JUXTAPOSED INTEGRATION MATRIX:
A CRISIS COMMUNICATION TOOL

By

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The purpose of this study was to field test the Juxtaposed Integration Matrix, a crisis communication tool, in real and simulated crisis scenarios by U.S. Air Force public affairs officers. Practitioners at three test locations found the matrix validated public relations postures and actions. Practitioners reported the matrix validated public relations strategies and provided an additional tool to present public relations tactics to the dominant coalition. Additionally, qualitative and quantitative content analyses of media articles were compared with actual military press releases. This analysis supported interview data and showed practitioners' actions were situationally dependent. From a theoretical perspective, this study also found the matrix added parsimony to the contingency theory of accommodation by reducing the number of variables to essentially three questions.

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Crises[1] are a fact of life. Every organization will eventually face them. It is not a question of if, but rather when they will happen. It is not the crisis; however, that is the greatest threat to an organization. It is how the organization *responds* to the crisis that matters. Crises are complex, dynamic and can quickly spiral out of control. For the public relations practitioner, controlling and mitigating such a situation is paramount. To do this, practitioners must know how to respond instantly and decisively. Nowhere is this truer than in military public affairs[2] where the very nature of the organization is fraught with potential crises.

From a military standpoint, the U.S. Air Force has historically dealt with crises in a variety of ways. Despite detailed Air Force regulations that discuss virtually every aspect of how public relations practitioners should do their jobs, responses to crises are typically tailored by situations. The key motto for Air Force public relations is in line with contingency theory's position of accommodation: "Maximum disclosure, minimum delay." Despite this motto and detailed regulations, legal, ethical and moral issues that

[1] For our purposes crisis is defined as either "an unstable or crucial time or state of affairs in which a decisive change is impending; especially one with the distinct possibility of a highly undesirable outcome or a situation that has reached a critical phase" (Merriam-Webster, 2004).

[2] The Air Force refers to its public relations function as public affairs. While there are differences in how public affairs and civilian public relations practitioners conduct their business, both deal essentially with the same aspects of media and community relations and internal information. Therefore, for the purpose of this research, both terms should be considered interchangeable.

swirl around a crisis situation in today's social and political climate make determining an appropriate public relations strategy difficult to determine with any degree of confidence.

While theories such as contingency theory of accommodation have identified aspects of a crisis, such as a set of variables, as yet, no practical tools have been developed to give practitioners a means to apply these principles. In terms of crisis response, the combination of contingency theory of accommodation and a graphic and operational framework as found in the Public Relations Field Dynamics (PRFD) may be ideally suited to supplement one another.

While there is no "silver bullet" to address all aspects of a crisis, this convergence can potentially bridge the chasm between theory and practice. This research focuses on determining an overall organizational posture toward a public, not the specifics of actually crafting media messages or techniques to convey those messages.

If successful, this research may also help bridge the gap in Air Force public affairs practitioner's experience, especially during the initial stages of a crisis by creating an understanding of why actions are taken. Considering the scope and types of crises Air Force public affairs practitioners are likely to face, this lack of preparation should be of serious concern.

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

This research project is based primarily on the theoretical framework of the contingency theory of accommodation. This theory addresses the response options available to an organization when dealing with an issue or crisis. I believe this continuum is at the heart of what public affairs practitioners do—make critical decisions and recommendations based on very dynamic situations.

Fearn-Banks (1996) called a crisis "a major occurrence with a potentially negative outcome affecting an organization, company, industry, as well as its publics, products, services, or good name. It interrupts normal business transactions and can threaten the existence of the organization" (p.1).

Similarly, for the purposes of this study, crisis is operationally defined as either "an unstable or crucial time or state of affairs in which a decisive change is impending; especially one with the distinct possibility of a highly undesirable outcome or a situation that has reached a critical phase" (Merriam-Webster, 2004).

As with the myriad other definitions for crises, the operative concept is potential. From a larger perspective, the effect of crises can be somewhat averted through a crisis management plan. Strother (2004) describes such a plan as critical.

> It is essential for any organization to have a comprehensive disaster-response plan, and an important part of that plan is the strategic communication that a company uses to communicate about the crisis to its many publics, including its own employees, the media, and any stakeholders of the company. (p. 291)

Coombs (1999) emphasizes crisis communication primarily as an issue of management. This approach includes such issues as scanning the environment for potential crises, planning and building relationships on a continual basis so that these aspects are in place when a crisis occurs.

Despite these preventative measures, at some point a crisis will occur. Planning and preparation come together in the crisis management plan. In general, the plan covers background information, everyone's responsibilities and what actions need to be taken during a crisis. These details need to be done in advance because time is critical. This plan "creates a system that can save lives, reduce an organization's exposure to risks, and permit remedial actions to be taken without embarrassment and scrutiny" (Coombs, 1999, p. 79).

Preble (1997) echoed the need and value of a crisis management plan.

> Crisis management deals with attempts to identify and predict areas of potential crises, the development of actions and measures designed to prevent crises from occurring or from an incident evolving into a crisis, and minimizing the effects or disruption from a crisis that could not be prevented. (p. 773)

Ironically, only 56.9% of major companies have such plans (Coombs, 1999). But even having the plan is good only if it can be tailored during the containing and recovering phase of a crisis. The essence of a good plan is being able to modify it for the ever-changing dynamics of the situation (Coombs, 1999).

Similar to Air Force rules and regulations, Coombs (1999) offers detailed, step-by-step information at the tactical and operational levels rather than a strategic vision of crisis communication. Coombs (1999), however, warns that "following a crisis management plan in lockstep fashion is a recipe for disaster" (p. 83).

Therefore, at issue to how to apply a crisis management plan appropriately to a dynamic situation.

> Communication theory has shown that situations affect the selection of messages, so, theoretically, some message response strategies should work better in some crises than in others. Crisis-response strategies and the resulting communication do a lot to shape public perceptions of the crisis and are designed to repair the image of an organization. (Strother, 2004, p. 298)

Contingency Theory of Accommodation

This theory posits that public relations practitioners' actions are constantly moving along a "continuum from total advocacy for a client or employer to total accommodation of a public" (Reber & Cameron, 2003).

Driving the decision about where to place the public relations action on this continuum are some 86 variables that dictate where an organization's stance along the continuum lies at any given point in time regarding a given public (Cancel, Mitrook, & Cameron, 1999). As such, the continuum provides a broad range of stances that can be taken toward a public, "differing from the more prescriptive and mutually exclusive categorization necessarily found in a limited set of models of communication" (Cancel, Mitrook, & Cameron, 1999, p. 172).

