Crisis Communication Preparedness Practices Among U.S. Charitable Organizations: Results From a National Survey

Ryan P. Fuller1 and Antonio La Sala2

Abstract
Organizations should prepare for crises, through identifying crisis concerns, having written crisis communication plans, and designating teams for crisis planning and response, for example. Nonprofit organizations, which represent an important sector of U.S. society, are no different in needing to prepare, but to date, a review of their crisis communication preparedness is lacking. Therefore, a national online survey of 2,005 U.S. charitable organizations was administered to determine nonprofit organizations’ adoption of an anticipatory perspective of crisis management. The anticipatory perspective shifts the organization’s focus from reaction to crises to anticipation of them. According to the survey, 75% of organizations reported at least one organizational crisis in the 24 months prior to taking the survey (circa 2017–2019). Loss of a major stakeholder was the most common organizational crisis that had occurred and the greatest future concern. Most nonprofits (97.5%) reported implementing some crisis communication preparedness tactics. Importantly, charitable organizations can enact communication preparedness tactics without significantly detracting from program delivery. Moreover, given the general concerns within the sector, nonprofit organizations should prepare specifically for loss of a major stakeholder and technologically created crises such as data breaches and negative word of mouth on social media.

Keywords
anticipatory perspective of crisis management, crisis preparedness, nonprofit sector, survey

Introduction
An organizational crisis is an event or a sequence of events that surprises internal and external stakeholders, threatens high-priority organizational goals, and potentially creates opportunities (e.g., learning, transformation; Ulmer et al., 2019). Preparation for crises, through practices such as analyzing past crises and future crisis concerns, having teams in place to plan for and respond to negative events, designating spokespersons, having written plans with communication goals and some prescribed messages or response frameworks, can help organizations avoid crises or reduce response time and impacts. Taleb (2010) argues that organizations of all types and sizes spend too much time on the day-to-day operations and too little time preparing for events with negative consequences. An example organization that spends a lot of time preparing for crises is the American Red Cross, a nonprofit international disaster relief organization. But expertise in one area does not mean organizations are invulnerable in other areas. For example, the Red Cross has also been subject to public scrutiny because donations meant to support people in need went toward paying administrative overhead expenses (Sullivan, 2015). In effect, organizational leaders should prepare for a wide variety of crises affecting their organization (Ulm, 2012).

This study contributes to the crisis communication literature by focusing on an important but understudied area (preparedness) in a significant but also underrepresented sector (nonprofit organizations). Scholarship on crisis preparedness is less compared with research on response and recovery stages (Coombs, 2010; Fuller et al., 2019; Ulmer, 2012). This gap on preparation can contribute to poor crisis response and recovery; research needs to understand what organizations are doing to prepare for crises, barriers to preparation, and resources needed to prepare to develop normative recommendations to export to organizational leaders (Ulm, 2012).

1California State University, Sacramento, USA
2Sapienza University of Rome, Italy

Corresponding Author:
Ryan P. Fuller, Department of Management & Organizations, College of Business Administration, California State University, Sacramento, Sacramento, CA 95819-6088, USA.
Email: ryan.fuller@csus.edu

Creative Commons CC BY: This article is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) which permits any use, reproduction and distribution of the work without further permission provided the original work is attributed as specified on the SAGE and Open Access pages (https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/open-access-at-sage).
Moreover, prior crisis scholarship tends to focus on business and governmental organizations with nonprofits to a lesser degree (Light & Morgan, 2008; Spillan, 2003), although nonprofits are at risk of adverse events. Addressing a gap is important because theorizing and practical guidance developed mainly in one context may have limited transferability to others. To illustrate, nonprofits’ environmental conditions may affect their communication activities differently than businesses and governments. For instance, prior research (B. F. Liu, 2012; Wiggill, 2011) demonstrates that nonprofits face pressures (politics, laws and regulations, media scrutiny, collaboration, communication value, lack of funding, limited training) that influence their communication practices. Moreover, compared with other sectors, their activities (e.g., relying on volunteer labor, serving or transporting vulnerable clients, raising charitable donations, partnering with other organizations) contribute to their risk profiles (Herman et al., 2004) may influence how they communicate as well (Herman & Oliver, 2001).

Specifically, this study combines the focus on preparation and nonprofits through a framework intended to move organizations from reaction to anticipation, the anticipatory perspective of crisis management (Olaniran & Williams, 2001, 2012). Organizations that have an anticipatory perspective evaluate their crisis concerns (including those based on past experiences) and take steps to prepare; in other words, they are proactive and vigilant. To situate the study, the next sections define the sector and its importance and provide a rationale to conduct a survey about the crisis preparedness of U.S. nonprofit organizations.

U.S. Nonprofit Sector

Nonprofit organizations represent a major segment of American society also constituted by for-profit and governmental sectors. According to the National Center for Charitable Statistics (McKeever, 2019), there are 1.56 million nonprofits registered with the U.S. Internal Revenue Service. Nonprofits are tax-exempt entities that are public serving, and “are expected to serve broad public purposes, not just the interests and needs of the organizations’ members” (Salamon, 2015, p. 8). These organizations include public charities, private foundations, political organizations, and other nonprofits (e.g., social welfare, civic leagues, social clubs, labor organizations, business leagues). Their impacts are significant to American society, including raising attention to social issues, supporting expression, building communities, and guarding important societal values (Salamon, 2015). Nonprofits contribute to the economy and provide an important third space in civic life. For example, in 2015, about one of every four Americans over 16 years old volunteers for a nonprofit organization, giving 8.7 billion hours of their time, equivalent to US$187.4 billion (McKeever, 2019).

Rationale

Like business and governmental entities, organizations in U.S. nonprofit sector face the potential for crises that affect their high-priority goals (Herman & Oliver, 2001; Light & Morgan, 2008; Spillan, 2003). Importantly, nonprofits enjoy broad trust and, compared with business and governmental organizations, are evaluated more positively for operating efficiently, spending money wisely, and acting in the public interest (California Association of Nonprofits, 2019). A proactive posture to crisis management could contribute to this public trust. Although some scholars have examined crisis readiness of nonprofits (Light & Morgan, 2008; Spillan, 2003), prior research neglects how nonprofit organizations prepare to communicate for crises. Effective crisis communication planning, such as crisis communication plans and trainings, enables organizations to achieve their goals and to reduce the amount of time required to respond to crises (Ulmer, 2012; Ulmer et al., 2019). Communication practices play a central role in promoting organizational readiness for crises as they act as an information variety amplifier (Ashby, 1956), generate tacit knowledge (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995), and allow a greater adaptation to the unexpected (Meadows, 2008; Ozanne et al., 2020). Understanding the nonprofit sector’s crisis communication preparedness has theoretical and practical implications. Researching the sector’s preparedness has implications for theory, namely, extending an anticipatory perspective of crisis management to the nonprofit context. Moreover, the findings of this research endeavor could contribute to Ulmer’s (2012) call to export crisis communication thought leadership, specifically helping leaders in the nonprofit sector by encouraging communication practices that enable their recovery from crises, preserve their economic and social value, and prevent an erosion of confidence in the sector (O’Neill, 2009).

