


 International Research Group on
CRISIS COMMUNICATION

Crisis Communication at the Beginning of the 21st Century

Conference hosted by the
International Research Group on Crisis Communication
Ilmenau (Germany) – October 8-10, 2009


 Institut für Medien- und Kommunikationswissenschaft
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Welcome to Ilmenau


**ILMENAU UNIVERSITY OF
TECHNOLOGY**




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Gliederung (nicht sichtbar)

1. General introduction and welcome (3min)
2. Introductory notes on IRGoCC (5min)
3. Crisis typologies: Phenomenological, chronological and social differentiations
 - a) Phenomenological: Crisis types
 - b) Chronological: Crisis phase models
 - c) Social: Micro, macro, and meso-level crises → (7min)
4. State of the art: Institutional, technical and symbolic-relational perspectives on crisis communication → (6min)
5. Communication as constitutive element of crises and unifying object of analysis → (4min)
6. Impetus and program of the conference → (5min)
= 30min → Q&A → Robert Heath

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Chairs

	Martin Löffelholz Director		Andreas Schwarz Managing Director
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Members

							
Claudia Auer	Alexander Böhm	Matthias Duchscherer	Marion Hensel	Darko Jakovljevic	Liane Rothenberger	Nicole Tepasse	Kathrin Vogler

Associated Members

				
Thomas Hanitzsch	Hannah Neumann	Yudi Perbawaningsih	Lukas Ispandriano	Sascha Stoltenow

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International **Research** Group on Crisis Communication

1. Military Media Relations. The relations of German and US Armed Forces to the media: Comparative analyses of the military communication management since 1990 (DFG)
2. The role of local media in the Mindanao conflict (Institute for Foreign Cultural Relations)
3. From Holocaust to Partnership – Perception of Israel and Germany in the Media (German-Israeli Foundation)
4. Public Relations and Crisis: A covariation-based approach on causal and responsibility attributions of stakeholders in the context of organizational crisis (doctorate thesis)

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COMMUNICATION ON TERRORISM, WAR, DISASTER, AND ORGANIZATIONAL CRISIS

SEARCHING FOR AN INTEGRATIVE APPROACH TO CRISIS COMMUNICATION RESEARCH

MARTIN LÖFFELHOLZ & ANDREAS SCHWARZ

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Imagine you have to tell your students
that their Master degree program in
communications has to be closed...

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Crisis Communication

Differentiating crises by...

1. ... phenomenological / perceptual aspects
2. ... chronological progress
3. ... social level / affected system(s)

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phenomenological / perceptual

2008 Crisis Categories

Source: Institute for Crisis Management

All Other Categories

Environmental	3%	Executive Dismissals	1%
Hostile Takeover	1%	Sexual Harassment	1%
Whistle Blowing	1%		

Crisis Categories Compared 1990 – 2008 (% of total crises each year)

	1990	2007	2008
Facility Damage	5.5	7.0	10.0
Casualty Accidents	4.8	7.0	9.0
Environmental	7.8	2.0	3.0
Class Action Lawsuits	2.2	9.0	5.0
Consumer Activism	2.8	4.0	4.0
Defects & Recalls	5.4	4.0	4.0
Discrimination	3.3	3.0	3.0
Executive Dismissal	1.3	1.0	1.0
Financial Damages	4.2	4.0	4.0
Hostile Takeover	2.6	0.0	0.0
Labor Disputes	10.3	9.0	11.0
Mismanagement	24.1	11.0	10.0
Sexual Harassment	.4	1.0	1.0
Whistle Blowers	1.1	1.0	1.0
White Collar Crime	20.4	19.0	17.0
Workplace Violence	3.8	15.0	17.0

<http://www.crisisexperts.com/index.html>

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INSTITUTE FOR
CRISIS MANAGEMENT

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Mitroff, Pauchant & Shrivastava 1988

