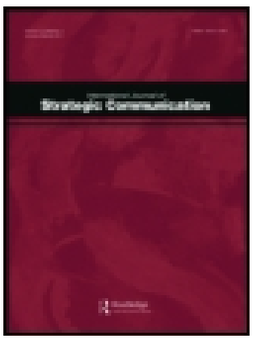

International Journal of Strategic Communication

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/hstc20

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To cite this article: Jungkyu Rhys Lim (2020): How Organizations in Different Cultures Respond to Crises: Content Analysis of Crisis Responses between the United States and South Korea, International Journal of Strategic Communication

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/1553118X.2020.1812613

Published online: 27 Oct 2020.

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION
https://doi.org/10.1080/1553118X.2020.1812613

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How Organizations in Different Cultures Respond to Crises: Content Analysis of Crisis Responses between the United States and South Korea

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ABSTRACT

Global organizations often fail in their crisis responses and exacerbate crisis damage with their culturally tone-deaf handling of crises. Using a content analysis of 281 crisis cases in the United States (n = 149) and South Korea (n = 132) from 2008 to 2018, this study examines differences in organizations' crisis responses based on culture. The findings indicate that organizations in South Korea simultaneously used multiple crisis response strategies. Specifically, Korean organizations apologized for creating a disturbance and offered corrective actions regardless of crisis responsibility. However, in addition to apologies and based on crisis responsibility, Korean organizations also employed strategies such as denying the existence of crises, attacking the accuser, or accepting crisis responsibility. Comparatively, organizations in the United States employed responses based on crisis responsibility. Specifically, American organizations apologized only when they were responsible for crises. Conversely, when they were victims of crises, American organizations chose to deny that crises exist, deny the intent to harm, and sought to justify their decisions. In sum, this paper extends knowledge of how and under what conditions organizations in different cultures respond to crises.

Global organizations often fail in their crisis responses and exacerbate crisis damage with their culturally insensitive, inappropriate, tone-deaf handling of the crises (An et al., 2010; Choi & Cameron, 2005; Taylor, 2000) because they are incapable of understanding subtle differences in other cultures' preferred crisis response. Organizations may need to respond to crises differently according to each country's culture, as responses have different meanings in different cultures (Falkheimer & Heide, 2006; Maddux et al., 2011). However, the existing scant research and anecdotal evidence have highlighted different crisis responses between Eastern and Western cultures (e.g., Haruta & Hallahan, 2003; Kim & Yang, 2012; Pickard, 2010; Zhu et al., 2017).

Previous crisis communication research on culture has been American-centric (Diers-Lawson, 2017), and "too dominated by case studies" (Manias-Muñoz et al., 2019, p. 5; see also e.g., Haruta & Hallahan, 2003; Wertz & Kim, 2010) with some comparative experimental studies (e.g., An et al., 2010; Lee, 2004, 2005). Studies that have examined transnational crises focus more on describing specific cases, rather than theorizing about the effect of culture (Gaither & Curtin, 2007; Kleinnijenhuis et al., 2015; Lindholm & Olsson, 2011). In response, crisis communication researchers have called for examining how cultural differences affect crisis communication practice using real-life crises (Coombs, 2016; Ha & Boynton, 2014; Ha & Riffe, 2015; Liu & Fraustino, 2014; Manias-Muñoz et al., 2019). Content analyses can provide foundational evidence on organizations' responses from different cultures. However, existing scholarship

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has not yet addressed cultural differences in crisis responses by simultaneously examining many real-life crisis cases.

The purpose of this study is to examine how and under what conditions organizations respond to crises in two countries representing different cultures: South Korea and the United States of America. A cross-cultural content analysis was conducted, adopting the situational crisis communication theory's (SCCT) crisis response postures (Coombs, 2019), taxonomies of apologies (Goei et al., 2007; Harris et al., 2006, 2010; Meier, 1998), apologies for creating a disturbance (Inoue, 2010), face-negotiation theory (Oetzel et al., 2000; Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998), and unique face-saving chemyon strategies (Kim et al., 2014; Kim & Yang, 2012). In doing so, the study extends theories related to organizational crisis responses and provides insight into how strategic communication professionals can work as cultural intermediaries (Bourdieu, 1984; Edwards, 2012), who create, shape, and influence meanings with production, distribution, and consumption of communication across cultures during different types of crises.

Literature review

Crisis communication with its Western focus

A crisis is "the perceived violation of salience stakeholder expectations that can create negative outcomes for stakeholders and/or the organization" (Coombs, 2019, p. 3). To respond to and mitigate potential adverse outcomes from crises, organizations try to manage crises. Crisis management is "a process of strategic planning for a crisis or negative turning point, a process that removes some of the risk and uncertainty from the negative occurrence and thereby allows the organization to be in greater control of its destiny" (Fearn-Banks, 2016, p. 2). Crisis communication is the lifeblood in crisis management, which is a comprehensive concept encompassing every step in the crisis management process (Coombs, 2019).

Crisis communication research to date has been American-centric (Diers-Lawson, 2017). One dominant framework in Western-centric crisis communication is situational crisis communication theory (SCCT) (Ha & Riffe, 2015; Liu & Fraustino, 2014; Ma & Zhan, 2016). According to SCCT, organizations should consider the extent to which their key stakeholders blame them for a crisis based on their perceived crisis responsibility, which, in turn, affects the optimal organizational crisis response strategy (Coombs, 1998, 2019; Coombs & Holladay, 1996). In SCCT, Coombs and Holladay (2002) categorized crises into three clusters based on how stakeholders typically perceive crisis responsibility: victim, accident, and preventable. In the victim cluster, stakeholders view the organization as a victim with minimum responsibility. In the accidental crisis cluster, stakeholders believe that organizations unintentionally caused crises or that crises occurred by accident. In the preventable crisis cluster, stakeholders view organizations as fully or mostly responsible for crises.

SCCT suggests that crisis managers should choose appropriate response strategies based on cluster type, or the level of perceived responsibility experienced by the public, to repair or avoid reputational damage; response strategies include denial, diminishment, rebuilding, and bolstering (Coombs, 2019). For example, when the organization is perceived to be responsible for the crisis, the organization needs to utilize more accommodative strategies. For instance, SCCT suggests using apologies in the preventable crisis cluster – when stakeholders view organizations as fully or mostly responsible for crises – as a part of the rebuilding strategy (to repair the organization's reputation). However, SCCT also suggests using denial strategies (e.g., attacking the accuser, denying the existence of crises, scapegoating, and blaming others for the crises) in the victim cluster to repair the organization's reputation. That includes rumor or malevolence crises, in which the organization is not responsible for the crises.

Moreover, SCCT suggests using diminish strategies (e.g., providing excuses, denying intentions, or justifying the actions) to reduce attribution of organizational crisis responsibility in the accidental crisis cluster where the organizations are not responsible for unintentional crises. Finally, organizations can establish positive connections with stakeholders as a bolstering strategy to supplement other strategies. Crisis managers use response strategies in a variety of combinations (Coombs, 2019). For more information on crisis response strategies, see Table 1.

Table 1. Crisis response strategies examined in this study.