Literature Review

This literature review summarizes the anticipatory perspective of crisis management (Olaniran & Williams, 2001, 2012) and then focuses on the types of crises affecting organizations, with a specific focus on nonprofits, barriers to communicating effectively during crises, and crisis communication practices that support organizational preparedness and the anticipatory perspective of crisis management. Research questions and a hypothesis are presented based on the reviewed literature.

Anticipatory Perspective of Crisis Management

Given the complexity of organizational environments and the likelihood of crises, researchers and practitioners have encouraged organizations to anticipate and plan for crises by assessing risks and vulnerabilities and enacting response and mitigation strategies shaped by their internal and external
environments (Coombs, 2019; Olaniran & Williams, 2001, 2012; Ulmer, 2012; Ulmer et al., 2019). Olaniran and Williams (2001) developed the anticipatory perspective initially to address the threat of technological crises specifically; however, they have extended the model because organizations face all types of crises that leaders can reveal through unraveling their expectations (Olaniran & Williams, 2012).

Accordingly, the anticipatory perspective of crisis management focuses on expectations and enactments within relevant internal and external environments. Expectations refer to the assumptions made about an “object, event, or decision” (Olaniran & Williams, 2012, p. 7) and “represent a critical starting point in crisis prevention” (Olaniran & Williams, 2001, p. 490). Enactments are actions that follow from expectations; they derive from crisis and risk assessments and lead to “instituting preventative measures, corrective actions, and response strategies” (Olaniran & Williams, 2012, p. 8). Expectations and enactments are shaped internally in terms of the organization’s rigidity and individual control. Rigidity refers to inflexibility in actions, whereas control is the degree to which individuals can freely make decisions and act during a crisis. Finally, the external environment focuses on the organizational field, geography and culture, legal concerns, political issues, economic factors, and media relations. The following section overviews expectations (types of crises affecting organizations) and enactments (communication preparedness tactics), asks research questions, and posits a hypothesis.

**Types of Crises Impacting and Concerning Nonprofit Organizations**

Organizations develop expectations about objects, events, and decisions by teasing out potential triggering events, preconditions, and postcrisis consequences (Olaniran & Williams, 2001). Crisis researchers have developed typologies to characterize crises and potential crises that organizations may face. This article draws on Coombs’s (2019) two-part characterization of crises, operational crisis and paracrisis, to classify different organizational crises. An operational crisis is one that completely or partially disrupts the functioning on an organization. A paracrisis resembles a crisis and requires management in full view of stakeholders; however, a paracrisis does not disrupt operations (Coombs & Holladay, 2012). A paracrisis serves as a warning signal and can escalate into an operational crisis through mismanagement or neglect. Although not an exhaustive list, potential organizational crises affecting all types of organizational forms include (Coombs, 2019; Herman & Oliver, 2001; Pauchant & Mitroff, 1992; Spillan, 2003; Ulmer et al., 2019) operational crises (loss of a major stakeholder, attempted or actual breach of a computer system by a hacker, computer system breakdown, workplace violence, theft/loss of organization’s property, fraudulent activity by internal stakeholders, major product/service malfunction, product recall, industrial/environmental accident, disease outbreaks, natural disaster) and paracrisis (negative news media coverage, negative word of mouth on social media, rumors, government investigation, lawsuits, boycott by consumers or the public).

Nonprofit organizations experience events that generate uncertainty and potentially create undesirable outcomes (Herman et al., 2004; Herman & Oliver, 2001; Spillan, 2003). Several recent high-profile case studies include Association for Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN; Sisco, 2012), American Red Cross (Sisco et al., 2010), Planned Parenthood (Rasmussen, 2015), Livestrong Foundation, and Susan G. Komen Foundation (SGK; Kinsky et al., 2014). ACORN, American Red Cross, Livestrong Foundation, and Planned Parenthood studies focused on fraudulent activity from internal stakeholders that gave rise to negative media coverage. The SGK Foundation case focused on the organization’s decision to withdraw funding from Planned Parenthood, which caused a boycott, negative news coverage, and negative word of mouth on social media. A study by Spillan (2003) revealed nonprofit organization leaders expressed concerns about events that negatively impacted high-priority goals, namely, operations crises (e.g., equipment breakdown), publicity crises (e.g., negative news coverage), fraudulent crises (e.g., theft of property), natural disasters, and legal crises (e.g., product recalls). Nevertheless, prior research focused on one organization or a few (Kinsky et al., 2014; Rasmussen, 2015; Sisco, 2012; Sisco et al., 2010; Williams & Buttle, 2013), one region (Spillan, 2003), or one type of crisis (e.g., fraud and corruption: Archambeault et al., 2015). This leads to the following research questions:

**Research Question 1 (RQ1):** What types of crises have U.S. nonprofits reported experiencing in the previous 2 years (circa 2017–2019)?

**Research Question 2 (RQ2):** What types of crises are U.S. nonprofits concerned about occurring in the future?

**Past Barriers to Effective Crisis Communication**

Researchers and practitioners (Coombs, 2019; Ulmer et al., 2019) recommend that organizations review their enacted responses after a crisis, providing a feedback loop for the organization to learn and improve. In the anticipatory perspective of crisis management, expectations are also shaped by prior enactments, for example, past crisis communication responses. Organizations need effective communication when confronted with a crisis (Ulmer et al., 2019). An effective crisis response is important to ensure good standing with the public that the organizations depend on for support. According to the research, several barriers can impede crisis communication, including internally focused issues due to
rigidity or control (e.g., nonresponse/silence, magnitude of the crisis, lack of budget for communication purposes, coordination issues with a related entity) and externally focused issues (e.g., legal implications, media criticism, constituent complaints, and adversarial/poor relationships with regulatory agencies; Horsley, 2014; Horsley & Barker, 2002; Kim & Wertz, 2013; B. F. Liu, 2012; Tyler, 1997; Ulmer et al., 2019; Wiggill, 2011). Therefore, we ask the following research question specifically regarding nonprofit organizations that have recently experienced a crisis:

**Research Question 3 (RQ3):** For U.S. nonprofit organizations that have experienced a crisis, what barriers to crisis communication do they report?

**Crisis Communication Preparedness Practices**

According to Olaniran and Williams (2001, 2012), *enactments* are organizational actions that follow from expectations. Hence, communication preparedness practices are enactments by the organization that plan for potential crises. Organizations engage in activities to prepare communicatively for crises (Lee et al., 2007). Recommended practices frequently include using traditional and social media to scan the environment for issues, having teams in place to plan for and respond to crises, designating spokesperson(s), having emergency contact information for internal and external stakeholders, including emergency/safety information regularly in internal communication, providing training, conducting simulations, and having a written crisis communication plan (Cloudman & Hallahan, 2006; Coombs, 2019; Horsley, 2014; Jaques, 2007; Lee et al., 2007; Seeger et al., 2003; Strauß & Jonkman, 2017). Written crisis plans, as crisis researchers have expressed, are only good if they are regularly reviewed and rehearsed (Coombs, 2019).