Despite this wide range of possible stances, the preference of contingency theory is "to seek ways to be accommodative" because public relations practitioners "have to earn, through accomplishments, in relationship-building and accommodation, a credibility for 2-way symmetrical or mixed motive public relations" Cameron (1997, p. 34). However, there are situations when accommodation may be illegal, unethical or logically impossible such as disclosing specific military information regarding troop movement during war (Cancel, Mitrook, & Cameron, 1999; Zhang, Qiu & Cameron, 2004).

> Accommodation of morally repugnant publics may be unethical. . . . From the worldview of an organization and its public relations professionals, the organization's position may be the only morally defensible one. This position holds greater moral force than a belief in dialogic process. Further, in spite of charges of paternalism, the organization's conviction that it operates in the public interest and that it knows more about the situation comes into play. (Cancel, Mitrook, & Cameron, 1999, p. 173)

A key aspect of contingency theory is that it is not outcome-based, in and of itself. Rather, it "depicts the stance of one organization toward a given public, not the outcome of interaction with that public. The outcome (win-win, win-lose or lose-lose) is beyond the purview of the theory, with its focus on decisions leading to an organizational stance in terms of greater or lesser accommodation of a public" (Cancel, Mitrook, & Cameron, 1999, p. 173).

Reber et al. (2003) point out the even public relations tactics are beyond contingency theory.

> It sorts out clusters of activity and techniques that may be typified as models (e.g., publicity model, public information model, etc.) from the strategic position or stance taken by an organization. This is done by focusing on stance alone and arguing that techniques may be used interchangeably, regardless of stance. Public information techniques, for example, may be used to cooperate with a public or be a first move in a highly adversarial exchange. Tools and techniques such as press agentry, persuasion, and public information do not necessarily align with a particular stance or location along the continuum from advocacy to accommodation. Contingency theory focuses on the stance of the organization, leaving implementation through various tactics out of the equation. (Reber, Cropp, & Cameron, 2003, p. 3)

The sheer number of variables in contingency theory creates a lack of parsimony. This is especially true if one were to try to apply these variables to a crisis situation. The difficulties are compounded because it is possible for the organization's actions to be at both ends of the continuum simultaneously (Cancel et al., 1997). Also, contingency theory lacks a predictive element to offer practitioners a reasonable chance of knowing

where they should fall on the continuum based on the situation and public. Research also found many of the initial 86 variables unsupported (Cancel, Mitrook, & Cameron, 1999).

Despite these limitations, research shows public affairs practitioners find validity in the concept of such a continuum (Cancel, Mitrook, & Cameron, 1999). However, research findings showed that of contingency theory's initial 86 variables, only a few were relevant to practitioners (Cancel, Mitrook, & Cameron, 1999), which has made the theory more parsimonious. Researchers interviewed 18 public affairs practitioners to "provide grounding and refinement of the contingency theory of accommodation in public relations" (Cancel, Mitrook, & Cameron, 1999, p. 171). Of those supported variables, Cancel, Mitrook, & Cameron (1999) grouped relevant variables under the categories of "predisposing" and "situational" variables. For example, "predisposing and situational categories of variables were identified that affect the degree of accommodation and advocacy undertaken by public relations practitioners in a given situation" (Cancel, Mitrook, & Cameron, 1999, p. 171).

Predisposing variables are essentially those that help to shape the organization's position toward a public before it even enters into a situation or interaction with a public. Variables most supported by research in this category include: "corporate business exposure; public relations access to the dominant coalition; dominant coalition's decision power and enlightenment; corporation's size; and individual characteristics of involved persons" corporate culture (Cancel, Mitrook, & Cameron, 1999, p. 189).

Situational variables, however, are the "specific and often changing dynamics at work during particular situations involving an organization and an external public" (Cancel, Mitrook, & Cameron, 1999, p. 177). Highly supported variables under this

category included: “urgency of the situation; characteristics of the external public’s claims or requests; characteristics of the external public; potential or obvious threats; and potential cost or benefit for a corporation from choosing various stances” (Cancel, Mitrook, & Cameron, 1999, p. 189). Additionally, the relative power of the two sides in an interaction was identified as a new variable (p. 190).

This research will focus exclusively on contingency theory’s situational variables because of their impact on a crisis situation and how they can be applied to a crisis communication model. Predisposing variables are likely to have less affect in a rapidly changing scenario.

While the list of situational variables is more manageable to crisis managers, it only offers a list of factors to consider. It does not specifically identify where the organization’s stance on the continuum should fall.

At issue, then, is how contingency theory can be made more parsimonious, or simplified, and tailored so it can be quickly applied to a situation or crisis. This research attempts to create a manageable version of the contingency theory, making it useful for any practitioner in a crisis situation.

Public Relations Field Dynamic

Another aspect of crisis communication is dealing with key publics. The Public Relations Field Dynamics (PRFD) was developed from studying small group communications (Springston & Keyton, 2001). The objective of PRFD was to develop a method to understand the dynamics of multi-public environments. Ultimately, PRFD allows a public relations practitioner to not only see the potential impact of an action with individual publics, but also the interaction between those individual publics. This places every action into the whole context of an environment.

The PRFD is composed of three dimensions based on three questions dealing with potential influence, friendliness and self- or community-orientation of given parties. Responses to each aspect are on a scale of one to ten. These responses are then charted on a three-dimensional graph along *x*-, *y*-, and *z-axes.*

PRFD validated the value and effectiveness of using only three questions. Originally, PRFD began used 26 Likert-type questions, "that represented all possible combinations of the three orthogonal dimensions" (Springston & Keyton, 2001, p. 120). However, answering so many questions for each party was not practical in most field studies. Researchers ultimately found that the original and two shortened versions of the questionnaire (a 12-item Likert instrument and a 3-item semantic differential instrument) were "all highly correlated with one another, indicating convergent validity . . . the three-item semantic differential instrument correlated most strongly, indicating predictive validity" (Springston & Keyton, 2001, p. 121). Additionally, research showed that respondents overwhelmingly preferred answering only three questions.

PRFD also validated the use of the three-dimensional graph to illustrate not only the environmental context, but also the value and limitations of each dimension individually. For example, researchers found the following advantages (Springston & Keyton, 2001, p. 119):

1. three dimensions are viewed as mutually exclusive
2. placement on one dimension does not predict placement on other dimensions
3. placement on a dimension is not seen as inherently good or bad
4. allows behavior and perceptions to be tracked over time within a comparative framework
5. provides a system to see the impact of a public's internal dynamics on the larger interdependent field

Integrating Theories

These theories complement one another with respect to relationships with publics and how an organization develops its stance toward those publics. The integration of certain theories provides a logical extension of each theory. "By coupling PRFD with other theories . . . our understanding of public relations as issues negotiation can be extended. Future research should begin to couple PRFD with other useful theories" (Springston & Keyton, 2001, p. 126).