Crisis Responses Strategies			
Response Strategies	Key Characteristics	Illustration	Reliability
	Denial Posture		
Attack accuser	Confront the person or group claiming a crisis exists	Pepsi: Coke charges McDonald's less	1.00
Denial	Claim that there is no crisis	Coke does not charge McDonald's less	0.91
Scapegoat	Blame someone else for the crisis	Exxon: Alaska caused delay	1.00
	Diminish Posture		
Excuse	Deny any intent to do harm or claim inability to control the event		
Provocation	Responded to act of another	Firm moved because of new state laws	1.00
Defeasibility	Lack of information or ability	Executive not told meeting changed	1.00
Accident	Act was a mishap	Sears' unneeded repairs inadvertent	1.00
Good intention	Meant well in act	Sears: No willful over-charges	1.00
Denial of intent	Deny any intent to do harm	I never meant to upset you.	1.00
Justification	Seek to minimize perceptions of damage from the event		
Minimization	Act not serious	Exxon: Few animals killed	1.00
Differentiation	Act less offensive	Sears: Preventative maintenance	1.00
Transcendence	More important considerations	Helping humans justifies tests	1.00
	Rebuilding Posture		
Apology	Take full responsibility and ask forgiveness	AT&T apologized for service interruption	0.91
Compensation	Offer gifts or money to victims	Disabled movie-goers given free passes	0.82
Corrective action	Plan to solve or prevent problem	AT&T promised to improve service	0.82
	Bolstering Posture		
Reminding	Remind people of past good works by the organization	Exxon's swift and competent action	0.82
Ingratiation	Praise people who help address the event		1.00
	Chemyon		
Corrective action without specific measures	Show will for corrective action without specific measures	We promise to meet your expectation and loves	0.82

(Benoit, 1997, 2015; Coombs, 2019; Kim & Yang, 2012)

Table 2. Characteristics of apology examined in this study

Characteristics of Apology		
Apology Characteristics	Examples	Reliability
Apology for creating a disturbance	I apologize for creating a disturbance or causing you so much anxiety/worry.	1.00
Expression of remorse/regret	I feel sorry/terrible about this.	0.89
Explicit statement of apology	I'm sorry/I apologize for the action.	0.91
Acceptance of responsibility	It was entirely our fault.	0.73
Denial of intent	I never meant to upset you.	0.82
Direct request to be pardoned	Please forgive me.	1.00
Explanation	I wasn't paying attention.	0.82
Self-rebuke	I am such an idiot.	0.91
Offer of reparation	I will replace it for you.	0.82
Promise of future forbearance	This will not happen again.	0.82

A meta-analysis on SCCT found that perceived crisis responsibility is the deciding factor regarding the extent of reputational damage that organizations experience – much more than matching responses based on SCCT guidance (Ma & Zhan, 2016). For example, crisis responsibility had

a significant association with reputation (r = −.54), but using the matched response (i.e., using diminish strategies in accidental crises or rebuilding strategies in preventable crises) only had a small association with reputation (r = .23) (Ma & Zhan, 2016).

Moreover, the meta-analysis found that the recommended responses have different levels of effectiveness in different crisis clusters. The matched crisis responses have a moderate association with reputation in accidental crises (r = .34), and a minor association with reputation in preventable crises (r = .17) (Ma & Zhan, 2016). In other words, using diminish strategies in accidental crises were more effective in protecting organizations' reputations than using rebuilding strategies in preventable crises. When organizations select crisis response strategies that are mismatched to crisis clusters, they can aggravate post-crisis reputational damage (Ma & Zhan, 2016; Sheldon & Sallot, 2008). Pertinent to this study, SCCT – to an extent – ignores cultural factors in guiding how organizations should respond to crises, which will be discussed below.

Crisis communication in other cultures

Culture can provide functional solutions and explanations regarding critical social interactions (Chiu & Hong, 2006; Nisbett, 2010), including how organizations manage and respond to crises. Culture is a complex whole that includes knowledge, beliefs, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired as a member of society (Tyler, 1871). Therefore, culture is the "collective programming of the mind" that allows us to distinguish one group from another (Hofstede, 1984, p. 25).

Although crisis communication scholarship has developed with a focus on American culture (Diers-Lawson, 2017), crises have become global and transnational (Gaither & Curtin, 2007; Kang et al., 2019; Lindholm & Olsson, 2011; Molleda, 2010; Sellnow & Veil, 2016). This trend has been accelerated due to the globalization of the economy, the development of transportation and technology, and the emergence of digital communication (Coombs, 2019; Fearn-Banks, 2016). All these factors contribute to increased interconnection among people and countries throughout the world, and that connection includes experiencing crises.

Molleda (2010) characterized these transnational crises as "*Cross-National Conflict Shifting*" that multinational organizations face at home or in host countries. For example, Kleinnijenhuis et al. (2015) found that agenda-building and agenda-setting occurred across countries during the 2010 BP oil spill crisis. BP's public relations efforts and expanding stock trades increased coverage of the crisis in U.S. media. This increased coverage, in turn, raised public awareness and increased the amount of crisis coverage in the U.K. media. Ultimately, BP share prices decreased in the global financial market (Kleinnijenhuis et al., 2015). Another example is when the Danish newspaper *Jullands-Posten* published cartoons of the prophet Muhammad in 2005 (Gaither & Curtin, 2007; Lindholm & Olsson, 2011). The outcry regarding these cartoons started as a domestic issue in Denmark where the government framed the issue as freedom of the press, yet the response backfired as a global public diplomacy crisis. Danish goods were banned throughout the Arab world. Danish embassies in Damascus, Syria, and Lebanon were attacked (Lindholm & Olsson, 2011). The food company *Arla Foods* faced a boycott in the Middle East, just because the company was from Denmark (Gaither & Curtin, 2007).

Strategic communication researchers have examined how to balance centralization and localization of organizations' strategic communication (Lehmberg & Hicks, 2018; Lim, 2010; Molleda et al., 2015; Wakefield, 2010, 2011). Lim (2010) examined multinational corporations' strategic communication strategies and found that multinational corporations can balance global integration and local responsiveness by giving tactical autonomy to local subsidiaries as long as they follow the company mission, goals, and specific program's themes. Molleda et al. (2015) further examined how strategic communication can be localized, and developed criteria for relevant decision-making for localization.

Research has demonstrated that theories developed in Western contexts like SCCT do not always apply to other cultural contexts (An et al., 2010; Haruta & Hallahan, 2003; Lee, 2004, 2005; Zhu et al., 2017). According to SCCT, accommodative strategies, such as apologies, are effective in preventable

crises when the organization is perceived to be responsible for crises (Coombs, 2019). For example, a case study on two major airline crashes that occurred in 1985 in Japan and the United States revealed that the Japanese Airlines (JAL) president repeatedly made public apologies to the victims' families and the survivors, whereas Delta's CEO never made a public apology (Haruta & Hallahan, 2003). As another example, McDonald's and KFC both experienced allegations against their operations in China. McDonald apologized for selling expired food and thus alleviated its crisis severity. KFC did not apologize for using growth hormones to feed its chickens until its responsibility was confirmed, thereby creating severe negative damage to its reputation (Zhu et al., 2017). These case studies, having occurred in China, suggested that apologies may be more frequently used and more effective in Eastern contexts than Western contexts, and that different crisis responses may be used in Eastern contexts (Haruta & Hallahan, 2003; Zhu et al., 2017).

Cross-cultural experimental research between the United States and South Korea found that in Korea, the public reacted more negatively to organizational responses that blamed and focused the responsibility for the internal crisis on the employee who caused the crisis via human error rather than accepting responsibility (An et al., 2010). Experimental research conducted in Hong Kong also revealed that accepting crisis responsibility showed more positive outcomes than denying crisis responsibility, despite the lack of Western participants in the study (Lee, 2004, 2005). Specifically, in the experiment using a hypothetical plane crash, accommodative strategies (e.g., apologies, compensation, and corrective actions) generated more favorable outcomes, such as attitude, trust, and purchase intention, than denial strategies (e.g., shifting the blame, minimization, and not providing any comments) (Lee, 2004, 2005).

Moreover, similar to a meta-analysis on SCCT (Ma & Zhan, 2016), an experimental study in Singapore found that attribution of crisis responsibility significantly influences thestakeholders' behaviors more than the crisis response itself, and apologies do not necessarily reduce negative consumer responses (Lwin et al., 2017). Coombs (2016) suggested further research on the moderating variables to better understand when SCCT should operate as predicted in a crisis. This may include different crisis responses and apologies in different cultures.

This study focuses on how organizations in Eastern vs. Western cultures employ crisis response strategies to address similar crises. By doing so, this study extends SCCT in a cross-cultural context. Despite differences between cultures and subcultures within the East and the West, countries from the East are very different from Western countries. The countries within the East (e.g., China, Korea, and Japan) share commonalities in attention, perception, causal inference, knowledge organization, and reasoning (e.g., Nisbett, 2010). Countries within the West also share commonalities along these factors (e.g., the United States and the United Kingdom). Still, Eastern and Western cultures differ widely in these factors (e.g., Nisbett, 2010). Accordingly, communication scholars need to study organizations' responses in different cultures. This project examines the United States and South Korea to investigate cultural differences in crisis responses, as they have a capitalist economy, economic freedom, civil liberties, and democracy components in common (Freedom House, 2020; Heritage Foundation, 2020). Each research question focuses on crisis response strategies from SCCT (Coombs, 2019):

RQ1: How, if at all, do organizations in the United States and Korea employ *rebuilding* strategies (e.g., apologies and corrective actions) to respond to similar crises?

