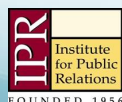


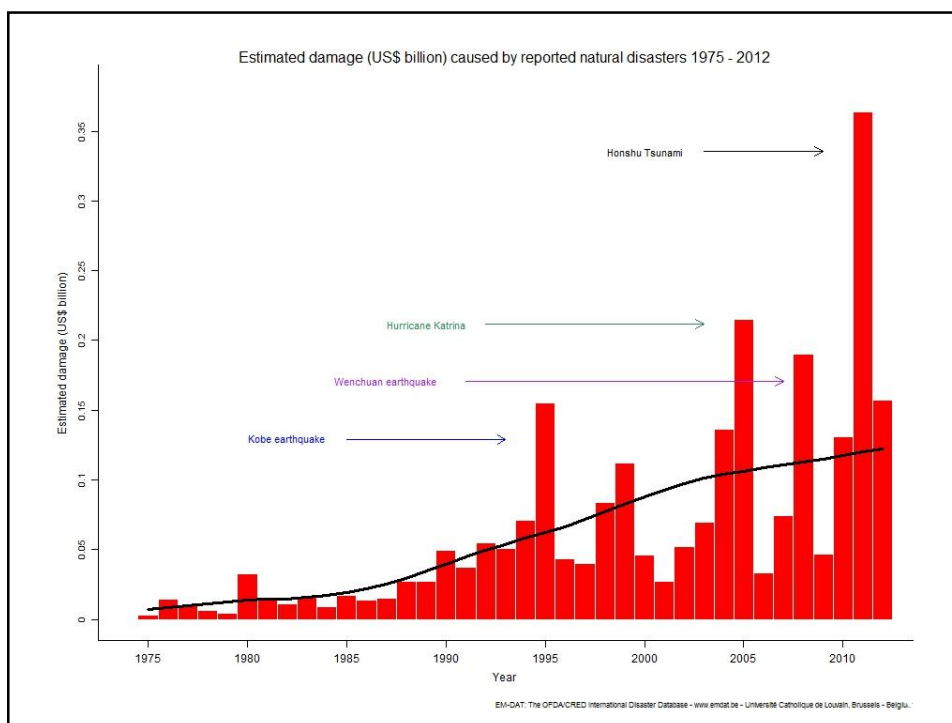
The Sociology of Crisis: Social Communications Lessons from the Boston Marathon Attack

Jeannette Sutton, PhD
University of Colorado, Colorado Springs



Are disasters getting worse?

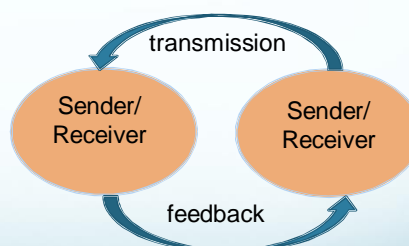
For the record



Social Communications

The world is becoming more connected; it is imperative to know how to communicate in a disaster or crisis

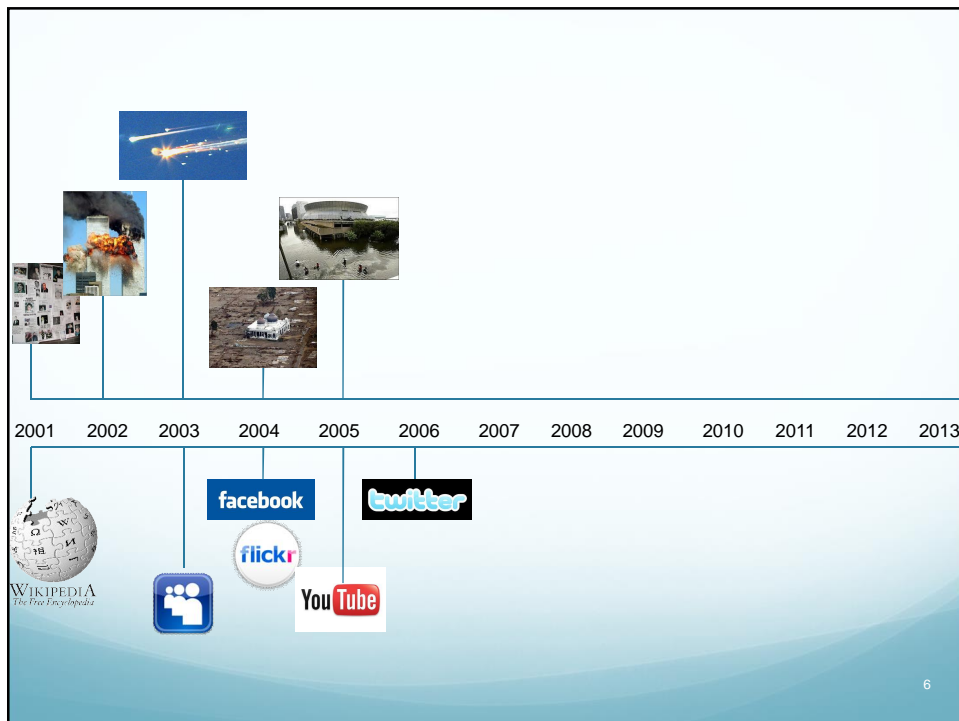
- Sender
- Channel
- Message
- Receiver
- **Engage**