This research attempts to take the structure of the Public Relations Field Dynamic and the situational variables of contingency theory and combine them into a single practical tool for public relations practitioners. This tool is called the Juxtaposed Integration Matrix (JIM) discussed in Chapter 3.

In order to develop this tool, a preliminary test was conducted to explore how public affairs practitioners viewed crisis communication within the military context. This analysis was done to provide strategic insights into Air Force public affairs.

Key findings of the preliminary investigation included:

- Air Force crisis communication training is tactical in nature
- Practitioners with greater public relations experience were able to think more strategically during a crisis
- All practitioners presented a strong sense of the public's right to know and strove to present information in a timely manner

This formal examination of Air Force public affairs was instrumental in the formulation of the JIM, and focused on improving strategic vision while complementing the existing high level of accommodation toward publics. For the complete preliminary study see Appendix J.

CHAPTER 3
JUXTAPOSED INTEGRATION MATRIX (JIM)

The JIM essentially attempts to take the situational variables from contingency theory and tries to address them in three primary questions. These variables included: "urgency of the situation; characteristics of the external public's claims or requests; characteristics of the external public; potential or obvious threats; and potential cost or benefit for a corporation from choosing various stances" (Cancel, Mitrook, & Cameron, 1999, p. 189). Additionally, the relative power of the two publics in an interaction was identified as a variable (p. 190). The answers to these questions can then be plotted on a graph to tell an organization where its stance should lie on the contingency continuum. The goal of this matrix is to quickly give an organization a strategic level assessment of the situation before employing specific tactics.

Overview

The JIM is a decision-support process. It assists the public affairs practitioner in first setting the strategic decision-making criteria and then in applying the criteria to achieve situational-specific outcomes.

The application theoretically attempts to bring together the best of PRFD, contingency theory and Air Force public affairs practices in a simplified, versatile form. To be of practical value, however, this research moves the continuum as described in contingency theory from a single longitudinal axis and expands it into a multi-dimensional form to attempt to capture the complexity of a dynamic situation. Such a

tool may offer predictability and a method to track effectiveness of messages. It also may help suggest how an organization's stance should change over time

In essence, the JIM integrates research from small group and crisis communication scholarship and focuses the scholarship on three crisis-centered questions.

- How culpable[1] is your organization?
- How reasonable are the publics' demands?
- How damaging is the situation?

Similar to a checklist, these questions are designed to give the user a sense of how to approach a crisis, leading the user to consider all critical aspects of a crisis. This includes not only the public stance, but also recommended actions based on crisis communication research. The answers to each question are ranked on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 represents the greatest culpability, most unreasonable demands or most damaging situation. As such, the low ends of the responses would call for the least amount of accommodation to a public by the USAF and strongest level of advocacy for the USAF perspective (Figure 3-1). These responses to the questions are charted on three orthogonal dimensions along *x*-, *y*-, and *z-axes.* Finally, response options are suggested that correspond to one of eight distinct sectors (Figure 3-2).

The responses to each of the questions directly correspond to the contingency theory continuum from advocacy to accommodation. The self-reporting scale is represented below (Figure 3-1).

[1] Culpability is operationally defined as "meriting condemnation or blame especially as wrong or harmful" (Merriam-Webster, 2004). Responsibility is not directly addressed in this definition, partly because this definition assumes moral, legal, or mental accountability.

Advocacy **Accommodation**

1----------5----------10

x-axis

Low----------(organization's culpability)----------High

y-axis

Unreasonable-------(complainant/public's demands)----------Reasonable

z-axis

Low----------(potential threat damage)----------High

Figure 3-1. Self-reporting scale for Juxtaposed Integration Matrix (JIM).

Key Questions Based on Contingency Theory

Each question represents one dimension in the JIM's multi-dimensional framework. Sub-questions are offered to explicate each of the three main questions. These sub-questions are designed to help respondents use a similar frame or point of reference when considering how to answer each of the three main questions.

1. How culpable is the organization? This question addresses the issues of relative power held by the organization and its publics, the urgency of the situation, potential costs or benefits, and the present or potential threats. The following assumptions are made:

- An organization assessing its own culpability in crisis is the first step in determining whether it can take an advocating or accommodating stance. For instance, a more culpable organization is likely to need to more be accommodating.
- The greater the culpability or perceived culpability the organization has, the less power it possesses in the situation. This may lead to present or perceived threats and costs becoming greater, and therefore, create a sense of urgency.
- Conversely, a lack of culpability would allow an organization to maintain a more advocative stance and to hold more relative power over the situation due to minimal potential costs and threats. Similarly, the urgency may be reduced.

To answer this question, one may consider the following sub-questions:

- How likely is it that the organization has done something morally, ethically, or legally wrong?

- How likely is it that the public will ***perceive*** the organization has done something morally, ethically, or legally wrong?

- How likely will perceived culpability have same effect on organization as actual culpability? (i.e. perception is reality)?

Here an organization may need to decide if real or perceived culpability exists. For example, a public who believes the organization is guilty may threaten an organization that has actually done nothing wrong. As such, the organization may need to respond, to some degree, as if it were actually culpable and decide to be more accommodative. Also, the organization might consider if there is a *chance* the organization is culpable. In the University of Colorado scenario below, the university originally believed it had no culpability then later had to change that position as more details came to light.

2. How reasonable are the public's demands? This question attempts to addresses the power both sides possess, obvious or perceived threats, the cost or benefit to the organization and the characteristics of the external public. The following assumptions are made:

- Demands can reflect the characteristics of the external public. These characteristics are crucial in determining how best to deal with a public.

- When demands are reasonable, an organization can be more accommodative to an external public that may be easier to work with.

- Complying with reasonable demands is generally feasible from a cost-benefit perspective.

- Unreasonable demands may lead to more advocacy, since the organization may be unable or simply unwilling to comply with the demands.

- Additionally, relative power contributes to whether demands can be considered reasonable. For example, a public that is perceived as having a great deal of relative power might be given more latitude on demands that a less powerful public.

As with the first question, one should consider other factors as part of the answer:

- How reasonable does your organization consider the public's demands?

- How reasonable do you believe the public considers its demands?

- How significant will not meeting these demands have on the organization? Or stated another way, will some amount of concession be of greater benefit to the organization over time?

Here it may be important to take into account or estimate the public's view of reasonable. As such, it may be acceptable for an organization to consider a more accommodative stance based on the public's perception of "reasonable." Accordingly, the organization must weight the benefits based on potential impact on itself.