RQ2: How, if at all, do organizations in the United States and Korea employ *denial* strategies (e.g., denying and attacking an accuser) to respond to similar crises?

RQ3: How, if at all, do organizations in the United States and Korea employ *diminishment* strategies (e.g., denying intention to harm, minimization, and transcendence) to respond to similar crises?

Face, face-negotiation theory, and chemyon

One possible explanation for cultural differences is the concept of face. Face is the image of self that people display to others (Goffman, 1972). People in all cultures maintain and negotiate face in all communication situations. During crises and conflicts, people's faces are threatened, and they try to save face (Ting-Toomey, 2005; Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998).

Face-negotiation theory explains how people from different cultures have different face needs, concerns, and conflict styles (Ting-Toomey, 2005, 2012, 2017; Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998). For example, individualistic cultures use *self-face*, which is the protective concern for one's image. Accordingly, individualistic cultures use a *dominating* conflict style, i.e., being aggressive and defending a position.

On the other hand, collectivistic cultures use *other-face*, the concern for accommodating the other conflicting party's image, or *mutual-face*, the concern for both parties' images and identity expectancy image of the relationship. Therefore, collectivistic cultures use *avoiding* (pretending the conflict does not exist), *accommodating* (smoothing over the conflict or giving in to the wishes of their partner), and *integrating* conflict styles (finding a mutual-interest solution, problem-solving, displaying respect, and apologizing) (Oetzel et al., 2000; Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001).

Beyond face-negotiation theory, research on South Korea highlighted the unique face-saving cultural variable chemyon (Kim & Yang, 2011; Lim, 1994; Lim & Choi, 1996). Chemyon is a kind of social face permeating every aspect of Koreans' daily social interaction (Kim & Yang, 2011; Lim, 1994; Lim & Choi, 1996). Chemyon has personal and social aspects (Kim & Yang, 2011). In Korea, it is important to save one's chemyon face, but also not to embarrass others and protect their chemyon in front of other people (Kim, 2003; Kim & Yang, 2011; Lim, 1994; Lim & Choi, 1996). Strategic communication in Korea reflects saving one's own face as well as others' faces (Kim, 2003; Kim & Yang, 2011). Studies have found that organizations attempt to save face by using chemyon strategies during crises in South Korea (Kim et al., 2014; Kim & Yang, 2012). Specifically, research found that Korean organizations expressed sympathy without blame, promised corrective action without specific measures (indirect corrective action), and intentionally used indirect communication (equivocation) (Kim & Yang, 2012). However, studies have not yet identified specifically to what extent organizations in Korea – and the United States – use face-negotiation theory's conflict styles and chemyon strategies differently during crises.

Apologies, different functions and meanings in different cultures

Apologies can protect organizations' reputations during crises (Coombs, 2016, 2019; Ma & Zhan, 2016). However, apologies have been defined differently. Researchers have identified taxonomies of apologies (Goei et al., 2007; Harris et al., 2006, 2010; Meier, 1998), including expression of remorse/regret, explicit statement of apology, acceptance of responsibility, denial of intent, and promise of future forbearance (see Table 2). However, Hearit (2008) indicated that an apology should at least include admitting guilt, showing regret, and asking for forgiveness. For apologies to be effective, the public should perceive them to be sincere and genuine (Benoit, 2015; Bentley, 2018). Bentley (2018) highlighted stakeholders' perspective that they want apologies to include both words and behaviors to fix the problem and rebuild their relationships with organizations after crises occur.

Furthermore, how the public perceives an apology also differs according to culture. Individualistic and collectivistic societies have different functions and meanings of apologies (e.g., Barnlund & Yoshioka, 1990; Sugimoto, 1997; Takagi, 1996). Individualism is the tendency to value the individual and personal goals over group goals, and the United States is a highly individualistic society. In individualistic Western cultures, an apology means an admission of responsibility accompanied by an expression of regret (Darby & Schlenker, 1982; Hargie et al., 2010; Kim et al., 2004). Due to this admission of responsibility, organizations are often reluctant to apologize for fear of legal ramifications, which is related to punitive Western justice systems.

On the other hand, collectivism stresses conformity, in-group harmony, sharing, obligations, and group goals over personal goals; China, Japan, and Korea are highly collectivistic societies (Hofstede, 1980, 1984, 2003; Triandis, 1993, 1995). Collectivist societies, such as China, Japan, and Korea, see apologies as a person's recognition of a burden suffered by the target and a way to alleviate interpersonal stress associated with damaged relationships (Ide, 1998; Oki, 1993; Takagi, 1996). Stakeholders expect apologies from an entity for creating a disturbance, but these apologies are not meant to imply guilt or innocence (Inoue, 2010). Rather, a public apology from an organization merely conveys a concern for the injured party rather than admitting guilt; it does not necessarily have legal implications in collectivistic cultures (Avruch & Wang, 2005; Huang & Bedford, 2009).

Some crisis communication research found that organizations in collectivistic cultures apologize more frequently than organizations in individualistic cultures. For example, a comparative study of messages employed during the 2006 spinach crisis (preventable crisis) in the United States and the 2004 dumpling crisis (victim crisis) in South Korea revealed such cultural differences (Wertz & Kim, 2010). Specifically, Korean organizations used apologies even in victim crises, whereas American organizations did not issue a full apology even in preventable crises. Similarly, in examining similar types of plane crash crises, Haruta and Hallahan (2003) observed that an apology was perceived to be the appropriate organizational response in Japanese society, whereas organizations in the United States avoided a full apology. Some crisis communication research conducted in South Korea (Choi, 2017; Ha, 2016; Kim et al., 2014; Kim & Yang, 2012) also found that Korean organizations used apologies quickly and frequently.

Prior research indicated that organizations in collectivistic cultures may apologize more often and quicker and use more indirect communication than organizations responding to crises in individualistic cultures (An et al., 2010; Ha, 2016; Haruta & Hallahan, 2003; Kim et al., 2014; Kim & Yang, 2012; Lee, 2004, 2005; Wertz & Kim, 2010). Moreover, organizations in collectivistic cultures may use more other- or mutual-face-saving and chemyon strategies, such as denying that the crises exist (avoiding), not blaming or attacking an accuser, and providing corrective actions without specific measures (Kim et al., 2014; Kim & Yang, 2012; Oetzel et al., 2000; Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001). Still, crisis communication scholarship has yet to examine the large number of real-world crises, particularly in non-American cultures, making it difficult to generalize findings (Diers-Lawson, 2017; Manias-Muñoz et al., 2019). One way to overcome these challenges is to conduct a cross-cultural comparative content analysis. Comparative content analysis can examine a large number of real-world cases to reveal how and under what conditions organizations respond to crises in collectivistic and individualistic societies. Therefore, based on the extant literature, this study posits:

H1: Organizations in Korea will apologize more often than organizations in the United States (face-saving strategy).

H2: Organizations in Korea will provide more corrective actions without specific measures than organizations in the United States (chemyon strategy).

H3: Organizations in Korea will deny that the crises exist more often than organizations in the United States responding to similar crises (face-saving strategy).

H4: Organizations in Korea will less frequently attack an accuser (chemyon strategy) than organizations in the United States.

Methods

To address the research question and hypotheses, the researcher conducted a quantitative content analysis (Krippendorff, 2018; Riff et al., 2019). The content analysis allowed the researcher to examine

similarities and differences across crisis response cases and deepen understanding about critical differences between cultures.

Data

The study examined the content of crisis responses in major trade publications in the United States and South Korea from 2008 to 2018. First, the researcher searched for crises that occurred during the study's time frame by using the search term "crisis" in the major trade publications (i.e., "The top 12 crises of 2016"). For American cases, the major trade sources are *Forbes, Bloomberg, Business Insider, Wall Street Journal, Holmes Report, PRSA PRsay, PRWeek, Campaign, Advertising Age*, and *AdWeek*. For the Korean cases, the major trade sources include *Chosun Biz, Korea Economic Daily, Maeil Business Newspaper, Seoul Economic Daily, Financial News, Dong-A Business Review, Herald Business, and The PR*. Additionally, the researcher used the crisis case database organized by the major economic newspaper *Korea Economic Daily* with the assistance of *SCOTOSS*, the communication consulting firm (Korea Economic Daily, 2020). These trade sources are considered to be important publications in business, organization and corporate communication, public relations, and public affairs.