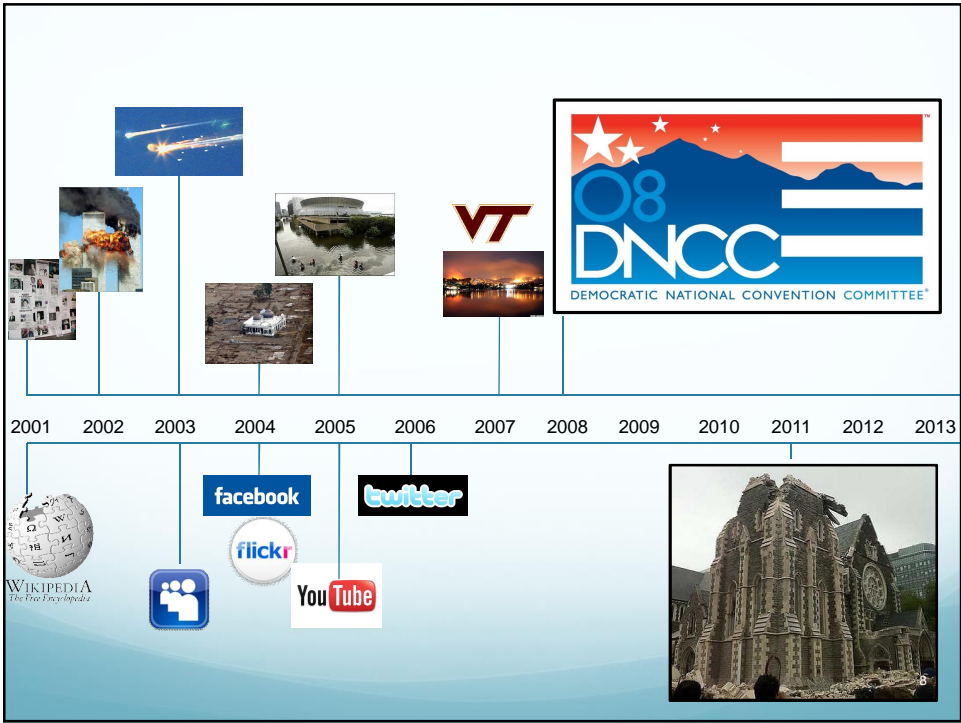
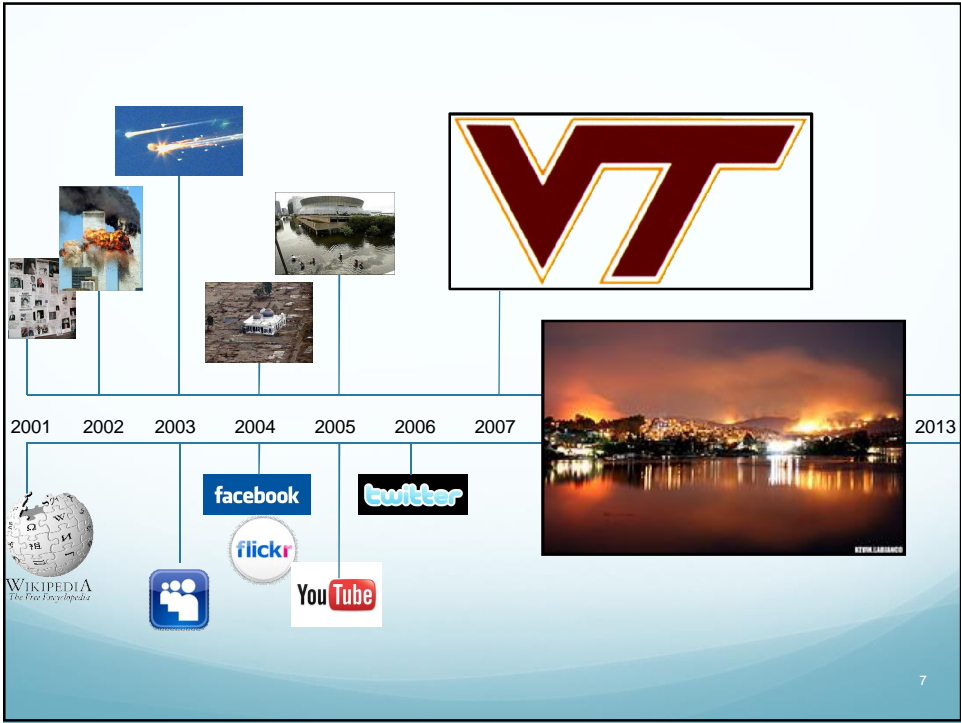
Social Media & Disaster Research