Some studies have examined aspects of the nonprofit sector’s preparedness. However, these studies have focused on topics other than communication (Chikoto et al., 2013; Light & Morgan, 2008; Spillan, 2003), or in communication research, they looked at one cause area (Sisco et al., 2014), one organization (Horsley, 2014; Schmalzried et al., 2012), or a different national context (Schwarz & Pforr, 2011). For example, Sisco et al. (2014) investigated crisis management planning by U.S. churches. Foremost, the researchers found that many of the churches did not have a crisis management plan (CMP). Churches that had CMP devoted most attention to response, gave minimal attention to precrisis through impacts on internal publics, and neglected the postcrisis evaluation stage. Horsley (2014) developed a case study of the American Red Cross’s disaster public information training. In it, she found that the Red Cross’s disaster public affairs training had many of the key attributes of Crisis Adaptive Public Information (CAPI): a shared goal, flexible hierarchy, role redundancy, a culture of reliability, mindfulness, and high levels of coordination (tight coupling). Schmalzried et al. (2012) evaluated local Red Cross chapters for the availability of disaster and emergency services information, finding provision of information varying considerably across the local organizations’ webpages, potentially negatively impacting individuals affected by disasters and emergencies. Schwarz and Pforr (2011) surveyed German nonprofits and found the communication preparedness of nonprofit interest groups in Germany was lacking in the area of training (media, scenarios), issue monitoring, crisis plans, and crisis management teams. Considering the above review, we pose the following question about communication practices enacted in planning for crises:

**Research Question 4 (RQ4):** Overall, how frequently do nonprofit organizations employ the recommended crisis communication preparedness practices?

Because some nonprofit organizations are active in disaster and emergency settings (Barbour & Manly, 2016; Horsley, 2014; Simo & Bies, 2007), they are more likely to have a focus supporting preparedness compared with those that are not active in these settings. This leads to the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 1 (H1):** Nonprofit organizations that have a role in public safety, emergency management, and disaster response will report more crisis communication preparedness tactics compared with those that do not have such a defined a role.

B. F. Liu (2012) and Wiggill (2011) demonstrated that nonprofits operate their communication activities on a limited budget. Adding to this pressure, many U.S. charity watchdog groups evaluate organizations on their financial performance, the cost to raise US$1, and expenses toward programs (Goza et al., 2016), and claims of poor financial management have generated negative press reports for nonprofits (Archambaut et al., 2015). These benchmarks vary by nonprofit cause area, but generally, expenses should not exceed revenue; 50% of revenue should come from public support (grants, donations); it should cost less than US$1 to raise US$1; and the majority of organizational expenses should go toward program delivery. Considering that crisis communication preparedness practices may be viewed as added costs to organizations, a fundamental question is whether there are differences in financial performance measures among organizations that use more tactics compared with those that implement fewer. This leads to the following research question:

**Research Question 5 (RQ5):** What is the relationship, if any, of crisis communication preparedness and financial measures of nonprofit performance (fiscal performance, fundraising efficiency, program expenses)?
Method

The researchers surveyed nonprofit organizations about past crisis experiences, future crisis and risk concerns, and crisis communication preparedness tactics. Perceptual data were collected using a self-administered online survey and were combined into a data set with financial measures from GuideStar, a clearinghouse of information about U.S. nonprofits. To analyze the data, we relied on quantitative methods. To answer research questions about communication preparedness of nonprofit organizations, we used descriptive statistics and measures of association and difference.

Sample

To be included in the study, organizations had to be public charities (501c3), have at least one employee and a minimum annual revenue of US$500,000, and provide their contact information on GuideStar. This sorting process resulted in a list of \((N = 20,998)\) potential participating organizations. Once a list of nonprofits was assembled, the first author emailed prospective participants with a request to participate (approximately 3.6% of emails bounced, leaving 20,239). The response rate for those that completed the full survey was 9.9% \((N = 2,005)\). Another 2.7% of organizations either started and did not finish \((N = 330)\) or explicitly declined participation \((N = 218)\). Data collection occurred between March 2019 and September 2019.

The survey was shared with organizations via an anonymous link. To connect the survey and GuideStar data sets, organizations were provided with a unique four-digit code (e.g., AAAA). If an organization’s code did not match one in the database of records (after checking for input errors), the organization was screened out. Duplicate entries were also removed. A total of 34 surveys were unsolicited completions.

After an initial invitation, the first author sent two email reminders to nonresponding organizations to complete the survey. A total of 218 organization informants indicated non-interest in participation, offering reasons such as apprehension about the topic, policies against completing research surveys, too busy to complete the survey, too much change in the organization, among other reasons.

The final sample included a diverse group of U.S. charitable organizations. Respondents were predominately in executive leadership roles (i.e., president/vice president, administrative/executive director, or C-level, \(N = 1,344, 67\%\)), followed by management \((N = 446, 22.2\%\)), not provided \((N = 159, 7.9\%\)), and nonmanagement roles (assistants, consultants, specialists, \(N = 56, 2.8\%\)). Most organizations had staff whose primary responsibility was communicating with internal and external audiences \((yes = 1,442, 71.92\%\)\). Of those organizations, 86.47% had paid staff \((N = 1,247)\), 11.30% had a mix of paid and volunteer staff \((N = 163)\), 1.73% had another designation \((N = 25)\), and 0.04% had volunteer staff \((N = 6)\). Nonprofits reported communicating with internal and external audiences in traditional and technologically mediated ways. With internal audiences, nonprofits communicated predominately via email announcements \((N = 1,909, 95.21\%\)), full organizational meetings \((N = 1,575, 78.55\%\)), and meetings with management \((N = 1,495, 74.56\%\)). They communicated externally through social media \((N = 1,955, 97.51\%\)), websites \((N = 1,950, 97.26\%\)), and mass emails \((N = 1,743, 86.93\%\)).

Organizations from all 50 U.S. states and three U.S. territories (Washington DC, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands) participated in the study and were located in urban areas (populations greater than 50,000 people; \(N = 1,522, 76.63\%\)), urban clusters (2,500 and 49,999 people; \(N = 353, 17.77\%\)), and rural areas (fewer than 2,500 people; \(N = 111, 5.59\%\)). The organizations represented all 26 major cause areas under the U.S. Internal Revenue Service’s National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities. (Table 1 provides a breakdown of participating organizations by cause area.) The mean age of organizations was 40.33 \((SD = 30.00)\) years. Included in the sample were those with independent \((N = 1,601, 79.9\%\)), subsidiary \((N = 232, 11.6\%\)), and parent affiliations \((N = 170, 8.5\%\)), and missing \((N = 2, 0.1\%\)). The majority of organizations had a board of directors \((N = 1,999, 99.97\%\)\) and a paid executive director \((N = 1,960, 97.8\%\)). The median number of employees employed by nonprofit organizations was 26; organizations reported relying on volunteers for the provision of services \((N = 1,189, 59.30\%\)) with a median of 30% comprising the total workforce. More than one quarter, or 26.13%, of organizations \((N = 524)\) indicated they would serve in public safety and/or emergency/disaster response, and 15.6% reported that their region had received a federal disaster declaration in the previous 2 years.