phenomenological / perceptual

Internal

↑

↓

External

Technical / Economic

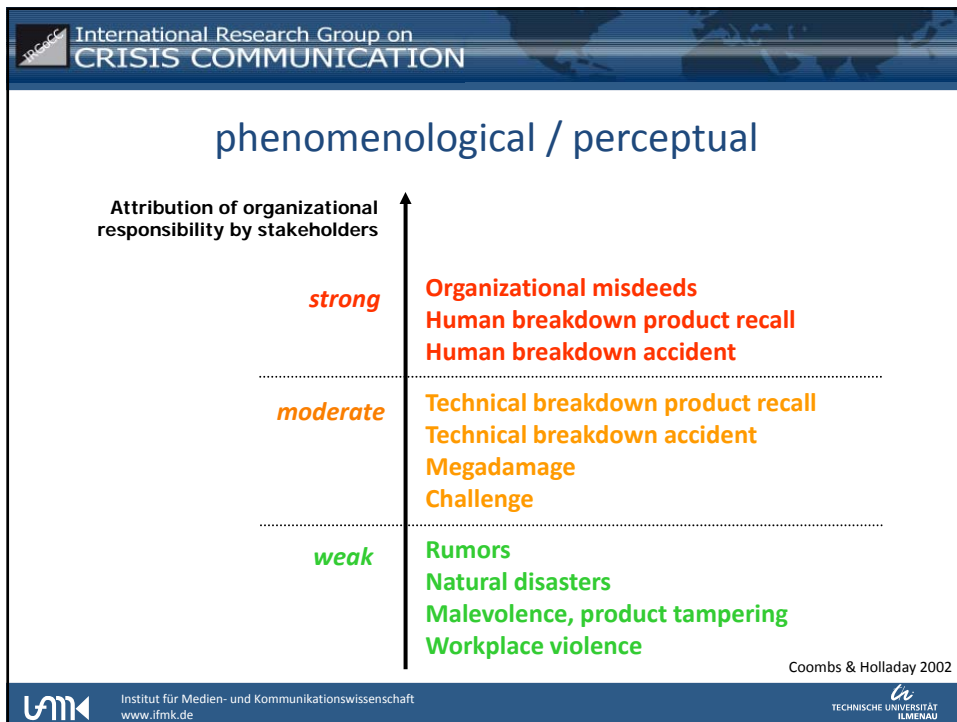
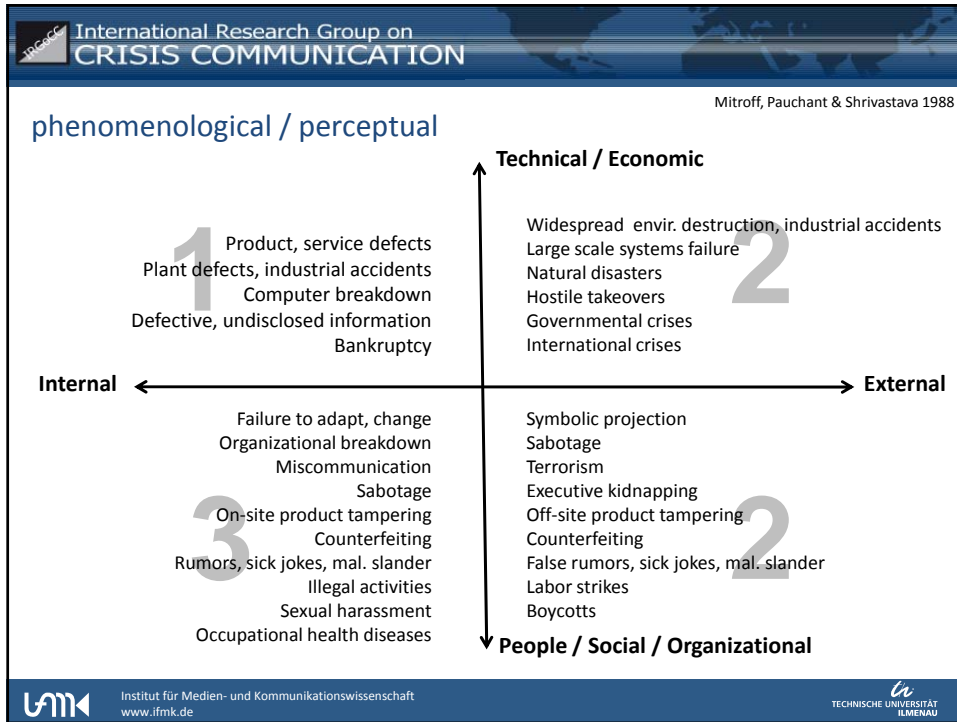
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