Once the case was identified, the researcher examined the organizations' initial crisis responses as well as media reports providing the crisis context. Specifically, the researcher collected all organizational response documents available online, such as press releases, news articles, posts on websites, and screenshots. At least one record per case was analyzed if the organization responded. The researcher identified 281 organizational crisis cases in the United States (n = 149) and South Korea (n = 132) from 2008 to 2018 to examine differences in organizations' crisis response by culture. Each crisis case is the unit of analysis. To better understand the context, at least one press release or statement and three news articles were analyzed for each case if the organization responded; some included more. No statement or press release was analyzed if the organization did not respond. Only initial crisis responses were coded and analyzed. In other words, once the researcher identified the crisis cases, coders collected the responses based on the media reports, social media posts, and organizations' websites. Then, the first statement from the organization was chosen (see Table 3).

Content analysis coding process

Two bilingual coders coded the data. Each crisis case and statement were coded by the country where the crisis occurred, the country in which the organization responsible for the crisis is headquartered, date the crisis occurred, time lags between when the crisis began and when the responsible organization responded, type of organization experiencing the crisis, crisis cluster, crisis response, and apology attributes.

Intercoder reliability

Intercoder reliability was acceptable based on Krippendorff's α (>.80) from coder training of about 11% of the total initial sample (n = 22). Once the crisis cases were sorted chronologically, the crisis cases were randomly chosen for intercoder reliability with a fixed interval (U.S.: n = 11, Korea: n = 11).

Table 3. Case organizations characteristics.

		For-Profits	Governments	Nonprofits	Individuals	Total
U.S.A.	Count	116	4	16	13	149
	%	77.9%	2.7%	10.7%	8.7%	
Korea	Count	125	2	4	1	132
	%	94.7%	1.5%	3.0%	0.8%	
Total	Count	241	6	20	14	281
	%	85.8%	2.1%	7.1%	5.0%	

This simple random sampling helps to achieve an unbiased representation of the whole sample. The organization responses included various characteristics that were examined in this study. Coder training included the process of coding, discussing, re-reading, and re-coding to resolve discrepancies between coders (see each variable and Tables 1 and 2 for the intercoder reliability).

Variables

Crisis type (crisis cluster)

To code the organization's crisis responsibility, the researcher used Coombs's (2019) three crises clusters: victim, accident, and preventable crisis. For example, preventable crises include car companies' emission deceptions or intentional use of faulty components and airline companies' unfair removal of a passenger. Accident crises include explosions or fires in factories and plane crashes. Victim crises include rumors (i.e., purposefully circulated misleading or false information about an organization), organizational challenges (i.e., discontented stakeholders' confrontation that organization inappropriately operates), and malevolence (i.e., a competitor's intentional attack on an organization's reputation), and non-workplace violence. To examine the crisis responsibility and the organizations' responses in a single time point, the researcher coded only initial crisis responses and used media reports at the time to understand and contextualize crisis attribution. This measure helps to identify similar crises and crisis responsibility. Krippendorff's α was strong (α = .817).

Crisis response

To code how organizations responded to the crises, the researcher used a combined crisis response strategy list from Coombs's (2014) SCCT crisis response postures: denial, diminishment, rebuilding, and bolstering. Also, corrective action "without specific measures" was added for chemyon strategies (Kim & Yang, 2012, p. 189; Kim et al., 2014). The coders coded the relatively immediate crisis responses within a month after the crisis began. For more information on the specific response, see Table 1. The coders dummy-coded for the presence or absence of each crisis response. Krippendorff's α was strong (average of α = .94).

Apology attributes

To examine the different meanings of apologies in detail, the researcher used taxonomies of apologies (Goei et al., 2007; Harris et al., 2006, 2010; Meier, 1998) adding apologizing for creating a disturbance from Inoue (2010). Krippendorff's α was strong (average of α = .87). Using taxonomies of apologies, the coders dummy-coded for presence or absence of the different characteristics of apologies (for more information on characteristics of apologies, see Table 2).

Analysis

A Chi-square test of association was used to determine if there was a relationship between different cultures and categorical variables of interest (Lomax & Hahs-Vaughn, 2012, pp. 221–224). The assumption of an *expected* frequency of at least 5 per cell was mostly met, because all expected values in each cell were greater than five. However, when the assumption of expected frequency was not met, Fisher's exact test was conducted. A Chi-square test does not have an assumption about equal group sizes; thus, unequal group sizes are accepted. However, the assumption of independent observation was not met, because we cannot guarantee independent observation unless the responses were not randomly selected; thus, there is an increased probability of a Type I error. The researcher proceeded to analyze the data, recognizing these constraints.

Results

Use of rebuilding strategies (RQ1)

RQ1 asked how organizations in the United States and Korea employ rebuilding strategies, such as apologies and corrective actions, to crises. Results showed that Korean organizations used significantly more rebuilding strategies than American organizations ($\mathcal{X}^2(1, N = 186) = 10.178, p < .01$). Only 57.7% of American organizations (n = 86) used rebuilding strategies, whereas 75.8% of Korean organizations (n = 100) used rebuilding strategies.

In particular, American organizations used *rebuilding* strategies significantly more for *accident* and *preventable* crises than victim crises ($\mathcal{X}^2(2, N = 86) = 24.066, p < .001$). Only 12.5% of American organizations used rebuilding strategies for victim crises (n = 3), compared to 68.8% and 65.6% of American organizations used rebuilding strategies for accident (n = 22) and preventable crises (n = 61), respectively.

Conversely, Korean organizations predominantly used rebuilding strategies regardless of crisis responsibility ($\mathcal{X}^2(2, N = 100) = 3.286, p > .05$). Korean organizations used rebuilding strategies for 66.7% of victim crises (n = 20), 85.7% of accident crises (n = 30), and 74.6% of preventable crises (n = 50). In particular, for victim crises, Korean organizations used significantly more rebuilding strategies compared to American organizations ($\mathcal{X}^2(1, N = 23) = 15.999, p < .001$). In victim crises, 66.7% of Korean organizations (n = 20) used rebuilding strategies, whereas only 12.5% of American organizations (n = 3) used rebuilding strategies (see Figure 1 and Table 4).

Use of apologies (H1)

H1 predicted that organizations in Korea would apologize more often for crises than organizations in the United States (face-saving strategy). Support was provided.

Organizations in Korea apologize for creating a disturbance. Regardless of crisis responsibility, organizations in Korea were likely to apologize for creating a disturbance more than half the time($\mathcal{X}^2(2, N = 100) = 2.683, p > .05$). Korean organizations apologized for creating a disturbance for 52.6% of the victim crises (n = 10), 76.0% of the accident crises (n = 19), and 62.5% of the preventable crises (n = 35). Interestingly, in the United States, only five organizations apologized for creating a disturbance for preventable crises, and they are headquartered in China, Japan, and Korea (see Table 5).

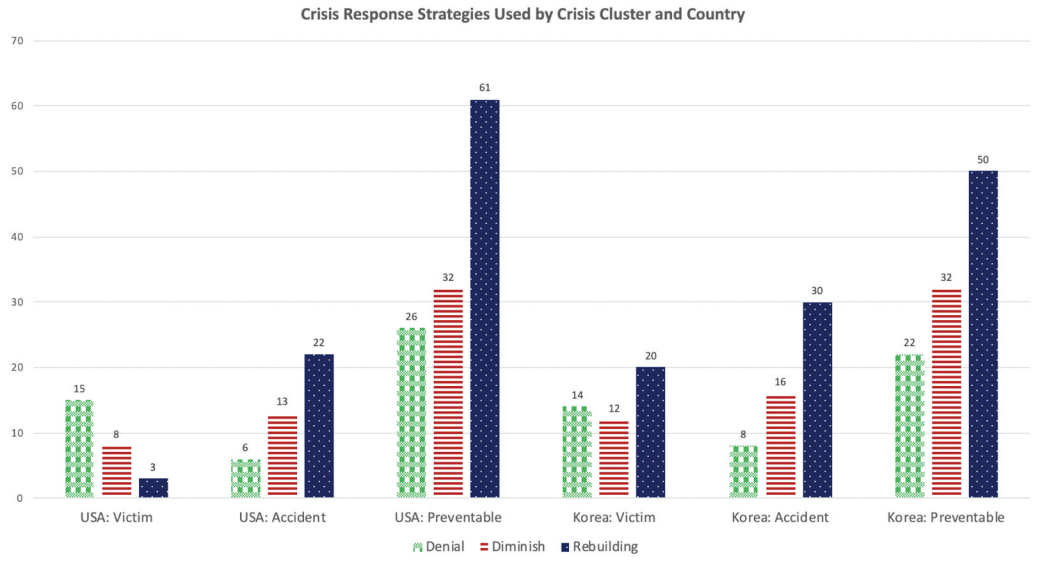

Figure 1. Crisis response strategies used by crisis cluster and country.