Measures

Three experts contacted by the first author reviewed the survey’s content. These individuals included one faculty member with expertise in crisis communication, one nonprofit director with a doctorate in communication and expertise in risk and disaster communication, and one nonprofit executive director. This review resulted in revisions to question stems and response categories.

The final survey questions focused on crisis occurrence, crisis concerns, crisis preparedness enactments, and demographic information about the organization. The survey included branching logic to probe further on topics such as organizational responses to past crises and crisis communication tactics.

Past crisis occurrence. Respondents were provided with a list of 18 organizational crisis types, drawn from crisis typologies and relevant to nonprofit organizations (Coombs, 2012, 2019; Pauchant & Mitroff, 1992; spellan, 2003; Ulmer et al.,
Table 1. Organizations Participating in Study by Cause Area.

| National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities code | N   | %   |
|------------------------------------------|-----|-----|
| A. Arts, Culture & Humanities             | 221 | 11.00 |
| B. Education                              | 220 | 11.00 |
| C. Environment                            | 64  | 3.20 |
| D. Animal-Related                         | 58  | 2.90 |
| E. Health Care                            | 117 | 5.80 |
| F. Mental Health & Crisis Intervention    | 72  | 3.60 |
| G. Voluntary Health Associations & Medical | 12 | 0.60 |
| H. Medical Research                       | 10  | 0.50 |
| I. Crime & Legal-Related                  | 17  | 0.80 |
| J. Employment                             | 16  | 0.80 |
| K. Food, Agriculture & Nutrition          | 65  | 3.20 |
| L. Housing & Shelter                      | 130 | 6.50 |
| M. Public Safety, Disaster Preparedness & Relief | 11 | 0.50 |
| N. Recreation & Sports                    | 22  | 1.10 |
| O. Youth Development                      | 107 | 5.30 |
| P. Human Services                         | 506 | 25.20|
| Q. International, Foreign Affairs & National Security | 19 | 0.90 |
| R. Civil Rights, Social Action & Advocacy | 42  | 2.10 |
| S. Community Improvement & Capacity Building | 78  | 3.90 |
| T. Alliances & Advocacy                   | 6   | 0.30 |
| U. Science & Technology                   | 12  | 0.60 |
| V. Social Science                         | 14  | 0.70 |
| W. Public & Societal Benefit              | 68  | 3.40 |
| X. Religion-Related                       | 66  | 3.30 |
| Y. Mutual & Membership Benefit            | 7   | 0.30 |
| Z. Unknown                                | 36  | 1.80 |
| Blank—Not recorded                        | 9   | 0.40 |

2019), and were asked, “Has your nonprofit experienced any of the following incidents in the last 2 years?” Example choices included “loss of a major stakeholder (director, president, founder, donor)” and “fraudulent activity by internal stakeholders (employees, volunteers, managers).”

Future crisis concerns. Respondents were asked, “Are you concerned about any of the following risks affecting your nonprofit in the future?” The response options were the same as in the list of crisis occurrences in the previous 2 years.

Crisis response barriers. Nonprofits that had experienced a crisis in the previous 2 years (circa 2017–2019) also answered questions about barriers to communicating during a crisis (Horsley & Barker, 2002; Kim & Wertz, 2013; B. F. Liu, 2012; Ulmer et al., 2019; Wiggill, 2011). Crisis communication barriers reflect internal and external issues such as lack of funding/budget (B. F. Liu, 2012; Wiggill, 2011) and legal implications (cf. Kim & Wertz, 2013). Respondents answered to the question, “Did any of the following factors impede your nonprofit’s communication efforts in responding to the critical event(s)?” Some example options included “legal implications” and “lack of a budget for crisis communication purposes.”

Crisis communication preparation tactics. Respondents were asked 10 yes/no questions related to common crisis and emergency communication tactics derived from prior research (Cloudman & Hallahan, 2006; Coombs, 2019; Jaques, 2007; Lee et al., 2007; Seeger et al., 2003). A binary (yes/no) approach to measurement followed similar research indexing crisis communication preparedness practices (Schwarz & Pfarr, 2011) and disaster mitigation and preparedness activities (Chikoto et al., 2013). Example questions included the following: “Does your nonprofit have a team to plan for critical events?”; “Does your nonprofit regularly include safety/emergency preparedness information in its internal communications”; and “Does your nonprofit have an official written plan on how to communicate with stakeholders during a critical event?”

If nonprofits had a written crisis plan, the survey branched to questions about reviewing/updating the plan. Nonprofits that updated their plan were prompted to explain the reason, including “Routine review,” “Recent critical event,” and “Recent near miss (close-call event that did not result in harm) experienced by my nonprofit.”

Nonprofit financial performance measures. Financial measures were collected from the organization’s Internal Revenue Service 990 filings via GuideStar, and ratios were constructed to measure nonprofit organizational performance. These measures included fiscal performance (ratio of total revenue to total expenses), public support (ratio of total contributions from grants, gifts, etc. to total revenue), program expenses (ratio of budget spent on program delivery out of all expenses), and fundraising efficiency (the cost to raise US$1, or total fundraising expenses divided by total contributions).

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using quantitative measures to describe the sample and those to measure statistical significance of correlations and differences between groups. To establish that nonparticipating organizations were not significantly different from participating organizations’ characteristics (Werner et al., 2007), the researchers constructed a random sample of 2,005 (of the 18,993 organizations that did not respond, opted out, or did not fully complete the survey). The two groups were compared on their fiscal performance, public support, program expenses, and fundraising efficiency, and number of employees using multiple analysis of variance (MANOVA). An MANOVA revealed a statistically significant difference between the two groups, $F(5, 3,947) = 3.00, p < .01$; Wilks’ $\lambda = 0.99, \eta^2_p = .03$. Responding organizations were not significantly different
Table 2. Crisis Type: Occurrences in Previous 2 Years (Circa 2017–2019).

| Crisis type                                                                 | Yes%  | 95% confidence interval |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|-------------------------|
| Loss of a major stakeholder (director, president, founder, donor)          | 31.07 | ± 2.03                  |
| Negative word of mouth on social media                                    | 26.38 | ± 1.93                  |
| Attempted or actual breach of computer system by hacker                    | 15.16 | ± 1.57                  |
| Computer system breakdown                                                  | 13.37 | ± 1.49                  |
| Malicious, false rumors                                                    | 12.12 | ± 1.43                  |
| Theft/loss of organization’s property                                     | 11.32 | ± 1.39                  |
| Natural disaster                                                          | 11.17 | ± 1.38                  |
| Lawsuit                                                                   | 10.97 | ± 1.37                  |
| Other (briefly list)                                                      | 9.58  | ± 1.29                  |
| Negative news media coverage                                              | 9.13  | ± 1.26                  |
| Fraudulent activity by internal stakeholders                                | 4.69  | ± 0.93                  |
| Violence at the workplace                                                 | 2.84  | ± 0.73                  |
| Major product/service malfunction                                          | 2.79  | ± 0.72                  |
| Government investigation                                                   | 2.04  | ± 0.62                  |
| Industrial/environment accident                                           | 1.40  | ± 0.51                  |
| Disease outbreaks (epidemics, food-borne illness, ~ 10% of staff affected) | 0.80  | ± 0.39                  |
| Product recall                                                            | 0.70  | ± 0.36                  |
| Boycott by consumers or the public                                        | 0.60  | ± 0.34                  |