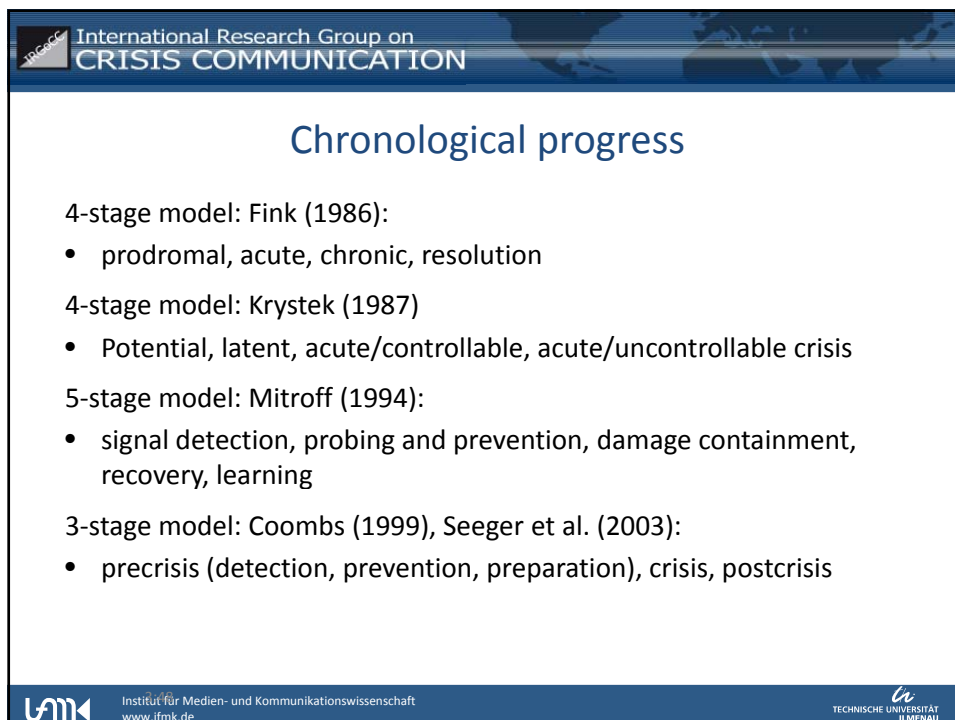
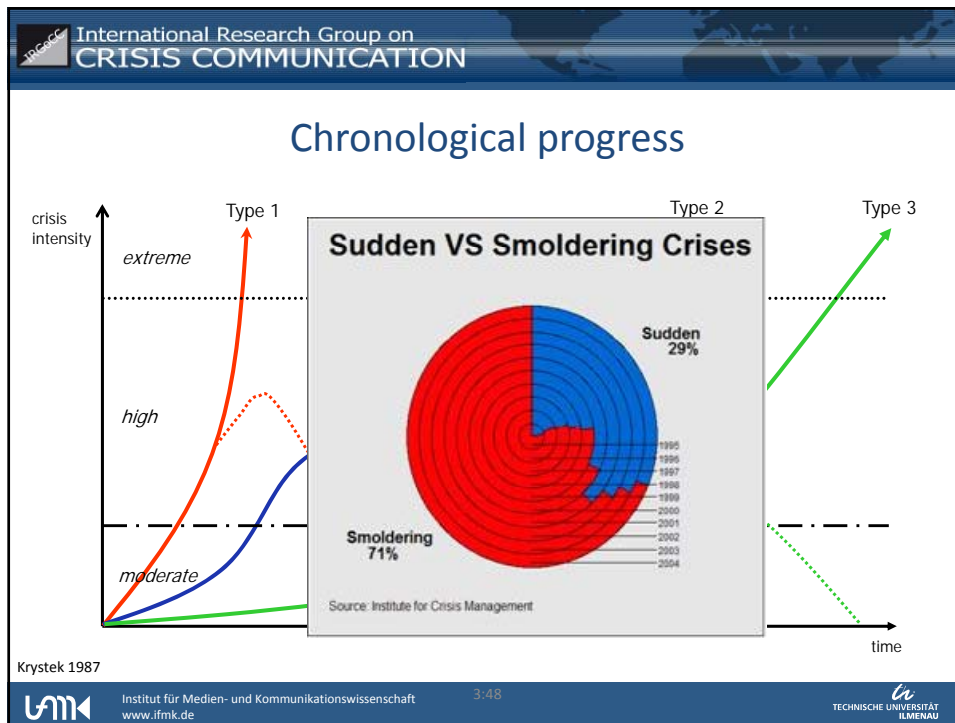
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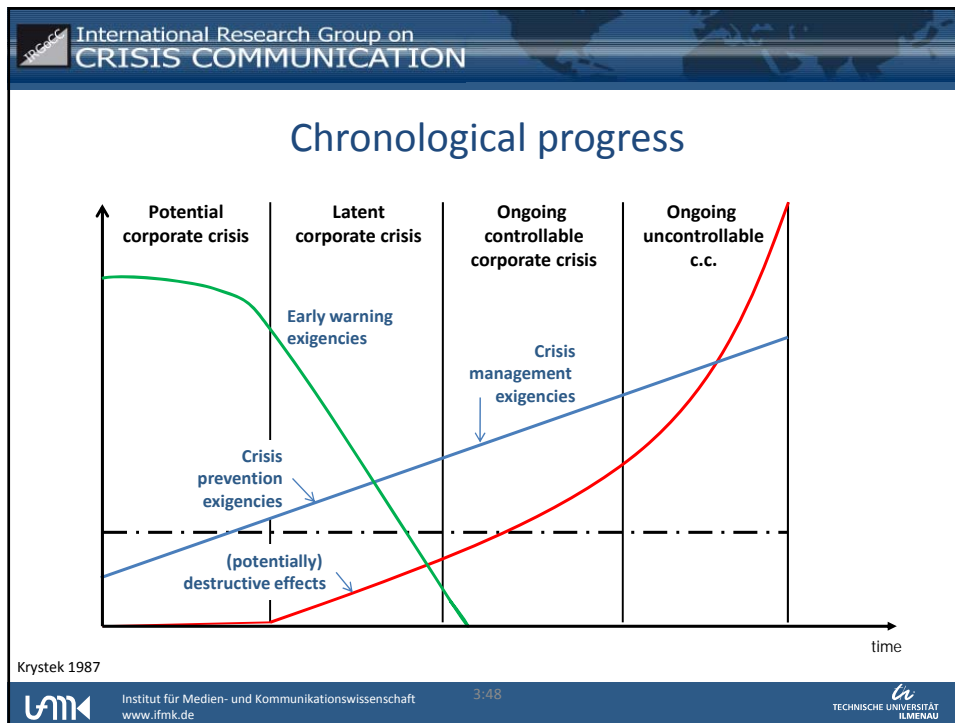
People / Social / Organizational