Table 4. Crisis response strategies used by crisis cluster and country.

Crisis Response Strategies Used by Crisis Cluster and Country

			Crisis Cluster				
Strategies	Country		Victim	Accident	Preventable	Total	$\mathcal{X}^2(2)$
RQ1. Rebuilding	U.S.A.	Count	3	22	61	86	24.06***
(e.g., Apology, Compensation)		%	12.5%	68.8%	65.6%	57.7%	
	Korea	Count	20	30	50	100	3.28
		%	66.7%	85.7%	74.6%	75.8%	
		$\mathcal{X}^2(1)$	15.99***	2.76	1.49	10.17**	
RQ2.	U.S.A.	Count	15	6	26	47	13.63**
Denial(e.g., Attack, Scapegoat)		%	62.5%	18.8%	28.0%	31.5%	
	Korea	Count	14	8	22	44	4.13
		%	46.7%	22.9%	32.8%	33.3%	
		$\mathcal{X}^2(1)$	1.34	.17	.44	.10	
RQ3.	U.S.A.	Count	8	13	32	53	.46
Diminish		%	33.3%	40.6%	34.4%	35.6%	
(e.g., Excuse, Justification)	Korea	Count	12	16	32	60	.50
		%	40%	45.7%	47.8%	45.5%	
		$\mathcal{X}^2(1)$	.25	.17	2.89	2.84	
Total	U.S.A.	Count	26	41	119	186	
		%	14.1%	22%	63.9%		
	Korea	Count	46	54	104	204	
		%	22.5%	26.4%	50.9%		

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

Table 5. Apologies by Crisis Cluster and Country.

Apologies by Crisis Cluster and Country

			Crisis Cluster				
Strategies	Country		Victim	Accident	Preventable	Total	$\mathcal{X}^2(2)$
Apology	**U.S.A.**	**Count**	**2**	**17**	**53**	**72**	**18.46*** **
		%	**8.3%**	**53.1%**	**57.0%**	**48.3%**	
	Korea	**Count**	**18**	**27**	**49**	**94**	**2.56**
		%	**60%**	**77.1%**	**73.1%**	**71.2%**	
		$\mathcal{X}^2(1)$	**15.26*** **	**4.27***	**4.39***	**15.16*** **	
Apology for	U.S.A.	Count	0	0	5	5	3.11
Creating a		%	0%	0%	5.4%	3.4%	
Disturbance	Korea	Count	16	20	40	76	.34
		%	53.3%	57.1%	59.7%	57.6%	
		$\mathcal{X}^2(1)$	18.18***	26.06***	56.85***	100.29***	
Expression of	U.S.A.	Count	2	7	13	22	2.12
Regret		%	8.3%	21.9%	14.0%	14.8%	
	Korea	Count	5	4	12	21	.73
		%	16.7%	11.4%	17.9%	15.9%	
		$\mathcal{X}^2(1)$	.82	1.32	.45	.07	
Explicit Apology	U.S.A.	Count	0	12	46	58	19.66***
Statement		%	0%	37.5%	49.5%	38.9%	
	Korea	Count	11	24	40	75	7.16
		%	36.7%	68.6%	59.7%	56.8%	
		$\mathcal{X}^2(1)$	11.05**	6.42*	1.64	8.98**	
Acceptance of	U.S.A.	Count	0	4	29	33	12.95
Responsibility		%	0%	12.5%	31.2%	22.1%	
	Korea	Count	3	17	30	50	12.96
		%	10%	48.6%	44.8%	37.9%	
		$\mathcal{X}^2(1)$	2.54	10.10**	3.09	8.32**	

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

Organizations in Korea commonly apologized for "creating a disturbance" or "causing you so much anxiety/worry," even when the organization was the crisis victim. For example, when the OB brewery company was attacked by a rumor that its beer smelled of chlorine, it stated: "For the consumers who

felt inconvenience regarding Cass beer, we apologize from the bottom of our heart." When a fire broke out at Samsung's SDS building, the organization said: "We are very sorry for our customers and community for causing so much anxiety." When two employees attacked a taxi driver after business hours, the cosmetic company AmorePacific issued the following apology statement: "We feel immensely responsible because it is the fault of employees who belong to our company." The CEO of the company added, "As the CEO of the company of such trouble-causing employees, I most sincerely apologize to the taxi driver and their family, and all who love AmorePacific."

Organizations in the United States apologize when responsible for crises. American organizations apologized more ($\mathcal{X}^2(2, N = 123) = 21.871, p < .001$) when they are responsible for the crisis. In fact, they never apologized for the crisis if they were deemed not responsible. American organizations made apology announcements for 0% of victim crises (n = 0), 56% of accident crises (n = 14), and 55.8% of preventable crises (n = 43), although there were fewer apology announcements in the United States overall than the number of apology announcements in Korea.

For example, when Uber CEO Travis Kalanick treated an Uber driver disrespectfully, he posted "a profound apology": "To say that I am ashamed is an extreme understatement … I want to profoundly apologize to Fawzi, as well as the driver, rider community, and the Uber team." Interestingly, regarding the Samsung smartphone explosion crisis – which was a translational crisis for the multinational company – the organization chose different crisis responses for American customers and Korean customers. In the United States, Samsung initially only acknowledged the inconvenience, emphasized its core values, and offered a call to action for battery replacements, with only a short video apology. Conversely, in Korea, Samsung immediately provided sincere and strong apologies multiple times to a variety of public sectors, including citizens, users, and shareholders, through multiple channels.

Both American and Korean organizations accept responsibility when responsible for crises. Organizations in both Korea and the United States accept responsibility more when they are responsible for the crisis, while Korean organizations accept responsibility overall significantly more than American organizations ($\mathcal{X}^2(2, N = 88) = 8.322, p < .01$). In Korea, only 10% of organizations accepted responsibility for the victim crises (n = 3), while organizations accepted responsibility for 48.6% of the accident crises (n = 17), and 44.8% of the preventable crises (n = 30) ($\mathcal{X}^2(2, N = 50) = 12.958, p < .01$). In the United States, no organizations accepted responsibility for victim crises (n = 0), and organizations accepted responsibility for 12.5% of accident crises (n = 4), and 31.2% of preventable crises (n = 29) ($\mathcal{X}^2(2, N = 33) = 12.958, p < .01$).

Corrective actions with and without specific measures (H2)

H2 predicted that organizations in Korea will provide corrective actions without specific measures more than organizations in the United States (chemyon strategies). The results partially supported this prediction.

Organizations in Korea offered corrective actions regardless of crisis responsibility $\left(\mathcal{X}^2(2, N = 100) = 3.423, p > .05\right)$. Korean organizations offered corrective actions for 56.7% of victim crises (n = 17), 57.1% of accident crises (n = 20), and 50.7% of preventable crises (n = 34). Moreover, Korean organizations offered corrective actions with specific measures (31.8%, n = 42) more than corrective actions without specific measures (chemyon strategies) (22%, n = 29).

For example, when Hanwha Chemical had an explosion in its plant, Hanwha promised to inspect, review, and renew its plants. When an employee was accused of assaulting a pregnant woman at a franchise hotpot restaurant, the company closed the branch. The company also paid all related expenses, including medical bills, for the pregnant woman.