Note. Total based on N = 2,005 organizations.

from nonresponding organizations on measures of performance: fiscal performance, $F(1, 3,951) = 0.41, p \geq 0.05$; public support, $F(1, 3,951) = 0.12, p > 0.05$; program expenses, $F(1, 3,951) = 1.74, p > 0.05$; and fundraising efficiency, $F(1, 3,951) = 2.63, p > 0.05$. They were significantly different with regard to the number of employees (nonparticipating group had higher average number of employees), $F(1, 3,951) = 11.10, p < 0.01, \eta^2_p = 0.03$. Overall, then, although the participating group had fewer employees compared with the nonparticipating group, their financial measures were similar.

To answer RQ1 to 4, frequencies, mean percentages, and 95% confidence intervals were computed. To answer H1, the total number of crisis tactics was tallied for each organization, and an ANOVA compared nonprofits that had a role in emergency management and public safety against those that did not. Regarding RQ5, two approximately equal groups were constructed, representing low and high frequency of the tactics, and an MANOVA was conducted.

Results

Potential Causes and Types of Crises

A total of 1,511 (75.36%) organizations reported at least one type of organizational crisis occurring in the previous 2 years (circa 2017–2019), answering RQ1. Nonprofits experienced organizational crises, the most frequent of which included loss of a major stakeholder ($N = 623, 31.07\% \pm 2.03$), negative word of mouth on social media ($N = 529, 26.38\% \pm 1.93$), attempted or actual breach of a computer system ($N = 304, 15.16\% \pm 1.57$), and computer system breakdown ($N = 268, 13.37\% \pm 1.49$). Overall, the mean number of crisis occurrences was 1.66 ($SD = 1.56$), with a minimum of 0 and a maximum of 10. Table 2 provides the occurrences of all 18 crisis types.

In response to RQ2, a majority of nonprofits were concerned about one or more future crises affecting their organizations ($N = 1,785, 89.07\%$). Regarding future crises, the most frequently mentioned were loss of a major stakeholder ($N = 1,061, 52.94\% \pm 2.19$), attempted or actual breach of a computer system by a hacker ($N = 827, 41.27\% \pm 2.16$), negative word of mouth on social media ($N = 803, 40.07\% \pm 2.15$), and natural disaster ($N = 652, 32.53\% \pm 2.05$). The mean number of concerns about future crises was 3.63 ($SD = 3.08$), ranging from 0 to 17. Table 3 provides the occurrences of all 18 crisis concerns.

Barriers to Crisis Communication

Nonprofit organizations faced barriers to their past crisis communication efforts, answering RQ3. Most respondents (56.12\% \pm 2.5) experienced a crisis reported at least one barrier to communicating. Of those 848 organizations that experienced communication barriers, the most frequent impediments to effective crisis communication included deliberate choice by organization not to communicate ($N = 280, 33.02\% \pm 3.16$), legal implications ($N = 278, 32.78\% \pm 3.16$), magnitude of the crisis ($N = 157, 18.51\% \pm 2.61$), and lack of budget for crisis communication purposes ($N = 156, 18.39\% \pm 2.60$). Table 4 overviews responses for all nine reported barriers.
Nonprofit informants reported communication practices to support the organization in a critical event, in response to RQ4. Specifically, the most frequently mentioned tactics by nonprofit organizations included maintaining emergency contact lists of internal stakeholders (N = 1,752, 87.38% ± 1.45), having a designated spokesperson or spokespeople (N = 1,640, 81.80% ± 1.69), having teams to respond to (N = 1,365, 68.08% ± 2.04) and plan for critical events (N = 1,198, 59.75% ± 2.14), and maintaining emergency contact information for external stakeholders (N = 1,095, 54.61% ± 2.15). Overall, 97.5% or organizations reported one or more of these practices. The mean number of communication preparedness tactics was 5.54 (SD = 2.67), and the index of tactics had acceptable reliability (α = .79). Table 5 reports on all 10 tactics.

Of the organizations that had an official written plan (N = 783, 39.05% ± 2.13), 68.45% (N = 536) indicated that it had been reviewed in the previous 12 months. The official plan had been updated in previous year by nonprofits following routine review (N = 321, 58.15% ± 4.15), change of staff (N = 137, 24.81% ± 3.70), recent critical event (N = 70, 12.68% ± 2.85), requirement (regulatory rule, direction from parent organization; N = 64, 11.59% ± 2.74), recent critical event experienced by unrelated organization in the same sector (N = 57, 10.32% ± 2.61), recent near miss (close-call event that did not result in harm; N = 48, 8.70% ± 2.42), other (N = 48, 8.70%, ± 2.42), and recent critical event experienced by related organization (parent, other local chapter in network; N = 17, 3.08% ± 1.49).

Nonprofit organizations that have a role in public safety, emergency management, and disaster response reported a

| Table 3. Crisis Type: Future Concerns. |
|--------------------------------------|
| Crisis type                          | Yes% | 95% confidence interval |
| Loss of a major stakeholder (director, president, founder, donor) | 52.94 | ± 2.19 |
| Attempted or actual breach of computer system by hacker | 41.27 | ± 2.16 |
| Negative word of mouth on social media | 40.07 | ± 2.15 |
| Natural disaster | 32.53 | ± 2.05 |
| Computer system breakdown | 31.54 | ± 2.03 |
| Negative news media coverage | 30.14 | ± 2.01 |
| Malicious, false rumors | 26.90 | ± 1.94 |
| Violence at the workplace | 21.16 | ± 1.79 |
| Lawsuit | 20.06 | ± 1.75 |
| Theft/loss of organization’s property | 18.56 | ± 1.70 |
| Fraudulent activity by internal stakeholders | 14.02 | ± 1.52 |
| Major product/service malfunction | 7.93 | ± 1.18 |
| Other (briefly list) | 7.63 | ± 1.16 |
| Industrial/environmental accident | 6.74 | ± 1.10 |
| Government investigation | 6.24 | ± 1.06 |
| Boycott by consumers or the public | 4.79 | ± 0.94 |
| Product recall | 1.15 | ± 0.47 |
| Disease outbreaks (epidemics, food-borne illness, ~ 10% of staff affected) | 0.00 | ± 0.00 |

Note. Total based on N = 2,005 organizations.

| Table 4. Crisis Communication Barriers. |
|--------------------------------------|
| Communication barrier                          | Yes% | 95% confidence interval |
| Deliberate choice not to implement crisis communication efforts | 33.02 | ± 3.17 |
| Legal implications | 32.78 | ± 3.16 |
| Magnitude of the crisis | 18.51 | ± 2.61 |
| Lack of budget for communication purposes | 18.40 | ± 2.61 |
| Other | 17.10 | ± 2.53 |
| Complaints by constituents | 14.74 | ± 2.39 |
| Criticism by the media | 8.14 | ± 1.84 |
| Coordination issues with a related organization (parent or local chapter) | 6.60 | ± 1.67 |
| Adversarial/poor relationships with governmental/regulatory agencies | 6.37 | ± 1.64 |

Note. A total of 1,511 organizations reported experiencing one or more crises in the previous 2 years (circa 2017–2019). A total of 848 organizations reported that their organization had experienced one or more barriers rendering communication less effective.