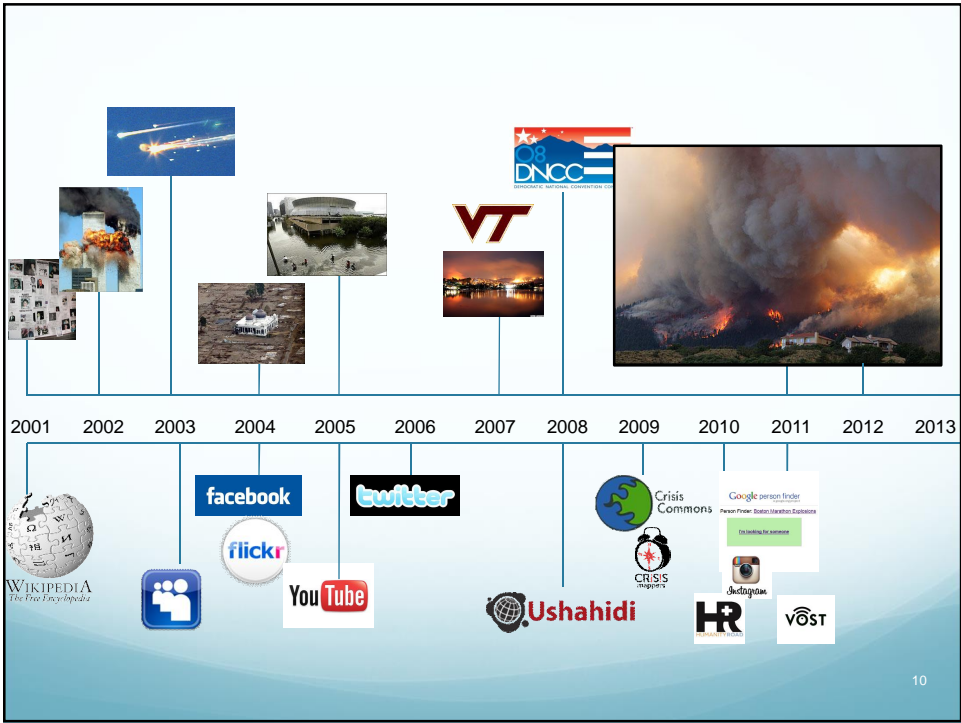
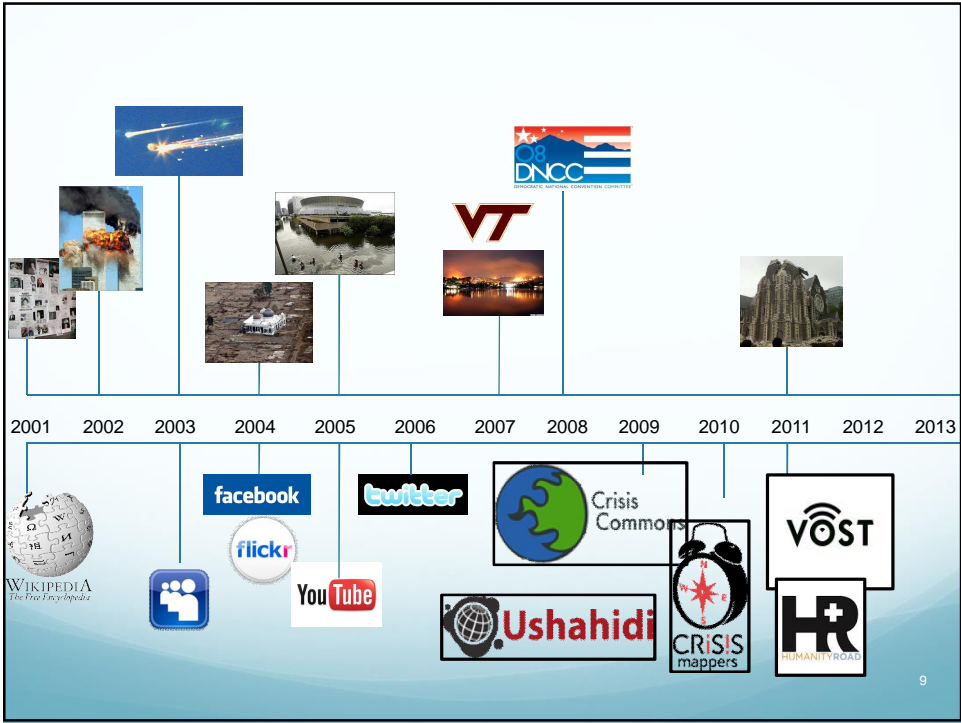
A brief history of the field