However, in the United States, only 4.8% of organizations offered corrective actions for victim crises (n = 1), and promised corrective actions for 40% of accident crises (n = 10), and 23.4% of preventable crises (n = 18) $\left(\mathcal{X}^2(2, N = 123) = 7.870, p = .071\right)$. Interestingly, 56.7% of Korean

organizations promised corrective action even when they are victims of the crisis, whereas only 12.5% of American organizations offered corrective actions for victim crises ($\mathcal{X}^2(1, N = 20) = 11.153, p < .01$) (see Table 6).

For instance, Chipotle promised that it was 'doing everything possible to make our food as safe as it can be' when many E. coli contamination cases were found at Chipotle restaurants across the United States. AT&T also fired its executive and took corrective measures when a 100 USD million lawsuit was filed that claimed the executive sent racially offensive images on his work phone.

Use of denial strategies (RQ2)

RQ2 asked how organizations in the United States and Korea differ in how they employ denial strategies, such as attacking an accuser and denying the existence of a crisis. Results showed that there was no significant difference in the use of denial strategies ($\mathcal{X}^2(1, N = 281) = .102, p > .05$) between American and Korean organizations; 31.5% of American organizations ($n = 47$) and 33.3% of Korean organizations ($n = 44$) used denial strategies.

American organizations use more *denial* strategies for *victim* crises than accident and preventable crises ($\mathcal{X}^2(2, N = 47) = 13.630, p < .001$); that is, 62.5% of American organizations used denial strategies for victim crises ($n = 15$). Only 18.8% and 28% of American organizations used denial strategies for accident ($n = 6$) and preventable crises ($n = 26$), respectively. On the other hand, Korean organizations used denial strategies for 46.7% of victim crises ($n = 14$), 22.9% of accident crises ($n = 8$), and 32.8% of preventable crises ($n = 22$), despite no significant difference ($\mathcal{X}^2(2, N = 44) = 4.136, p > .05$) (see Figure 1 and Table 4).

Both Korean and American organizations deny crises when they are a victim (H3)

H3 predicted that organizations in Korea would deny that the crises exist (face-saving strategy) more often than organizations in the United States. However, the results did not support this prediction. Both organizations in the United States ($n = 37$, 24.8%) and Korea ($n = 35$, 26.5%) mostly *deny*, or claim that there is no crisis, when they are victims of rumor or malevolent attack crises. In other words, there is no difference between Korean and American organizations in denying the existence of crises ($\mathcal{X}^2(1, N = 72) = .104, p > .05$) (See Table 7).

Specifically, organizations *deny* the existence of *victim* crises significantly more than accident and preventable crises in both the United States ($\mathcal{X}^2(2, N = 37) = 19.078, p < .001$) and Korea ($\mathcal{X}^2(2, N = 35) = 7.086, p < .05$); 58.3% of American organizations denied the existence of victim

Table 6. Corrective actions by crisis cluster and country.

Corrective Actions by Crisis Cluster and Country

			Crisis Cluster				
Strategies	Country		Victim	Accident	Preventable	Total	$\mathcal{X}^2(2)$
Corrective Actions	**U.S.A.**	**Count**	**3**	**13**	**27**	**43**	**5.28**
		%	**12.5%**	**40.6%**	**29.0%**	**28.9%**	
	Korea	**Count**	**17**	**20**	**34**	**71**	**.50**
		%	**56.7%**	**57.1%**	**50.7%**	**53.8%**	
		$\mathcal{X}^2(1)$	**11.15****	**1.82**	**7.78****	**18.04*****	
With Specific Measures	U.S.A.	Count	2	12	23	37	6.25*
		%	8.3%	37.5%	24.7%	24.8%	
	Korea	Count	11	15	16	42	4.23
		%	36.7%	42.9%	23.9%	31.8%	
		$\mathcal{X}^2(1)$	5.85*	.19	.01	1.69	
Without Specific Measures	U.S.A.	Count	1	1	4	6	.28
		%	4.2%	3.1%	4.3%	4%	
	Korea	Count	6	5	18	29	2.21
		%	20%	14.3%	26.9%	22%	
		$\mathcal{X}^2(1)$	2.96	2.55	16.72***	20.66***	

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

Table 7. Specific denial strategies by crisis cluster and country.

Strategies	Country		Crisis Cluster: Victim	Accident	Preventable	Total	$\mathcal{X}^2(2)$
Deny Existence of Crises	U.S.A.	Count	14	3	20	37	19.07***
		%	58.3%	9.4%	21.5%	24.8%	
	Korea	Count	13	5	17	35	7.08*
		%	43.3%	14.3%	25.4%	26.5%	
		$\mathcal{X}^2(1)$	1.20		.32	.10	
Attack Accuser	U.S.A.	Count	2	2	5	9	.67
		%	8.3%	6.3%	5.4%	9%	
	Korea	Count	6	1	4	11	5.95*
		%	20%	2.9%	6.0%	8.3%	
		$\mathcal{X}^2(1)$	1.43	.45	.02	.55	
Scapegoat	U.S.A.	Count	1	2	8	11	.38
		%	4.2%	6.3%	8.6%	7.4%	
	Korea	Count	2	3	8	13	.59
		%	6.7%	8.6%	11.9%	9.8%	
		$\mathcal{X}^2(1)$			.48	.54	

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

crises (n = 14), but only 9.4% of accident crises (n = 3) and 21.5% of preventable crises (n = 20). Similarly, in Korea, 43.3% of organizations denied victim crises (n = 13), but only denied 14.3% of accident crises (n = 5) and 25.4% of preventable crises (n = 17).

For example, in Korea, the OB brewery company faced rumors that its beer smelled of chlorine. The company called it a groundless rumor and denied any crisis, while apologizing for creating a disturbance. When the movie theater brand CGV suffered a rumor that there were ticks in its theater chairs, CGV argued that these were not CGV theaters and that the company was working with exterminator companies.

In the United States, Starbucks got into a controversy for not having patterns on its red Christmas cups. In response, the company CEO said that Starbucks wanted to usher in the holidays with a purity of design that welcomed all stories and did not apologize for this choice. Similarly, when media outlets reported that Facebook, Apple, and Google allegedly gave the U.S. government direct access to their servers, these companies also denied involvement without apologizing.

Organizations in Korea attack an accuser (H4)

H4 predicted that organizations in Korea would be less likely to attack an accuser than organizations in the United States. However, the results did not support this prediction. *Attacking an accuser*, or confronting a person or group claiming a crisis exists, is the least-used denial strategy in both the United States (n = 9, 9%) and Korea (n = 11, 8.3%). However, Korean organizations attacked an accuser somewhat more when they were victims of the crisis ($p < .05$, Fisher′s exact test). For example, 20% of organizations in Korea attacked an accuser for victim crises (n = 6), while only 2.9% and 6% of Korean organizations attacked accusers for accident (n = 1) and preventable crises (n = 4), respectively. Conversely, less than 10% of organizations in the United States attacked an accuser; when they were victims of the crisis, only 8.3% of American organizations (n = 2) attacked an accuser.

For instance, in Korea, when a consumer found a dead frog in Namyang Dairy's baby formula, the company argued that it is impossible to find dead frogs given the production process and questioned whether the consumer put a dead frog in the formula. Moreover, in Korea, when a consumer posted a picture of a dead mouse in a loaf of Paris Baguette's bread, the company demonstrated its baking process to show that it is impossible to see dead mice in a loaf of bread and reported the consumer to the police.

Use of diminish strategies (RQ3)

RQ3 asked how organizations in the United States and Korea employ diminish strategies, such as denying intention to harm, minimization, and transcendence, to similar crises. There was no significant difference in their use of diminishing strategies ($\mathcal{X}^2(1, N = 113) = 2.844, p > .05$), such as excuses ($\mathcal{X}^2(1, N = 95) = .360, p > .05$) or justification ($\mathcal{X}^2(1, N = 53) = .899, p > .05$), between American and (n = 53) and Korean (n = 60) organizations across crisis clusters (see Table 4, Table 8, and Table 9). Organizations use *diminish* strategies regardless of crisis responsibility in the United States ($\mathcal{X}^2(2, N = 53) = .464, p > .05$) and Korea ($\mathcal{X}^2(2, N = 60) = .505, p > .05$). Specifically, American organizations used diminish strategies for 33.3% of victim crises (n = 8), 40.6% of accident crises (n = 13), and 34.4% of preventable crises (n = 32). Similarly, Korean organizations used diminish strategies for 40% of victim crises (n = 12), 45.7% of accident crises (n = 16), and 47.8% of preventable crises (n = 32).

