**Introduction:**

The purpose of this assignment is to highlight the importance of technical writing and definitions, especially to those who are not as familiar with the topic or field being discussed. Clear and accurate definitions help the public understand and evaluate complex technical and social issues. It is also important to note that accuracy is crucial, as definitions can have general, societal and global implications (Lannon & Gurak, 411). Understanding the full power of words and definitions is key when it comes to public relations and communications. As mentioned on my personal blog – I am hoping to get into crisis communications (also known ask crisis management) upon graduation. When I say this to people, many are unsure of what it is, so I thought I would use a popular term in the crisis world for the assignment: Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT).

Included within this assignment are three composed definitions of the above-mentioned term (Situational Crisis Communication Theory):

* Parenthetical definition
* Sentence definition
* Expanded definition

**Parenthetical definition:**

Situational crisis communication theory (evidence based framework used to understand how to maximize protection of the organization facing crisis) provides guidance when trying to anticipate how interested parties will react to a crisis of reputation (Coombs, 163)

**Sentence definitions:**

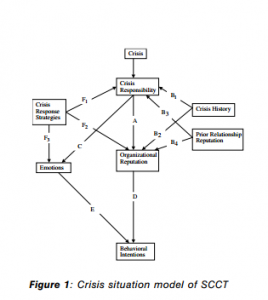
Research from SCCT provides a set of guidelines for how crisis managers should use crisis response strategies to protect a reputation during a crisis. SCCT identifies key aspects of the crisis situation and highlights specific characteristics about the crisis and the reputations held by those involved (Coombs, 162). The result is, in understanding how those with vested interest will respond to the crisis, specialists can act on previously gathered knowledge during and after the crisis has ‘passed’.

**Expanded Definition**

*What are its parts?*

Below is a diagram, which illustrates the process, recommended in a situation requiring crisis communication. At the top there is the crisis. From there, the party in charge of managing the crisis is responsible for gathering crisis history, response strategies and understanding the reach and impact of the crisis.

Take, for example, an oil spill. The crisis manager would look at the history (*has this company had previous oil spill? Have they taken the necessary precautions in the past t try and prevent a spill?),* the responsibility of the company (*what is the company legally responsible for doing to clean up the spill?*) and creating strategy (create a narrative in the media). From those three initial responses there are more complicated ides (possibly too much for this assignment), but would discuss emotions of both those involved and those witnessing the spill, managing the reputation of the executives (and other parties directly involved) of the company experiencing a crisis.

[](http://engl301-arts.sites.olt.ubc.ca/files/2016/09/scct.png)

*\*\*Photo Courtesy of Crisis communications, 2012\*\**

*How did its name originate?*

They concept of SCCT is based off of a common sociological theory known as ‘attribution theory’. This well-known theory “deals with how information is used to arrive at causal explanations for events.  It examines what information is gathered and how it is combined to form a judgment” (McLeod, 3).

*When is it used?*

SCCT is used in scenarios involving mass media. As mentioned before an example of this could be a major oil spill. It is also commonly used during political scandals. Crisis teams would work to manage or repair the reputation of a Politian after a misstep; an example of this would be Hilary Clinton’s email scandal. Her team worked to control the message in the media and provide evidence that would help increase her trust or a logical reason to explain why she had a personal server.

*How does it Work?*

The framing research in mass communication illuminates the rationale behind crisis and organizes them into crisis frames (Coombs, 162). Framing theory is the idea that ‘framing’ is related to agenda setting. In short, framing theory highlights how the media focuses attention on certain events and then places them within context of a scenario, regardless of accuracy (166). In general, frames are concerned with emphasis. A frame can make the topic relevant when working to manage public perception (164).

In communication, frames can be strategically used words, phrases or images that highlight information in the public message. For example, the media naturally feature certain aspects of a problem in a story. The way a message is framed shapes how people define problems, the cause of problems, who is blamed and solutions to problems (164). In short, the frame shapes the blame and reputation of those directly involved.

Mass communication research demonstrates that the way the media chooses to frame issues affects political judgments, personal reputation, public perception and even the success of an organization.

Works Cited

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