**Communication Preparedness Tactics**

Nonprofit informants reported communication practices to support the organization in a critical event, in response to RQ4. Specifically, the most frequently mentioned tactics by nonprofit organizations included maintaining emergency contact lists of internal stakeholders (N = 1,752, 87.38% ± 1.45), having a designated spokesperson or spokespeople (N = 1,640, 81.80% ± 1.69), having teams to respond to (N = 1,365, 68.08% ± 2.04) and plan for critical events (N = 1,198, 59.75% ± 2.14), and maintaining emergency contact information for external stakeholders (N = 1,095, 54.61% ± 2.15). Overall, 97.5% or organizations reported one or more of these practices. The mean number of communication preparedness tactics was 5.54 (SD = 2.67), and the index of tactics had acceptable reliability (α = .79). Table 5 reports on all 10 tactics.
higher number of crisis communication preparedness tactics compared with those that do not, \( F(1, 1,994) = 111.93, p = .00, \eta_p^2 = .05 \), supporting H1.

**Organizational Financial Performance and Crisis Communication Preparedness Tactics**

RQ5 asked about the relationships between communication preparedness and measures of organizational financial performance. A MANOVA compared organizations that had a low (five or fewer) number of tactics and high (six or more). These high and low categories were constructed from the data; 48.2% of organizations had five or fewer tactics; 52.8% had six or more. The MANOVA revealed a result approaching statistical significance, \( F(3, 1,985) = 2.42, p = .065, \) Wilks’ \( \lambda = 0.99, \eta_p^2 = .00 \). The use of crisis communication tactics does not appear to significantly decrease money spent on program delivery (i.e., program expenses divided by total expenses), \( F(1, 1,987) = 0.58, p = .45 \). Nor does it appear to harm the fundraising efficiency of the organization (fundraising expenses divided by total contributions), \( F(1, 1,987) = 0.165, p = .20 \). Implementing more of the tactics does, however, seem to be related to a lower fiscal performance (i.e., total revenue divided by total expenses), \( F(1, 1,987) = 5.56, p = .02, \eta_p^2 = .003 \).

**Discussion and Implications**

This study provides a picture of nonprofits’ recent experiences with crises, their future concerns about crises, and the measures they are taking to plan for crises. They appear to be anticipating potential crises and engaging in communication planning, that is, tactics to enact in the event of a crisis. This section reviews and relates the study to past research on crisis communication, and then addresses theoretical and practical implications of the research.

Over 75% of nonprofits reported experiencing at least one crisis in the prior 2 years (between 2017 and 2019), and 90% expressed concerns about at least one future crisis occurring. Most of the organizations (97.5%) reported at least one communication tactic to mitigate future crises. The present study showed similar findings as Schwarz and Pfarr (2011), with a lower percentage of organizations conducting trainings and having written communication plans. The present study, though, shows an improvement over Spillan (2003), with a greater number of organizations with teams to prepare for and respond to crises.

The most frequent crisis occurrence and future concern was loss of a major contributor, such as a director, president, founder, or donor. Such a loss would present a major operational crisis for nonprofit organizations. Consumer boycotts and violence at the workplace were mentioned as concerns 8.00 and 7.44 times more frequently, respectively, than actual occurrences reported by responding organizations. Unfortunately, active shooters and mass casualty events have become more common in the United States that require planning for (M. Liu et al., 2015). For example, during this study (March to September 2019), three mass shootings (Gilroy, CA; El Paso, TX; and Dayton, OH) occurred, likely increasing the salience about concerns for active shooter incidences. These expectations—at least regarding workplace violence—clearly are shaped by salient events in the external environment.

Technology featured prominently into how nonprofits communicated with internal and external stakeholders, types of past crises, and types of future concerns. The most common way to communicate with internal stakeholders was email announcements. For external stakeholders, nonprofits relied heavily on technology; their top three methods were social media (#1), websites (#2), and mass emails (#3). The trend of digitization documented by Briones et al. (2011) by the disaster response organization American Red Cross appears to have diffused throughout the nonprofit sector nearly a decade later. Consistent with the original conception of the anticipatory model of crisis management (Olaniran & Williams, 2001), technology featured prominently into

| Crisis preparedness tactic                                             | Yes | Total | Yes% | 95% confidence interval |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-------|------|-------------------------|
| Maintains emergency contact information for internal stakeholders    | 1,752 | 2,004 | 87.38 | ± 1.45                  |
| Has designated a spokesperson (spokespeople)                        | 1,640 | 2,003 | 81.80 | ± 1.69                  |
| Has a team to respond to critical events                            | 1,365 | 2,004 | 68.08 | ± 2.04                  |
| Has a team to plan for critical events                              | 1,198 | 2,005 | 59.75 | ± 2.15                  |
| Maintains contact information for external stakeholders             | 1,095 | 2,002 | 54.61 | ± 2.18                  |
| Systematically monitors media channels                              | 1,083 | 2,005 | 54.01 | ± 2.18                  |
| Includes emergency preparedness information in communications       | 926  | 2,003 | 46.18 | ± 2.18                  |
| Staff has received training on how to communicate about critical events | 909   | 2,002 | 45.34 | ± 2.18                  |
| Has an official written plan outlining how to communicate during critical events | 783   | 2,005 | 39.05 | ± 2.14                  |
| Provides regular opportunities for staff to practice the communication roles for a critical event | 356 | 2,001 | 17.76 | ± 1.68                  |

Note. Total based on \( N = 2,005 \) organizations.
nonprofits’ past crises and types of future concerns. Technological crises filled out three of the top five occurrences, including negative word of mouth on social media (#2), attempted or actual data breach (#3), and computer system breakdown (#4). For future concerns, there was a similar pattern: negative word of mouth on social media (#2), attempted or actual breach (#3), and computer system breakdown (#5). The occurrences and concerns around technology crises contrast with Spillan’s (2003) study because social media did not exist yet, and data breaches have become routine, with several far-reaching incidents in the United States (Privacy Rights Clearinghouse, n.d.). Cheng (2016) depicted a growth in research on social media in crisis research, although only 5% of organizations studied in 73 articles were nonprofits. Technology-related occurrences and concerns are part of an environment where internet and social media are both sources of crises and ways of responding to them (Austin & Jin, 2017; Goodman et al., 2014). As controlling costs was important for nonprofit organizations, this study demonstrated that nonprofits were not significantly diverting program/service delivery costs to administrative expenses or decreasing their fundraising efficiency by having these crisis communication preparedness tactics in place.