Organizations in Korea and the United States deny intentions

Regardless of crisis responsibility, the most cross-culturally similar diminish strategy usage in Korea (n = 31) and the United States (n = 39) was to *deny any intent* to do harm (see Table 8). American organizations denied any intent to harm for 25% of victim crises (n = 6), 21.9% of accident crises (n = 7), and 28% of preventable crises (n = 26) regardless of crisis responsibility ($\mathcal{X}^2(1, N = 39) = .476, p > .05$). Similarly, Korean organizations denied intent to harm for 16.7% of victim crises (n = 5), 31.4% of accident crises (n = 11), and 22.4% of preventable crises (n = 15) regardless of crisis responsibility ($\mathcal{X}^2(1, N = 31) = 2.050, p > .05$).

For example, in the United States, the Cincinnati Zoo explained that its decision was unintentional when they had to euthanize Harambe the gorilla to keep a child safe. Mylan CEO Heather Bresch also said that the company did not have intention to raise EpiPen's prices and shared her frustration, when the company was criticized for raising lifesaving EpiPen's prices.

Similarly, Korean Air denied its intentions when the vice president ordered a flight to return to the gate right before takeoff because she was not satisfied with how a flight attendant served macadamia nuts. When the social commerce company WeMakePrice decided not to hire anyone after making 11 prospective employees work for 2 weeks without pay as part of the interview process, the company told the public that was not its intention.

Table 8. Specific excuse strategies by crisis cluster and country.

			Crisis Cluster				
Strategies	Country		Victim	Accident	Preventable	Total	$\mathcal{X}^2(2)$
Excuse	**U.S.A.**	**Count**	**7**	**12**	**29**	**48**	**0.55**
		%	**29.2%**	**37.5%**	**31.2%**	**32.2%**	
	Korea	**Count**	**10**	**15**	**22**	**47**	**1.09**
		%	**33.3%**	**42.9%**	**32.8%**	**35.6%**	
		$\mathcal{X}^2(1)$	**.10**	**.19**	**.04**	**.36**	
Deny intentions	U.S.A.	Count	6	7	26	39	0.47
		%	25%	21.9%	28%	26.2%	
	Korea	Count	5	11	15	31	2.05
		%	16.7%	31.4%	22.4%	23.5%	
		$\mathcal{X}^2(1)$		.77	.63	.27	
Accident	U.S.A.	Count	0	6	4	10	7.73*
		%	0%	18.8%	4.3%	6.7%	
	Korea	Count	4	4	5	13	1.00
		%	13.3%	11.4%	7.8%	10.1%	
		$\mathcal{X}^2(1)$				1.03	

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

Organizations in Korea use minimization

The second diminished strategy that Korean organizations used is to *minimize* perceptions of damages. Fifteen percent of Korean organizations (n = 15) used minimization regardless of crisis responsibility ($p > .05$, Fisher's exact test) (see Table 9). Specifically, Korean organizations used minimization for 16.7% of victim crises (n = 5), 2.9% of accident crises (n = 1), and 13.4% of preventable crises (n = 9).

For example, when Cha Medical Center used cord blood that people had stored in its cord blood banks without permission, the medical center argued that the cord blood that it used did not meet standards for size and number of cells, and was used for explorative research. Moreover, when the Korean Food and Drug Administration found carcinogenic materials in baby powder products, the company Korea Kolmar attempted to minimize the risk perception by arguing that it found only a small amount of carcinogenic materials in one product.

Organizations in the United States use transcendence

The second diminish strategy that American organizations sometimes used is to *transcend*, or bring up more important considerations. That is, 11.4% of American organizations (n = 17) used transcendence regardless of crisis responsibility ($p > .05$, Fisher's exact test) (see Table 9). American organizations used transcendence for 16.7% of victim crises (n = 4), 3.1% of accident crises (n = 1), and 12.9% of preventable crises (n = 12).

For example, every time Starbucks had a crisis, such as the no-pattern cup for Christmas, #RaceTogether, and green unity cup, it attempted to promote its ideas and justify motivation. When the New York Police Department (NYPD) conducted a social media campaign to share a photo with a member of the NYPD, #myNYPD, the campaign backfired. When users asked about police brutality using the hashtag #myNYPD, NYPD stated: "The NYPD is creating new ways to communicate effectively with the community. Twitter provides an open forum for an uncensored exchange and this is an open dialogue good for our city."

Table 9. Specific Justification Strategies by Crisis Cluster and Country.

			Crisis Cluster				
Strategies	Country		Victim	Accident	Preventable	Total	$\mathcal{X}^2(2)$
Justification	**U.S.A.**	**Count**	**5**	**4**	**16**	**25**	**.75**
		%	**20.8%**	**12.5%**	**17.2%**	**16.8%**	
	Korea	**Count**	**6**	**3**	**19**	**28**	**5.42**
		%	**20%**	**8.6%**	**28.4%**	**21.2%**	
		$\mathcal{X}^2(1)$			**2.83**	**.89**	
Minimization	U.S.A.	Count	0	2	1	3	2.92
		%	0%	6.3%	1.1%	2%	
	Korea	Count	5	1	9	15	3.86
		%	16.7%	2.9%	13.4%	11.4%	
		$\mathcal{X}^2(1)$			**	10.20**	
Differentiation	U.S.A.	Count	0	1	5	6	.87
		%	0%	3.1%	5.4%	4%	
	Korea	Count	1	1	9	11	
		%	3.3%	2.9%	13.4%	8.3%	
		$\mathcal{X}^2(1)$			3.16	2.28	
Transcendence	U.S.A.	Count	4	1	12	17	3.16
		%	16.7%	3.1%	12.9%	11.4%	
	Korea	Count	1	1	6	8	1.51
		%	3.3%	2.9%	9%	6.1%	
		$\mathcal{X}^2(1)$			.60	2.47	

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

Discussion and conclusion

As the first known empirical cross-cultural comparative content analysis of organizational crisis responses and statements across crisis types between two cultures, the current study provides implications for international strategic communication scholars and professionals regarding how crises can be better handled regardless of cultural setting.

Findings summary

This study uncovered different crisis responses between the two cultures. Overall, organizations in Korea simultaneously used multiple strategies. Regardless of crisis responsibility, Korean organizations apologized for creating a disturbance, and offered corrective actions, even when they are the victims of the crisis. Korean organizations also denied intentions to harm and minimized perceptions of damage, regardless of crisis responsibility. However, when they were victims of crises, Korean organizations denied the existence of crises and even attacked accusers, in addition to apologizing for creating a disturbance.

In the United States, organizations used specific single strategies based on crisis responsibility. American organizations apologized, offered corrective actions, and accepted responsibility when they were responsible for crises. However, when they were victims of crises, American organizations usually chose to deny that crises exist, rather than attacking accusers. American organizations also denied the intention to harm, and justified their actions by bringing up more important considerations or values across crisis types.

Theoretical and practical implications

Previous research found that culture is essential in crisis communication because of globalization (Diers-Lawson, 2017; Gaither & Curtin, 2007; Manias-Muñoz et al., 2019; Wakefield, 2010), and strategic communication practice and scholarship can work as a cultural intermediary (Curtin & Gaither, 2007; Edwards, 2012). Prior experimental and case study research found differences between collectivistic and individualistic cultures in that accommodative strategies, including apologies and corrective actions, were preferred in collectivistic cultures (An et al., 2010; Choi & Cameron, 2005; Haruta & Hallahan, 2003; Taylor, 2000; Zhu et al., 2017). The results of this study further specify how and under what conditions organizations respond to crises in collectivistic and individualistic societies in the real world. With this knowledge, strategic communicators working across cultures can better navigate, create, and shape meaning as a cultural intermediary in their responses during crises.