3. How damaging is the situation to the organization? This question clarifies the strength of the organization's position based on the two previous questions. It primarily sets the urgency of the situation. Potential and obvious threats, the relative power of both sides and the potential cost also come into play in this question. The following assumptions are made:

- Determining the level of damage a crisis or situation can have on an organization solidifies the stance an organization will take on the contingency continuum. For example, a high potential of serious damage during a crisis is likely to drive an organization to be more accommodative to diffuse the situation.

- Conversely, a situation that possesses little threat of damage may lead an organization to a stance of greater advocacy as a result of increased relative power, less potential cost to the organization and a reduced sense of urgency.

- By quickly identifying its stance, an organization can take control of the situation. This is crucial because "taking early control of the crisis prevents rumors and speculation from needlessly intensifying the crisis damage. Moreover, the response must be quick and consistent while the organization remains open to communication with stakeholders" (Coombs, 1999, p. 133).

To answer this question objectively, an organization might consider the following factors:

- How likely is it that the organization will suffer damage to its reputation as a result of this situation?

- How likely is it that the organization will suffer loss of income as a result of this situation?

- How likely is it that this situation will have a significant negative impact on the organization as a whole?

The Graph

By applying the JIM to a given crisis situation, an organization's answers to the three questions can be graphically represented to show the relative effect of each and determine the appropriate response based on the situation. The format is derived from the Public Relations Field Dynamics (PRFD) model that uses three dimensions to show multiple publics' perceived relationship to the organization and each other. The concept is used to provide a "theoretical and coherent framework for understanding as well as a method for measuring an entire organizational field" (Springston & Keyton, 2001, p. 117). What PRFD offers to a relational view, JIM attempts to offer to a crisis situation – a simplified, three-dimensional view of a complex situation.

While PRFD and the JIM are designed to measure different aspects of public relations, there are similarities. Most importantly is the similarity in understanding that public relations operates in "complex, fluid and adaptive systems" (Springston & Keyton, 2001, p. 116), not unlike contingency theory's continuum. As such, PRFD provides a validated foundation for the JIM and is the logical extension of PRFD graphic and operational elements.

In terms of graphing responses, answers to the questions would range from 1 to 10, where 1 would represent pure advocacy and 10 would represent pure accommodation. On the three-dimensional framework, culpability would lie on the *x*-axis, demands along the *y*-axis and potential damage on the *z*-axis (Figure 3-2).

Strategies based on the JIM

Determining where an organization's stance should lie in the matrix is only the first step. Without appropriate, pre-determined courses of action, the stance is of little value. Coombs (1999, p 129) identified seven possible actions an organization can take during a

crisis situation. These essentially move along the continuum from advocacy to accommodation. They include:

- Attack the accuser: confronts the accuser; may include threats of a litigation
- Denial: no crisis exists or explain why there is no crisis
- Excuse: deny intention or claim lack of control to reduce responsibility
- Justification: downplay seriousness to reduce perceived damage
- Ingratiation: praises stakeholders or remind them of organization's past good deeds
- Corrective action: take steps to repair damage and prevent a repetition
- Apologize: offer a full apology; may include statement of responsibility or plea for forgiveness and could offer compensation

Another option not covered by Coombs is possible – ignore the public, where the organization does not respond to or address the issue at all. Sometimes called strategic inaction, this tactic is a calculated non-response, not to be confused with a simple "no comment" statement.

Figure 3-2 depicts the entire JIM and where each response strategy corresponds to each quadrant of the matrix.

Car Manufacturer Scenario[2]

To illustrate the JIM, assume a car manufacturer was accused of improperly installing seatbelts and this negligence was possibly responsible for three deaths.

Using the JIM, the manufacturer may rate itself high (8) in culpability, the public's demand for compensation as reasonable (8) and the potential damage (through either

[2] This research will focus on how the JIM applies to military public relations. This example is for illustration purposes and is not meant to suggest application to such a corporate crisis or that the JIM is equally valid across all scenarios or between corporate and military practitioners.

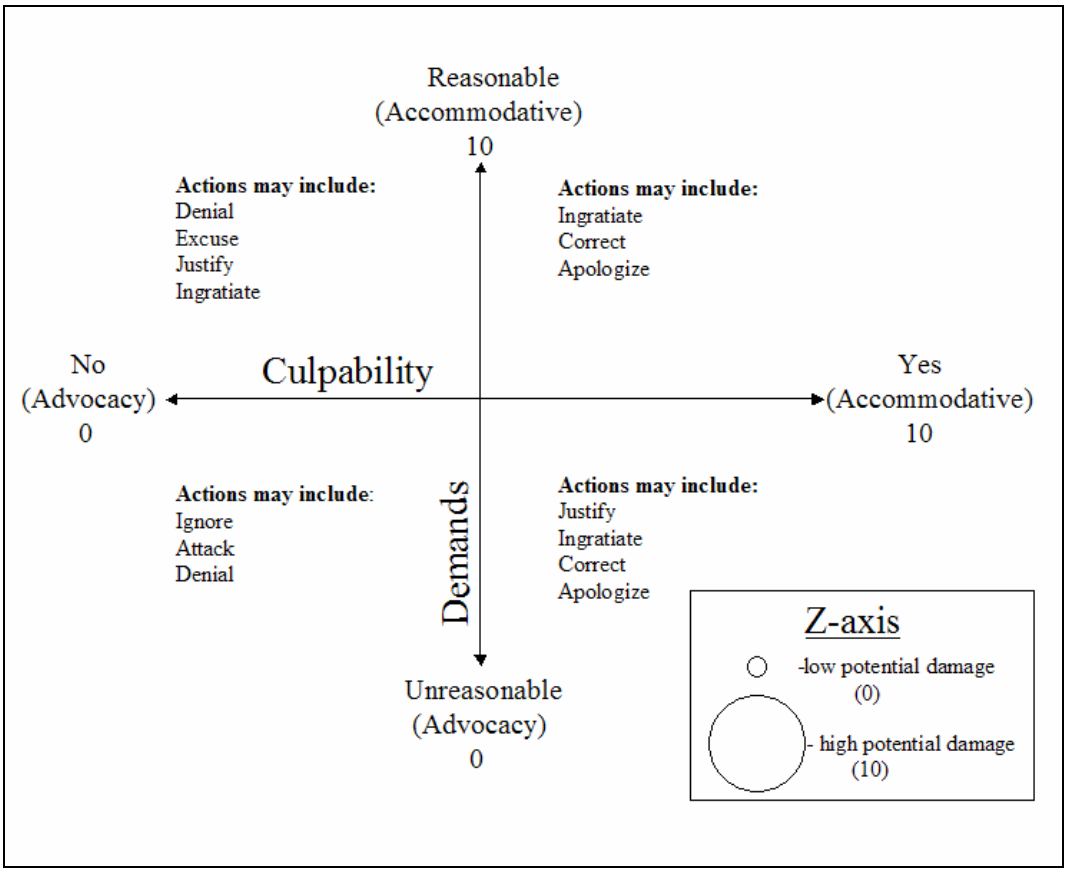

Figure 3-2. Juxtaposed Integration Matrix (JIM). The degree to which actions are taken is determined by the crisis' potential damage to the organization (circle size). That is, the larger the circle the greater the potential damage.

litigation, publicity or both resulting in economic losses or damaged reputation) as high (8). The graphed response would then help the manufacturer determine its stance on the continuum (Figure 3-3, Point 1). In this case, the company would be very accommodative and might do things such as offer a full apology, compensation, and announce corrective actions to prevent future occurrences.