Theoretical Implications

This study examined the extent to which nonprofit organizations in the United States have adopted an anticipatory perspective of crisis management. As such, this study extends the anticipatory perspective to the nonprofit context, unpacking expectations (future crises via past crises and past communication barriers), and revealing enactments undertaken by organizations. The current study expands on past nonprofit research to make claims about the state of U.S. charitable organizations. Importantly, the current project affirmed anticipatory perspective’s (Olaniran & Williams, 2001) original emphasis on technology as a source of potential crises, and supports broadening crisis concerns beyond technology (Olaniran & Williams, 2012), especially loss of a major stakeholder. Moreover, nonprofit organizations active in public safety, emergency management, and disaster response seem to enact communication preparedness more frequently compared with those that do not have such a role.

Practical Implications

This study addresses practical matters for nonprofit organizations. These questions were whether nonprofits were experiencing crises and what measures they are taking to address potential critical events. Given the findings about these organizations’ experiences of critical events and their tactics to prepare for them, coaching and development can occur in those areas. These learnings provide opportunities (Ulmer et al., 2019) to move beyond description (positive science) and toward normative recommendations (Ulmer, 2012) to benefit the nonprofit sector.

Nonprofit organizations have enacted crisis communication preparedness practices without contributing to significant administrative overhead expenses. To build on their practices, nonprofits can address two of the less frequently adopted practices. Nonprofits could implement written plans and trainings by adopting freely available templates or expert recommendations (cf. Coombs, 2019). Moreover, regarding crisis communication training, nonprofit communicators could take the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s freely available Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication online training, for instance (Courtney et al., 2003), designed by crisis and risk communication experts. Providing opportunities to practice the communication roles taken in a critical event was among the least mentioned tactics. Therefore, nonprofit leaders might consider walkthroughs or tabletop exercises on the most frequent areas of concern for future crises, such as how to respond to loss of a major contributor, negative word of mouth on social media, and an attempted or actual breach of the computer system. Regarding data breaches, states and federal agencies offer templates for how to respond (Privacy Rights Clearinghouse, n.d.; Veltos, 2012). Organizations could use templates to improve organizational learning (after-action reports, hot washes), following the simulation exercises. These options and suggestions can also help those organizations that identified lack of a budget for crisis communication as a barrier. The anticipatory perspective of crisis management itself is a practical model; the interplay of expectations, enactments, and internal and external factors provides a useful framework for individual organizations to anticipate and plan for crises. Given that the circumstances for individual organizations may vary, this study may provide a useful starting point for expectations.

Of the organizations that have a written plan, 68.45% have reviewed it in the previous year. Plans should be reviewed yearly and are most useful when they are updated to reflect current risks and concerns, and organizational learnings from after-action reports (Coombs, 2019). Many of the barriers to crisis communication—legal concerns, criticism by media, and complaints by constituents, coordination issues with related entities, and adversarial relationships—relate to relationships. By including these barriers in their expectations (along with consequences, such as reputational harm, for example), nonprofit leaders can enact specific behaviors. For example, nonprofit leaders could reflect upon their relationships with stakeholder groups and anticipate some of the questions they might encounter in a critical event. These relationships should be identified and developed beforehand to tap into a reservoir of goodwill (Ulmer et al., 2019).

Many nonprofits are using social media to communicate with external stakeholders and are also concerned about negative word of mouth on social media. Nonprofits are advised to follow Eriksson’s (2018) guidelines developed from a systematic review about using social media for crisis management. Eriksson recommended using a dialogue strategy...
during crisis communication, and attending to source, message timing, and medium features. Moreover, Eriksson suggested that when using social media to respond to crises, to tap into a network of supporters developed before the crisis, listen to public dialogue about the crisis, complement social media use with other forms of traditional media, and take advantage of the strengths of speed and reduced reliance on traditional gatekeepers of information. Nonprofits should also use social media to anticipate and respond to crises through issue monitoring online (Straub & Jonkman, 2017).

Finally, the practical implications above point to some larger areas to help the nonprofit sector. Crisis preparedness fits within the larger discourse in nonprofit research and practice of capacity building and long-term organizational sustainability (Shumate et al., 2017). In addition to self-directed efforts by nonprofits above, organizations that help nonprofit organizations build capacity—for example, foundations, management, and technical assistance organizations—can help integrate crisis management into strategic planning processes to help nonprofits understand how to prepare. At the same time, nonprofits have cause-related missions and therefore have a good understanding of their values (Fuller, 2020). Values are an important source differentiating reactive and proactive organizations (Mitroff, 2005). As Ulmer (2012) states, “Organizations must have the right values in place and make crisis management part of their business plan if they are going to be proactive and effective in managing the event” (p. 534).

Limitations and Future Directions
This study has some limitations. One limitation is that data were collected at one point in time. A longitudinal analysis of nonprofit organizations could answer questions beyond a single snapshot of charitable organizations. Another limitation was the method for data collection. Although internet surveys can elicit a large number of responses, the response rates for these types of surveys are low because of bounce rates, spam filters, unfamiliarity with the researcher, among others. However, the response rate in this study is similar to other internet-survey research on crisis preparedness topics (Light & Morgan, 2008; Schwarz & Pforr, 2011). Moreover, when comparing responders with nonresponders, there were no significant differences on several financial measures, although this comparison does not necessarily mean nonresponders would provide the same responses as participants. This study did not include organizations with revenues below US$500,000 or those with no employees. This study only includes charitable (501c3) organizations, and these may differ compared with private foundations, political organizations, and other nonprofits (social welfare, civic leagues, social clubs, labor organizations, and business leagues). Overall, the picture of crisis occurrences, crisis concerns, and preparedness tactics for these organizations could be different from those in this sample. Thus, future research could consider including all nonprofit types, regardless of size.

This present study occurred prior to the major upheaval due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a low-probability, high-consequence event (100-year pandemic). A disease epidemic not only was an infrequent occurrence mentioned by organizations, but also not even selected as a future concern by any of the organizations. Obviously, if this study were conducted a year later, a disease epidemic would be more salient to these organizations. Research early on in the pandemic by Fuller (2020) documented how charitable organizations in one region in California were affected by and responding to COVID-19. The results showed that nonprofit organizations faced operational closures, were innovating to deliver on their mission despite closures, and communicated with their internal and external stakeholders using mostly technologically mediated channels. Nevertheless, considering the widespread financial harm and technology adoption due to COVID-19, the concerns documented in the present study regarding dependence on major contributors and technology are still relevant. Future research should also analyze how nonprofit organizations have responded to and recovered from COVID-19, including how it has influenced their expectations and enactments for pandemics and other types of crises. Overall, the present research project suggests that the sector is taking measures to anticipate and plan for crises, improving in developing a proactive orientation since Spillan’s (2003) work, although there is still more work to do.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests
The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding
The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: This article was supported by funding from the California State University, Sacramento, Research and Creative Activity Faculty Awards Program.