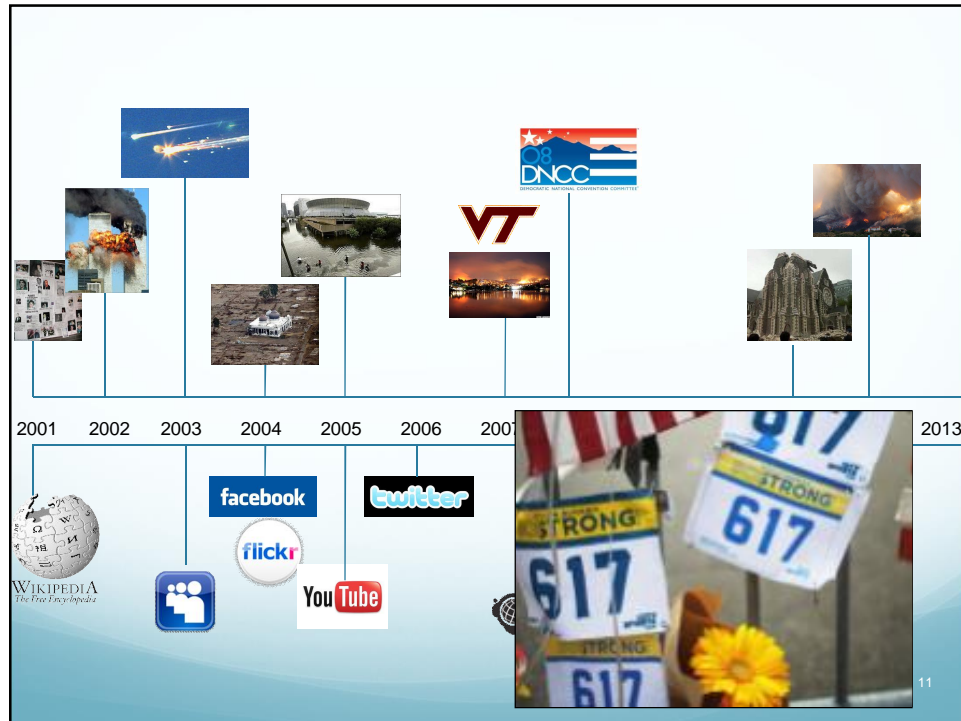
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Research Approach