If the situation was slightly altered and the public began demanding the company close its business, the demands could be considered unreasonable (3) the company's stance would need to change (Figure 3-3, Point 2). Instead of being almost purely accommodating, the company's response may slightly change to include ingratiation and offering alternate reparations other than those demanded. Since the potential damage is

still high (large circle), the demands cannot be simply ignored or minimized. This small change in the scenario results in a subtle move along the continuum toward some advocacy, but is still predominantly accommodative.

Finally, assume it later came to light that the deaths were attributed to the car owners tampering with the seatbelts. Self-rating would dictate a very different stance by the car manufacturer. For example, culpability may go down (3), demands may lessen (2) and potential damage to the manufacturer would also likely go down (3) (Figure 3-3, Point 3).

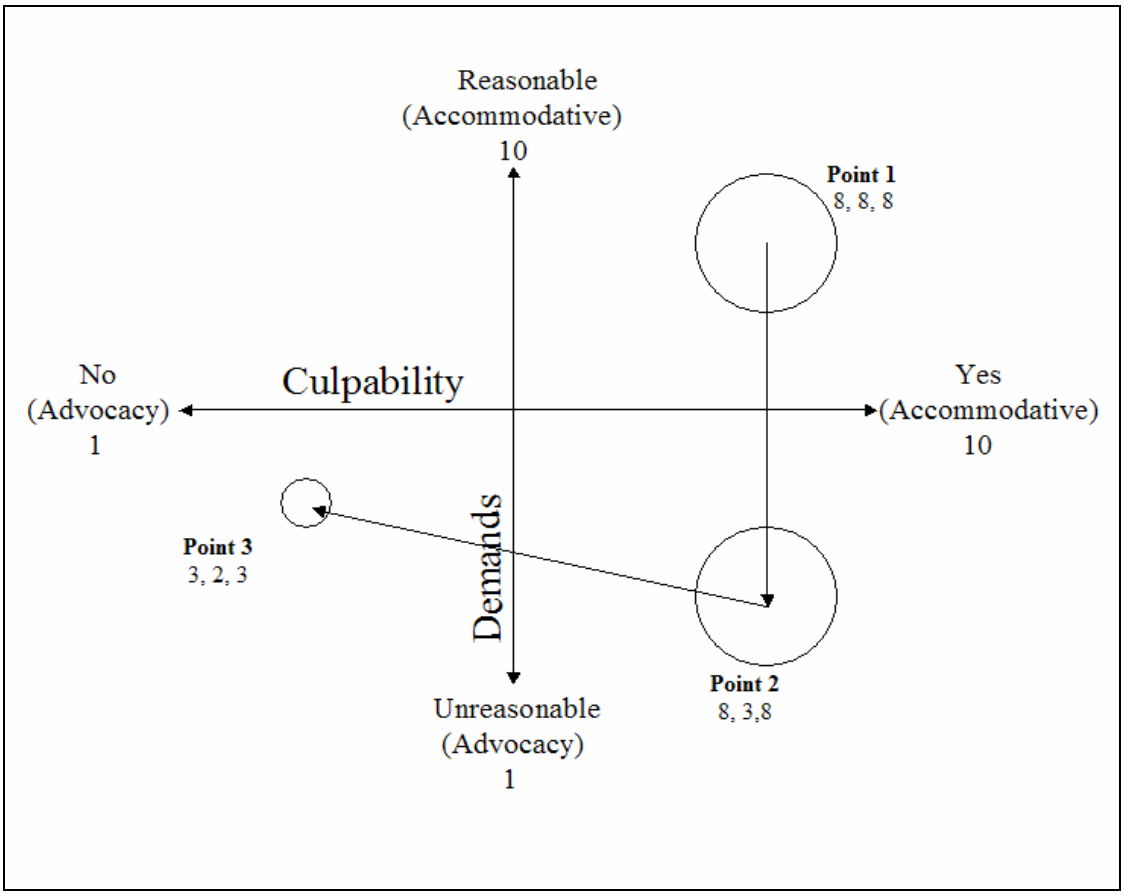

Figure 3-3. The JIM representing a car manufacturer's stance along the contingency continuum where the organization moves from an accommodative response to a position of advocacy. Note: Potential damage is represented on *z*-axis by size of the circle—larger is more damaging or potentially damaging to the organization.

In this scenario, the company may challenge the accusers or state that there is no crisis.

The ultimate goal is to give public relations practitioners a tool with which to choose the appropriate overall strategy with a degree of confidence. Further, it suggests a format to present these findings in a simple and graphic way to organizational leadership.

University of Colorado Scenario

To illustrate JIM's practicality, it is useful to apply it to a recent crisis situation at the University of Colorado at Boulder (CU). This situation was chosen due to its relatively short period of time and the impact of its implications, which allowed the researcher to easily gather media materials for analysis. Additionally, the incident provided clear examples of culpability, organizational damage, and threats by publics.

Allegations were leveled against the school involving alcohol, rape and illegal football recruiting practices. The limitation to using this example is that the university's responses to each of the three questions must be estimated based on the university's actions and circumstances as they are represented in CU statements and media coverage. Ideally, the JIM would be used to determine the actions based on the circumstances of the situation.

Background. The crisis began in January 2004, when allegations surfaced that the football program used sex and alcohol to recruit players. At least eight women have come forward charging they were "assaulted by football players or recruits since 1997, though no criminal charges have been filed. Three of the women have filed federal lawsuits against the school, saying it fostered a hostile environment that contributed to attacks during or just after an off-campus party in December 2001." The head football

coach, Gary Barnett, was placed on leave in February 2004 pending the outcome of the investigation (Associated Press [AP], 2004a).

