informative, i.e., news disseminated through media or broadcast through warning system

• Infrequent/nonroutine Receiver/situation centered

• Based on what is known and what is not known

• Short-term (crisis) Less preparation, i.e., responsive

• Authority figures/emergency manager, technical experts

• Personal, community, or regional scope

• Mediated; press conferences, releases, speeches, websites

• Spontaneous and reactive
# Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication (CERC) Lifecycle

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-crisis</th>
<th>Initial</th>
<th>Maintenance</th>
<th>Resolution</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Risk messages</td>
<td>- Uncertainty reduction</td>
<td>- Ongoing uncertainty reduction</td>
<td>- Updates regarding resolution</td>
<td>- Discussions of adequacy of response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Warnings</td>
<td>- Self-efficacy reduction</td>
<td>- Self-efficacy</td>
<td>- Discussions about cause</td>
<td>- Consensus about lessons learned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Preparations</td>
<td>- Reassurance</td>
<td>- Reassurance</td>
<td>- Discussions of new risks/new understandings of risks</td>
<td>- New understandings of risks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Build and test communication systems</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“130,000 – 210,000 AVOIDABLE COVID-19 DEATHS – AND COUNTING – IN THE U.S.”

By Irwin Redlener, MD; Jeffrey D. Sachs, PhD; Sean Hansen, MPA; Nathaniel Hupert, MD, MPH October 21, 2020
Trump is breaking every rule in the CDC’s 450-page playbook for health crisis

The communication chaos on coronavirus is eroding the most powerful weapon we have: Public trust

By Carolyn Y. Johnson and William Wan March 14, 2020 at 9:50 a.m. EDT

"For those of us in this field, this is profoundly and deeply distressing," said Matthew Seeger, a risk-communication expert at Wayne State University. "I'm fearful we've continued to undermine our belief that subject matter experts are people we should listen to," said Seeger, the Wayne State professor. "We've done a good job over the last couple decades of undermining science and telling people scientists aren't to be believed."
Crisis and Narrative: Origins

“I want to tell someone what happened.”

“Please listen to my story.”

Crisis as a Narrative Space

1. Meaning deficit
2. Information vacuum
3. De-Narration
4. Suspension of established modes of sensemaking
5. Competing interpretations and perspectives
Functions of Stories

1. Impose order: events are ordered in a sequential manner to create larger meaning structures that may be rooted in larger belief systems

2. Explanation: patterns of association such as cause and effect logic that explains what happens, why it happens, who makes it happen, when it happens, and how people should respond to these events

3. Sensemaking: through interaction and the application of interpretation scheme we make sense, construct meaning of equivocal situations
Crisis Narratives

Accounts
Blame Narratives
Renewal Narratives
Victim Narratives
Hero Narratives
Memorial Narratives


Discourse of Renewal: Origins

Cole Hardwoods
Malden Mills
Reframe & Reimagine the Post-crisis Phase

Processes not adequate
Recovery not sufficient
Centralized response inadequate

- Post-Crisis Learning
- Post-Traumatic Growth
- Whole-Community Response
- Organization and Emergent Organization
Renewal: “Never let a good crisis go to waste.”

“A process leading to seeing, understanding and moving beyond the immediate harm created by a crisis to leverage systemic opportunities for positive change that can be collectively-embraced by a group, organization and /or community.”

- Developed from chaos, complexity organizational learning theory
- Process or re-organizing, self-organizing or emergent organizing
- Meaning making as point of convergence
Traditional Emergency Management Process
Crisis & Renewal

Renewal
Recovery
Response
Preparedness
Mitigation
Panarchy is a framework natural rules that seeks to rationalize the interplay between change and persistence, growth and decline, chaos and order ... a theory or adaptive evolution (Gunderson and Hollings, 2002).
Resilience

“Bounce Back”
Modest Disruption
Stability
Adaptation
Resilience Strategies

Renewal

“Bounce Forward”
Major Disruption
Change
Transformation
Renewal Strategies
Points of Convergence Resilience & Renewal

- Both emerged from efforts to understand successful response.
- Both focus primarily on the post-crisis condition.
- Both seek to understand how a crisis is a force of personal, organizational and social change
- Both seek to connect the post-crisis condition to the pre-crisis condition
Elements of Renewal

1. Pre-Event Relationships
2. Based in shared values
3. Spontaneous, Honest Response
4. Strong, Visible, Vocal Leadership
5. Points of Attraction
6. Forward Looking (Prospective vs Retrospective)
7. Optimistic, Compelling, Shared Vision
Summary and Next Steps

Expanded Understanding of Crisis Events
Crisis as Transformative, Evolutionary, Epistemic
Multi – Trans Disciplinary
Global
Mega-Crises
Current Methods, Protocols are Inadequate

PROFESSOR SHOT TO DEATH DURING EXAM IN DETROIT

Dec 11, 1998

A college professor giving final exams last night was fatally shot by a man who opened fire with a rifle, reloaded and fired again before fleeing.

Andrzej Olbrot, a 52-year-old Wayne State University engineering professor, died at Detroit Receiving Hospital shortly after the shooting, authorities said.
Questions & Discussion