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social level / affected system(s)

Societal crises (macro)

- Economic crises (economic cycles)
- Marx' theory of structural crisis in capitalism
- Political crisis (Habermas, Offe)
- Evolution theoretical explanations of societal crisis (Prisching, 1986)

1. Cyclical character, phases
2. Initiator of social change (negative/positive)
3. Internal and external causes
4. Perspectives: systems, structures, decisions

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social level / affected system(s)

Psychological crises (micro)

- Developmental psychology (Erikson, 1968)
- Critical life events (Lindemann, 1944, 1956)
- Stress research (Caplan, 1964; Lazarus, 1981)
- Social support research
- Cognitive theories

1. Critical transitions, from normal to pathological emotional states
2. Confrontation with threatening/dangerous situations → open end (coping/learning vs. breakdown)
3. Crises are no sicknesses
4. Internal and external causes
5. Typical phases (crisis/person specific)

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social level / affected system(s)

Organizational crises (meso)

- Corporate bias in the crisis management literature
- Focus on liquidity problems
- Initially underrating the role of stakeholders, reputation, and communication

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Organizational crises (meso)

„An organizational crisis is a low-probability, high-impact situation that is perceived by critical stakeholders to threaten the viability of the organization and that is subjectively experienced by these individuals as personally and socially threatening. Ambiguity of cause, effect, and means of resolution of the organizational crisis will lead to disillusionment or loss of psychic and shared meaning, as well as to the shattering of commonly held beliefs and values and individuals' basic assumptions. During the crisis decision making is pressed by perceived time constraints and colored by cognitive limitations.” (Pearson/Clair 1998: 66).

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Conclusions for an integrative crisis approach

1. Crises affect all social levels and systems
2. Scientifically observed commonalities
3. interaction of internal and external factors as well as cognitive processing
4. disrupting continuity, negative, pressuring, threatening and stimulate attention
5. threat basic values, goal attainment ...
6. Crisis perception and labelling dependent on observing system
7. The capacity of systems to cope with crises still needs more research

Schwarz, 2009

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State of the empirical research


Institutional Perspective
Which structural/institutional dimensions account for a higher threat or resistance to crisis exposure of organizations?
→ structures, conditions

Technical/Instrumental Perspective
Which tools and techniques do communicators use in/before/after crises? Effectiveness?
→ tools, infrastructure

Symbolic-relational Perspective
How, with whom and with what effect do communicators and or publics communicate in crises?
→ messages and publics

Bechler, 2004; Löffelholz & Schwarz, 2008

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Crisis Communication

„Crises are terminological creations conceived by human agents, and consequently, are managed and resolved terminologically. As such, instead of being one component, communication constitutes the quintessence of crisis management.” (Hearit/Courtright 2004: 205).

Crises are „observations of observed events, that contradict normal expectations of continuity, that are perceived to be existentially relevant, and assessed to be negative“ (Kohring et al., 1996: 285).

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Conference Rationale

Keynote 1

Crisis communication at the beginning of the 21st century

Communication process perspective:	WHO? (e.g. top and Institutional Perspectives on Crisis Communication)	CHANNEL / WHAT? (The Role of Media and Journalism in the Construction of Crises)	TO WHOM / EFFECTS? (The Audiences Perspective on Crisis Communication)
Crisis type:			
War / armed conflicts			
Terrorist attacks			
Natural disasters			
Organizational crises			
	PANEL 1	PANEL 2	PANEL 3