For this purpose, three points in time will be applied to the matrix: initial response by CU at the end of January, events on or about February 12, 2004 and the CU president's remark to a Congressional committee on March 11, 2004.

January 30, 2004. University president, Elizabeth Hoffman, met with Colorado governor, Bill Owens, to discuss the allegations on January 30, 2004. Following the meeting, Owens stated:

> While aspects of this matter are the subject of litigation, I continue to believe that the people of Colorado must receive a candid accounting of the facts. . . . I am confident that the University administration understands the gravity of these charges. I look forward to a complete and detailed accounting of the facts that will help the University move beyond these very serious charges. (University of Colorado [CU], 2004a)

Additionally, Hoffman stated:

> I appreciate the opportunity to meet with Governor Owens and to assure him personally that the allegations made against the University's recruiting program are false. The University has taken a number of steps over the course of the past several years to prevent abuses in the recruiting program. I appreciate the Governor's support and concern. I am personally offended at the reports that the University of Colorado would not investigate such serious charges fully and completely. We will address these issues at next week's meeting. The people of Colorado deserve an appropriate response. (CU, 2004a)

Based on these statements, CU may seem to have answered the questions in the following way: Culpability: 1, Reasonable demands: 3, Potential damage: 3 (Figure 3-4).

These responses are suggested because Hoffman's denial of the allegations places culpability low on the continuum. Hoffman, however, concedes to the demands to investigate the charges, which seems to indicate the demands are reasonable. Finally, the fact that Hoffman met with the governor in a timely manner indicates an urgency of the situation and potential damaging implications of the charges to CU. Additionally, the

potential damage is highlighted by Owen's inclusion of the term "litigation" in his statement.

These responses are also supported by the response actions suggested in JIM. These answers would place the stance in the upper left quadrant, which suggests actions such as denial and ingratiation. Hoffman denies the charges and uses ingratiation to reassure stakeholders of positive past actions.

February 12, 2004. On February 12, 2004, CU offered to "change its athletic recruiting policies to settle three sexual assault lawsuits, but only if the university could escape paying damages" (AP, 2004b). The lawsuits were based on allegations that three women were raped "during or after an off-campus party attended by football players and recruits in December 2001 (AP, 200b). Also on February 12, Hoffman and the CU chancellor issued a statement that, in part, said the following:

> Today the University of Colorado turned over information from an on-going internal audit to the Broomfield Police Department. . . . We initiated the internal audit immediately upon learning of the escort service allegations. The University of Colorado has identified evidence that telephone calls were made from a cell phone assigned to former athletics employee Nathan Maxcey . . . to an escort service and to a singles chat line. The University is continuing its internal investigation. If we learn of additional relevant evidence, we will turn it over to the Broomfield Police Department in full cooperation with the police investigation. As we have stated repeatedly, we remain steadfast in our commitment to investigate these allegations. We will take swift, decisive and appropriate action upon the receipt of credible information. (CU, 2004b)

In response to these circumstances, CU may have answered the questions in the following way: Culpability: 8, Reasonable demands: 3, Potential damage: 8 (Figure 3-4).

In this instance, responses would place CU's stance in the lower right quadrant, which suggests ingratiation and correction. At this point, it seems CU is seeing its culpability rise. This change alone has moved it along the *x*-axis from the advocacy to

the accommodative end. Despite the fact that the demands are unreasonable and the potential damage has remained unchanged, the matrix shows the options to CU are different. For example, denial is not an action in this quadrant and also no longer reflected in the media and press statements. Additionally, through its internal audit and relations with local police, CU is showing signs of corrective actions. As in the previous situation, CU continues to use ingratiation to assure stakeholders of their commitment to get to the bottom of the allegations. Finally the fact that CU is offering to change policy in exchange for paying damages shows a concern for the potential damage and a degree of accommodation by considering corrective actions in the policy arena.

March 11, 2004. By March 2004, the crisis had escalated: Approximately eight women were claiming sexual assault, the head coach was on administrative leave, the situation was being investigated by an internal CU audit, an independent investigative committee and a recently formed NCAA task force. On March 4, CU released its revised football recruitment policy that called for strict guidelines and harsh punishment for offenders. On March 11, Hoffman testified to the House Subcommittee on Commerce, Trade and Consumer Protection, Committee on Energy and Commerce. Her remarks detailed the many proactive measures CU was taking as "appropriate corrective steps." Ironically, these "corrective steps" were being taken despite the following statements:

> We do not yet know all the facts about these allegations . . . in a number of instances the evidence is conflicting. . . . Nonetheless, I want to assure the Subcommittee that we take these allegations extremely seriously and that we are moving rapidly and responsibly to address the situation. (Hoffman, 2004)

In light of these circumstances, the questions may have been completed as follows: Culpability: 9, Reasonable demands: 4, Potential damage: 9 (Figure 3-4).

Here the actions are consistent with a lower right quadrant of the matrix. Perhaps the most notable change is in the estimate of culpability, which continues to rise. This ranks high due to the sheer number and scope of corrective actions despite the absence of an apology or statement of sympathy for alleged victims. Demands, which CU may consider an admission of guilt, remain relatively unreasonable, but are not a large player at this time since their corrective actions are overshadowing other demands that may be out there. In essence, CU has mitigated this variable through its proactive actions. Finally, the potential damage remains high until the investigations are complete. This is evidence CU is concerned due to the number of corrective actions. Also, showing that CU has done all it could is an active way to reduce potential damage.

