

ABSTRACT

THESIS PROJECT: Taming the Lions and the Lies: A Review of The Pennsylvania State University's Crisis Response Strategies

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This thesis examined how Pennsylvania State University administrators managed the Sandusky sex abuse scandal in 2011. Coombs' (2006) Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) strategic response strategies were the theoretical basis for this thesis. This study found Penn State primarily demonstrated the corrective action response strategy. This content analysis also uncovered the dominant tone of Penn State's messages, which was a traditional public relations tone, as defined by Fitzpatrick and Rubin (1995). This content analysis focused on newspaper articles between November 5, 2011 and January 22, 2012, which were collected from The New York Times and State College's local newspaper the Centre Daily Times that were reporting on the Sandusky crisis.