The results revealed that organizations in Korea apologized for creating a disturbance and promised corrective actions regardless of crisis responsibility, whereas organizations in the United States apologized and promised corrective actions only when they were responsible. Research has confirmed that apologies are overused and often ritualistic in Asian cultures (Borkin & Reinhart, 1978; Olshtain & Cohen, 1983). The current results aligned with research confirming that accommodative actions, such as apologizing for creating a disturbance, were more frequently used in collectivistic societies (Inoue, 2010). The results also aligned with findings that collectivistic societies more often use *accommodating* (smoothing over the conflict or giving in to the wishes of their partner) and *integrating* conflict styles (finding a mutual-interest solution, problem-solving, displaying respect, and apologizing) (Oetzel et al., 2000; Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998). The results provide concrete evidence by quantitatively comparing multiple real-world cases between Korea and the United States, rather than picking only a few cases and qualitatively examining them. Interestingly, Lee's (2004, 2005) experimental research found that Hong Kong consumers favor practical, purposeful, and action-specific compensation offers over mere verbal expressions of sorrow, perhaps because apologies are routinely and ritually overused (Lee, 2004, 2005; Wertz & Kim, 2010). Lee (2004, 2005) found that the compensation strategy, such as offering gifts or money to victims, yielded more sympathy than making

an apology in Hong Kong. Strategic communicators working in organizations operating in different countries can benefit by understanding these practices. Specifically, strategic communicators may want to consider adopting multiple, simultaneous strategies, such as apologizing for creating a disturbance while attacking an accuser, in Eastern cultures. Conversely, strategic communicators may want to consider choosing one dominant response based on their crisis responsibility in Western cultures. Future studies also need to examine the effectiveness of crisis responses in different cultures, or how the public perceives organizations' crisis responses.

More importantly, results reveal that organizations in Korea simultaneously employ crisis strategies based on crisis responsibility, even attacking an accuser for victim crises, while continuously apologizing for creating a disturbance across crisis types. Conversely, organizations in the United States tend to use single strategies based on crisis responsibility. This adds to the existing knowledge of how organizations respond to crises, as strategic communication professionals use a variety of combinations of crisis response strategies (Coombs, 2019). Strategic communication professionals can better understand these practices. One explanation is face and the unique cultural variable in South Korea, chemyon, regarding saving social and personal face. Face-negotiation theory explained that individuals in individualistic cultures tend to be aggressive and defensive to protect their own image (self-face), whereas individuals in collectivistic cultures tend to smooth over the conflict, give in to their partner, and apologize to accommodate others' image (other-face or mutual-face) (Oetzel et al., 2000; Ting-Toomey, 2005, 2012, 2017; Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998).

Studies on chemyon also showed that it is critical to save one's own face as well as not embarrassing others (Kim & Yang, 2011; Lim, 1994). This study's results revealthat although Korean organizations' crisis communication reflected this mutual-face chemyon saving, organizations do not save their faces by providing corrective actions without specific measures or not attacking an accuser, which is in contrast to what previous studies found (Kim et al., 2014; Kim & Yang, 2012). Instead, results revealed that organizations in Korea save their own faces and others' faces by simultaneously adopting multiple strategies, such as saving their own faces by attacking the accuser and saving the public's face by apologizing for creating a disturbance. During crises, Korean organizations may save others' social faces and not embarrass others by apologizing for creating a disturbance and acknowledging their sympathy as a mutual face-saving strategy. At the same time, Korean organizations may protect their own faces by simultaneously employing denying and diminishing strategies and even attacking an accuser based on crisis responsibility. Crisis communication practitioners should take into consideration that organizations in collectivistic societies may consider offering apologies for creating a disturbance and corrective actions regardless of their responsibility, while carefully adding appropriate crisis responses based on their crisis responsibility.

SCCT suggests that crisis managers should choose appropriate response strategies based on cluster type, or the level of responsibility perceived by the public (Coombs, 1998, 2014). Results regarding American organizations' different responses based on crisis responsibility can be explained by SCCT. However, SCCT cannot fully explain the finding that Korean organizations simultaneously use different crisis response strategies. These results offer a different way of looking at SCCT and elaborating SCCT based on culture. The results imply that crisis communication researchers need to elaborate crisis responses based on crisis responsibility in collectivistic societies in detail beyond just apologies and corrective actions because the organizations' key messages may lie in additional denial and diminishing strategies. Future studies can examine the impact of combined uses of crisis strategies on stakeholders' perceptions. Future studies can also qualitatively examine what crisis communicators meant by using these strategies. The results add knowledge about the influence of culture on crisis communication, of which we know little (Coombs, 2016, 2019). Strategic communication professionals need to understand the complexity of responses and centralization and localization of organizations' strategic communication, when responding to crises in different cultures, as crises become transnational (Gaither & Curtin, 2007; Kleinnijenhuis et al., 2015; Lehmberg & Hicks, 2018; Lindholm & Olsson, 2011; Molleda, 2010).

While there is minimal research on the legal system and crisis responses, one explanation for the more frequent use of apologies in South Korea may be the legal system, and in particular, punitive

damages. Punitive damages are "sums awarded apart from any compensatory or nominal damages, usually because of particularly aggravated misconduct on the part of the defendant" (Dobbs, 1973, p. 204) to punish malicious conduct and compensate victims for otherwise uncompensable losses (Gotanda, 2004). Interestingly, the United States, England, and most countries adopting common law legal systems allow punitive damages, whereas Japan, South Korea, and most countries adopting civil law legal systems limit recovery of damages to an amount that restores a party to its pre-injury condition (Gotanda, 2004). Punitive damages create concerns that organizations will be sued for an enormous amount of money, possibly making organizations more defensive in their crisis responses (Patel & Reinsch, 2003; Rehm & Beatty, 1996; Robbennolt, 2003; Wagatsuma & Rosett, 1986). Sriramesh and Vercic (2009) called for an examination of other cultural variables, including political, economic, and legal systems. Thus, future studies can examine legal systems.

Limitations and future directions

This study has several limitations. First, by using content analysis of crisis responses, this study uncovers *how* real-world organizations have responded to crises, not how organizations *should* respond to crises. The fact that many organizations responded to crises in a certain way does not mean that their responses were effective. Future experimental studies can test the effectiveness of the crisis responses examined in this paper in different cultural contexts. Second, only the organizations' initial crisis responses were analyzed for precision of data and accuracy of coding. Yet, initial responses are only the beginning; crises are dynamic and ongoing processes with multiple stages. Future studies can examine crisis responses across stages. Third, semantic differences could exist in words used for apologizing across languages. However, semantics and languages reflect and transmit psychological values and norms (Chiu & Hong, 2006), reinforcing culturally appropriate ways of apologizing.

Further, how global organizations, especially non-Korean and non-American, responded to crises in the United States and Korea were not specifically quantitatively examined in this study because of the small number of cases for statistical analyses. Future research can examine such multinational organizations' responses to transnational crises in greater detail, and test the effectiveness of such responses in different cultures. Also, although the researcher attempted to demonstrate crisis cases with varying degree of impacts through examples, this study did not analyze the responses via other important factors, such as crisis impacts, crisis history (Kim, 2017; Lee & Kim, 2016), and organizations' offensiveness and virtuousness (Page, 2019). This study also did not examine how organizations in different cultures use bolstering strategies, as they are supplemental to other major strategies (Coombs, 2019). Future studies can examine them and study how different types of organizations respond to crises in different cultures. Although the researcher attempted to identify the critical crises using multiple sources, there might be sampling bias for the selected cases. Finally, the study only looked at South Korea and the United States with a focus on Hofstede's individualism and collectivism dimension. Future studies can look at other countries to look for other dimensions and factors of cultures.

Despite these limitations, this study contributes to the crisis communication literature on crisis responses between different cultures. Research in crisis communication so far has heavily focused on Western, developed countries. However, there are other cultures to be studied that would help develop theories. We cannot blame global organizations for initially failing to recognize differences in cultures and not properly responding to crises. It is crisis communication researchers' roles to examine other cultural influences on crisis response and pass the knowledge to these organizations. Crisis communication professionals can work as cultural intermediaries (Bourdieu, 1984; Edwards, 2012; Gaither & Curtin, 2007) across cultures. The next step is to continue to study differences between cultures through further research so that global organizations can use the most effective crisis responses.

Acknowledgments

I thank my most wonderful sister Jungsuh Sue Lim for her invaluable assistance in coding the data. Many thanks go to Dr. Brooke Liu, Dr. Elizabeth Toth, and Dr. Erich Sommerfeldt, for their insightful suggestions.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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