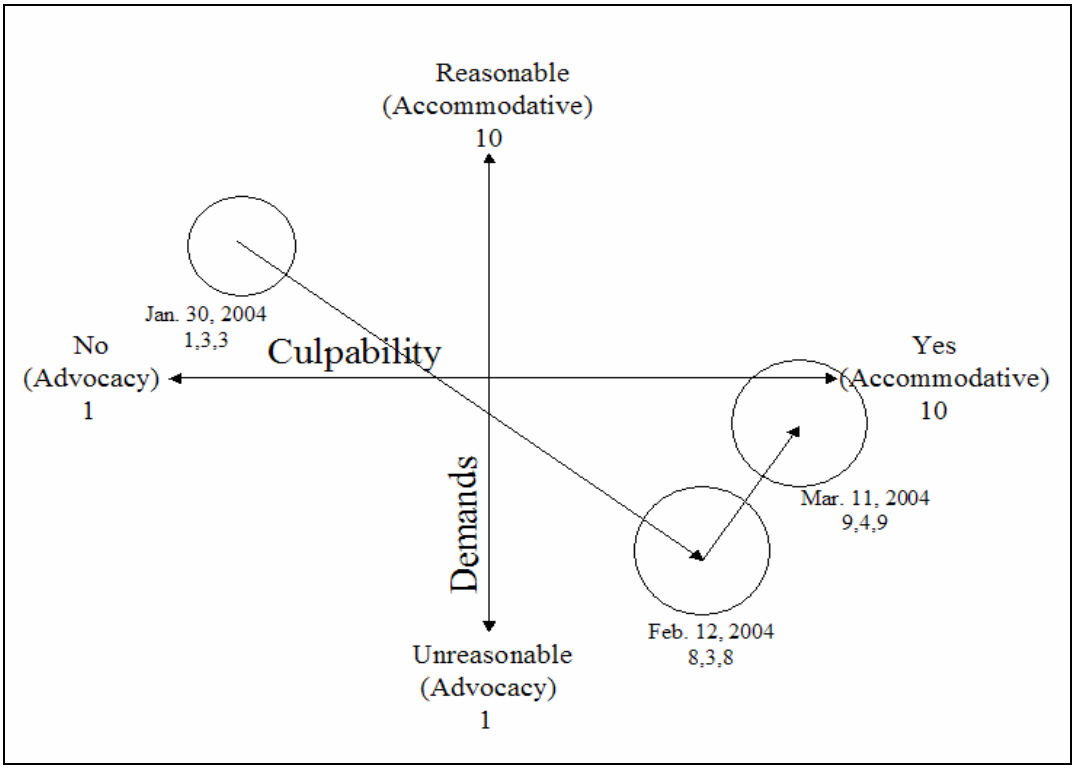

Figure 3-4. JIM representing stances by CU on three occasions during 2004 scandal. Arrows represent movement of stance over time.

As Figure 3-4 shows, CU's stance has moved along the continuum depending on the situational variables. As events unfolded, its culpability, or perceived culpability, of itself continued to rise. This seems to be the greatest factor contributing to CU's movement toward more accommodation. Also, there is a trend to move to more accommodation as the circle approaches the upper right quadrant. It is also interesting to note how CU has negated external demands through its proactive approach to corrective actions.

Tracking these results longitudinally over time, might also indicate CU's initial stance may have been incorrect, especially with the use of denial before knowing all the facts an investigation might provide. This may be attributable to the CU administration either not knowing all the circumstances or believing no damaging facts would come to light. In either case, it would have been well advised to assume a greater culpability, which in turn would have steered the response away from using a denial tactic. The end result would have ensured a more consistent message through the crisis.

Research Questions

To determine the usefulness of JIM in crisis situations, the following research questions were developed:

- RQ1: Are three questions sufficient to identity an effective stance of an organization (i.e. does it fail to address a key aspect of a crisis)?
- RQ2: Is the 3-D graphic representation an effective tool to inform or communicate with leadership?
- RQ3: Does greater experience as a public affairs practitioner help or hinder use of the application?
- RQ4: Did the application have an effect on the organization's stance?

- RQ5: Is accommodation the ideal posture of an organization, even during crisis? That is, do all crisis situations drive organizational posture toward accommodation (upper right quadrant of the graph)?

- RQ6: Does the JIM adequately function at the strategic level?

CHAPTER 4
METHODOLOGY

In order to test the validity of the JIM appropriately, it was crucial to have practitioners use it during realistic crisis response exercises and as part of an on-going crisis issue. The Air Force was chosen as a research organization because each military installation is required to conduct a variety of exercises annually. Not only are these exercises realistic, they also test virtually every type of crisis the base may face. Exercise types include fuel or chemical spills, terrorist attacks, natural disasters and aircraft accidents. Additionally, the Air Force generally has on-going situations that may be considered a crisis by this study's definition.

Sample

A purposive sample was used targeting Air Force public affairs officers. Additionally, some snowball sampling was used as original respondents recommended other bases and crises. The initial sample was contacted with an e-mail sent to the Air Force Public Affairs Forum, to which many, but not all, Air Force public affairs practitioners subscribe, soliciting volunteers to use the application. This method was chosen not only for its expediency, but because it was a readily available resource. The sample frame was derived from volunteers who met the following criteria:

- Bases conducting exercises between October and December 2004
- Bases or organizations with on-going crisis issues

A minimum of three different crisis situations were sought by the researcher in order to gather enough data to identify limitations, additional uses and the validity of the matrix in determining an organization's stance during a crisis.

Participants

Ultimately, two bases were chosen to participate during scheduled base exercises. Shaw Air Force Base, South Carolina conducted a terrorist response exercise. Edwards Air Force Base in California conducted a chemical spill response exercise. Both exercises involved base-wide participation.

The Missile Defense Agency[1] was also chosen because of its on-going issues with the Airborne Laser (ABL) project[2]. Additionally, the ABL was chosen among other MDA projects because it offered logical start and stop data collection points over the course of a six-week period.

Table 4-1. General study participants.

Name	Duty title	Location	PA experience (yrs)
Capt Mark Gibson	Chief, Public Affairs	Shaw AFB, SC.	2 (17 in military)
Captain Catie Hague	Chief, Public Affairs	Edwards AFB, CA	6.5
Maj. Cathy Reardon	Chief, Media Relations & Plans	Missile Defense Agency, Wash. D.C.	16

A training guide (Appendix A) was developed to educate public affairs practitioners on how to implement and apply the matrix. Before training began, a pilot study was conducted on the training materials with three active duty Air Force public affairs officers. This pilot study sought to determine the effectiveness and efficiency of

[1] MDA is an agency under the Department of Defense. Its mission is to develop, test and prepare for deployment a missile defense system.

[2] The Airborne Laser (ABL) project is run by the Department of Defense's Missile Defense Agency. The ABL "involves putting a weapons class laser aboard a modified Boeing 747-400 series freighter aircraft and using that laser to destroy ballistic missiles shortly after launch" (US Air Force, 2003).

the training guide. Training materials were modified based on feedback from the practitioners. Data collected in this pilot study are not included in the general study.

Once selected, participating public affairs officers were trained in advance in using and presenting the JIM to the organization's leadership. The officers were provided worksheets (Appendix B) to answer questions and graph responses. These worksheets were also used to help analyze the use of the application. Also, a Microsoft PowerPoint presentation template was provided to public affairs practitioners for their use in briefing leadership on the proposed crisis response.

Data Collection

The use of in-depth interviews was important to grasp the expected variation in responses from practitioners. This method also served the exploratory nature of the research. Prior to conducting interviews, all participants received a copy of the informed consent form and agreed to its parameters, which included pre- and post-crisis interview sessions.

Initial interviews were conducted before participants were introduced to the application. The purpose was to develop a baseline for the organization and its relationships.

The following set of eight investigative open-ended question topics was developed to guide researchers through the interviews.