ORCID iD
Ryan P. Fuller https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4867-7067

References
Archambeault, D. S., Webber, S., & Greenlee, J. (2015). Fraud and corruption in US nonprofit entities: A summary of press reports 2008-2011. Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly, 44(6), 1194–1224. https://doi.org/10.1177/0899764014555987
Ashby, R. (1956). An introduction to cybernetics. Methuen.
Austin, L. L., & Jin, Y. (2017). Social media and crisis communication. Routledge.
Barbour, J. B., & Manly, J. N. (2016). Redefining disaster preparedness: Institutional contradictions and praxis in volunteer
responder organizing. *Management Communication Quarterly,* 30(3), 333–361. https://doi.org/10.1177/0893318916629101
Briones, R. L., Kuch, B., Liu, B. F., & Jin, Y. (2011). Keeping up with the digital age: How the American Red Cross uses social media to build relationships. *Public Relations Review,* 37(1), 37–43. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.purev.2010.12.006
California Association of Nonprofits. (2019). *Causes count 2019: The economic power of California’s nonprofits.* https://calnonprofits.org/publications/causes-count
Cheng, Y. (2016). How social media is changing crisis communication strategies: Evidence from the updated literature. *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management,* 26(1), 58–68. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-5973.12130
Chikoto, G. L., Sadiq, A. A., & Fordyce, E. (2013). Disaster mitigation and preparedness: Comparison of nonprofit, public, and private organizations. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly,* 42(2), 391–410. https://doi.org/10.1177/0899764012452042
Cloudman, R., & Hallahan, K. (2006). Crisis communications preparedness among US organizations: Activities and assessments by public relations practitioners. *Public Relations Review,* 32(4), 367–376. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.purev.2006.09.005
Coombs, W. T. (2010). Parameters for crisis communication. In W. T. Coombs & S. J. Holladay (Eds.), *Handbook of crisis communication* (pp. 17–53). Blackwell.
Coombs, W. T. (2011). Situational theory of crisis: Situational crisis communication theory and corporate reputation. In C. E. Carroll (Ed.), *The handbook of communication and corporate reputation* (pp. 262–278). Wiley-Blackwell.
Coombs, W. T. (2019). Ongoing crisis communication: Planning, managing, and responding (5th ed.). SAGE.
Coombs, W. T., & Holladay, J. S. (2012). The paracrisis: The challenges created by publicly managed crisis prevention. *Public Relations Review,* 38(3), 408–415. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.purev.2012.04.004
Courtney, J., Cole, G., & Reynolds, B. (2003). How the CDC is meeting the training demands of emergency risk communication. *Journal of Health Communication,* 8(Suppl. 1), 128–129. https://doi.org/10.1080/136325403901656029
Eriksson, M. (2018). Lessons for crisis communication on social media: A systematic review of what research tells the practice. *International Journal of Strategic Communication,* 12(5), 526–551. https://doi.org/10.1080/1553118X.2018.1510405
Fuller, R. P. (2020). How nonprofit organizations are communicating through the COVID-19 disaster. The Western ABC Bulletin. https://abcwest.org/2020/06/14/how-nonprofit-organizations-are-communicating-through-the-covid-19-disaster/
Fuller, R. P., Ulmer, R. R., McNatt, A., & Ruiz, J. B. (2019). Extending discourse of renewal to preparedness: Construct and scale development of readiness for renewal. *Management Communication Quarterly,* 33(2), 272–301. https://doi.org/10.1177/0893318919834333
Goodman, M., Pang, A., Hassan, N. B. B. A., & Chong, A. C. Y. (2014). Negotiating crisis in the social media environment. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal,* 19(1), 96–118. https://doi.org/10.1108/CCIJ-09-2012-0064
Gozu, R. A., Tyner, L., & Kaufinger, G. (2016). Multivariate analysis of voluntary welfare and lease organization financial performance measures. *Journal of Accounting and Finance,* 16(6), 87–105. https://doi.org/10.33423/jafv16i6.1062
O’Neill, M. (2009). Public confidence in charitable nonprofits. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly, 38*(2), 237–269. https://doi.org/10.1177/0899764008326895

Ozanne, L. K., Ballantine, P. W., & Mitchell, T. (2020). Investigating the methods and effectiveness of crisis communication. *Journal of Nonprofit & Public Sector Marketing, 32*, 379–405. https://doi.org/10.1080/10495142.2020.1798856

Pauchant, T. C., & Mitroff, I. I. (1992). *Situational crisis communication theory.* Public Relations Review, 8(1), 68–70. https://doi.org/10.1016/0363-8202(92)90040-N

Rasmussen, L. (2015). Planned Parenthood takes on Live Action: Assessing informational website communications during emergencies and disasters. *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing, 17*(3), 199–207. https://doi.org/10.1002/nvsm.1423

Schwarz, A., & Pforr, F. (2011). The crisis communication preparedness of nonprofit organizations: The case of German interest groups. *Public Relations Review, 37*(1), 68–70. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2010.10.002

Seeger, M. W., Sellnow, T. L., & Ulmer, R. R. (2019). Increasing the impact of thought leadership in crisis communication. *Management Communication Quarterly, 26*(4), 523–542. https://doi.org/10.1177/0893318997111003

Sullivan, L. (2015, June 3). In search of the Red Cross’ $500 million in Haiti relief. npr. https://www.npr.org/2015/06/03/411524156/in-search-of-the-red-cross-500-million-in-haiti-relief

Taleb, N. (2010). *The black swan: The impact of the highly improbable.* Random House.

Tyler, L. (1997). Liability means never being able to say you’re sorry: Corporate guilt, legal constraints, and defensiveness in corporate communication. *Management Communication Quarterly, 11*(1), 51–73. https://doi.org/10.1177/0893318997111003

Ulmer, R. R. (2012). Increasing the impact of thought leadership in crisis communication. *Management Communication Quarterly, 26*(4), 523–542. https://doi.org/10.1177/0893318997111003

Ulmer, R. R., Sellnow, T. L., & Seeger, M. W. (2019). *Effective crisis communication: Moving from crisis to opportunity* (4th ed.). SAGE.

Veltos, J. R. (2012). An analysis of data breach notifications as negative news. *Business Communication Quarterly, 75*(2), 192–207. https://doi.org/10.1177/1080569912443081

Werner, S., Praxedes, M., & Kim, H. G. (2007). The reporting of nonresponse analyses in survey research. *Organizational Research Methods, 10*(2), 287–295. https://doi.org/10.1177/1094428106292892

Wiggill, M. N. (2011). Strategic communication management in the non-profit sector: A simplified model. *Journal of Public Affairs, 11*(4), 226–235. https://doi.org/10.1002/pa.415

Williams, M., & Buttle, F. (2013). Managing word-of-mouth: A nonprofit case study. *Journal of Nonprofit & Public Sector Marketing, 25*(3), 284–308. https://doi.org/10.1080/10495142.2013.816191