- Data collection
 - April 15, 2013-April 19, 2013
 - Attempted a census (N=31) of official public safety accounts at the Federal, State, and local level
 - Content, network connections, follower numbers
- Data analysis
 - Mixture of automated and manual coding for message content and style
 - Regression modeling to assess mechanisms governing retweet probability

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The receiver

Where to begin

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Who is your audience?

- The at risk public
- The inconvenienced public
- The inquisitive public
- The expressive public
- The helping public
- The socially vulnerable public



The channel & the message

Cultural and linguistic competence

Message Content

Category	Recommended Message Content
Source	Who is giving the message
Time	When to begin and complete a protective action
Location	Exactly who should and should not do the protective action; the geographical boundaries for the location
Hazard and Consequence	Describe the impending hazard, its consequences, the threat posed, and what they are being asked to do to reduce impact
Guidance	Exactly what to do and how to do it

Mileti & Sorensen, 1990

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Message Style

Category	Recommended Message Style
Clarity	Simply worded, free of jargon, understandable
Specificity	Precise and non ambiguous

Mileti and Sorensen, 1990.

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Terse Regime Communication

- Brief messages (limited in character)
- Easily shared and retransmitted
- Crosses over many communication channels
 - Social media/Twitter (140 characters)
 - SMS (160 characters)
 - Wireless Emergency Alerts (90 characters)

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Wireless Emergency Alert



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Some things matter more than others

- Hazard impact (content)
- Hazard guidance (content)
- Instructional language (style)
- Inclusion of a #hashtag (style)



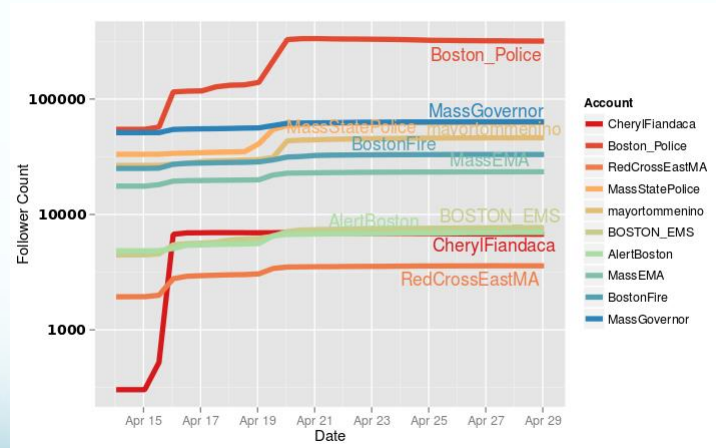
21

The sender

Monitor, network

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Increased Attention



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Monitor

Twitter as a Sentinel in Emergency Situations:
Lessons from the Boston Marathon Explosions

JULY 2, 2013 · PERSPECTIVE



THIS JUST IN

**10 Boston Marathon Bombing Rumors
That Need to Be Stopped Immediately**

by Jeanne Sager April 17 at 11:15 AM

The Telegraph

**Boston marathon bombings: how social media identified
wrong suspects**

When the FBI released pictures of the Boston Marathon bombers onto the internet they unleashed a force they could not control.

24

Engage

Transactional communication

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Engage

- How:
 - With empathy
 - With credibility
- What:
 - What is being done
 - What information
- Why:
 - To reassure
 - To enhance credibility



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Be Prepared

- For media intensity
- For viral nature of information spread
- For public scrutiny
- For ridicule
- For imposter accounts

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Key lessons learned

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Be Aware

- Linear model is outdated
- Persons who are %socially vulnerable+may be your audience
- Coordinate your channels
- Identify your partners
- Engage your audience to prepare for the future

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Most Retweeted -- 125,000 Retweets



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Thank you for listening!

Questions?



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