1. Please describe yourself (name, current job title, and rank) and your experience in public affairs.
2. Describe your relationship with your boss/commander.
3. Describe training you have received on how to respond during to a crisis.
4. Describe the crisis or exercise in which the application was used.

5. Describe your experience using the application during the crisis.
6. How did it change your crisis response processes and actions?
7. How would you change or modify the matrix?
8. For what other public affairs functions might this matrix be used?

The initial interviews averaged 40 minutes in length. The initial interviews covered the first three question areas in the interview schedule. These included: Background and experience, relationship between public affairs officer and leadership, and the level of crisis communication training of each subject. This was done to prevent the introduction of the matrix from contaminating or obscuring pre-crisis opinions and expectations.

Additionally, data was gathered via post-crisis in-depth interviews with the public affairs practitioners to determine the value of the JIM. These interviews dealt with question areas four through eight, which included descriptions of the crises, experience using the matrix, the effect the matrix had on crisis response and other possible applications for the matrix.

Interviews were conducted via telephone and averaged 47 minutes in length, with the shortest being 26 minutes and the longest being 70 minutes. All interviews were recorded electronically with the respondent's permission.

To assist the researcher in codifying question responses, a check sheet was used during interviews. The check sheet was composed, listing the situational variables identified by Cancel, Mitrook & Cameron (1999).

As with the training guide, pilot interviews were conducted with active duty Air Force public affairs practitioners to evaluate the interview schedule and check sheet. Modifications were made based on feedback from the practitioners. Data collected in pilot studies are not included in the general study.

Throughout each interview, related follow-up questions were asked for clarification or further description of their experiences with the use of the application. Some follow-up questions or clarification were addressed via e-mail. Participants agreed to allow the researcher to use identifying information.

In order to triangulate findings from interviews for the ABL project, the researcher gathered mainstream media and missile defense industry coverage from the Missile Defense Agency's media clipping archive and Lexis Nexis to compare content with the organization's press releases. This informal content analysis was meant to supplement interview data and, therefore, not intended to be generalizable or predictive.

Content analysis is defined by Holsti (1968) as "any technique for reaching conclusions by systematic and objective identification of defined properties of messages" (p. 601). There "is no clear cut guideline for sample size selection in content analysis" (Kaid, 1989, p. 202).

The researcher analyzed both latent and manifest content. Kaid (1989) suggests this is the best way to fully understand the media content.

> A researcher who engages in counting alone might incompletely describe the programming content as well as miss the chance to correlate content with communication effects. On the other hand, quantification guards against the problems of allowing novelty to substitute for importance, a trap into which practicing journalists frequently fall. (p. 199)

Due to the small size of the sample and the descriptive nature of the research questions, the analysis was primarily qualitative and considered aspects such as tone of and amount of accommodation within the article.

A quantitative analysis was also accomplished that identified manifest content. For example, the prevalence of certain elements such as military officials' and critics' quotes,

and how frequently problems with the ABL program were mentioned. These categories were exhaustive and mutually exclusive for the purposes of this study.

The latent content aspect of the analysis was used to identify abstract themes and deeper meanings in the content, rather than superficial manifest content. Stacks (2002) suggests that this method of content analysis is difficult.

> At least one content analysis theorist, Ole Holsti, suggests that content analysis should be conducted only at the manifest level. Latent content might include how good or bad, attractive or unattractive, a particular message or photo was, whether it conformed to a campaign theme, and so forth. Latent content is hard to count; therefore, it has reliability and validity problems. (p. 109)

However, this method was not employed as a "count" of content, but rather was used juxtaposed to other media sources and press releases to gain an overall understanding of how the activity played out in the media. This method was designed to identify any relational dispositions between the media and the organization.

> This approach is similar to an ethnographic content analysis, which is used to document and understand the communication of meaning, as well as to verify theoretical relationships. Like all ethnographic research, the meaning of a message is assumed to be reflected in various modes of information exchange, format, rhythm and style, e.g., aural and visual style, as well as in the context of the report itself and other nuances. (Altheide, 1987, p. 68)

Ultimately, the results of this content analysis were addressed with participants through in-depth interviews to shed light on relationships between the organization and media during the research period.

Data Analysis

Constant comparative method of data analysis was used by "taking information from data collection and comparing it to emerging categories" until saturation was realized in the data (Creswell, 1998, p. 57).

Before formal data analysis began, the researcher listened to all digital audio files of interviews and transcribed responses verbatim. Data in field notes and transcripts were reduced using summaries and visual representations such as charts, diagrams and graphs. Commonalities in data were coded based on themes, subjects and major categories. Dey (1995) refers to qualitative analysis as using “insight, intuition, and impression” (p. 95). Summaries and visual representations were sent to interview subjects for verification and feedback (member checks).

This process essentially follows Creswell’s (1998) data analysis spiral where the researcher moves from data collection and management through reflecting to describing and classifying data to presenting the data, “a packaging of what was found in text, tabular or figure form” (p. 145).

MDA press releases and media news stories were also used as a source of data. In order to test the predictive value of the JIM, the researcher conducted a qualitative and quantitative content analysis of media content from Lexis Nexis and the organization’s press releases. Themes and categories were identified during data analysis and from a review of media content. Specifically, the researcher was looking for instances were the press releases either matched or differed from subsequent media content and where media release content may have changed as a result of media content. Additionally, the coding sheet helped identify key words in media content that corresponded with advocacy and accommodation. For example, words such as “took over” may indicate advocacy. Words such as “Air Force granted” or “worked with” would indicate accommodation.

As with the interviews, the focus was to identify trends in posture over time and how media coverage reflected organizational stances and actions of advocacy or accommodation.

CHAPTER 5
RESULTS

The purpose of this chapter is to report the findings from the interviews and media content analysis. The Juxtaposed Integration Matrix (JIM) was used during two base exercises and during a critical junction in the real-world Airborne Laser project. Each presented unique aspects and issues to evaluate the value of the JIM. The interpretation and implications of these findings are discussed in Chapter 6.

Themes

There were three major themes that emerged upon analysis of the transcribed data. These themes emerged during the initial interviews of participants and helped provide context and background for each participant. The themes include:

Table 5-1. Themes identified from participant interviews.

Theme	Description
Experience	Ties into confidence in decisions and the ability to effectively communicate.
Relationships	Suggests the give and take of social reciprocity. Typically considered in terms of long-term versus short-term with internal and external publics. Key aspects included: trust and accommodation.
"Gray" Area	Parts of public affairs that are situationally dependent or otherwise not clearly defined by regulations or policies.

Theme 1: Experience

The first major theme to emerge was experience. Experience led to greater confidence in decisions and an overall ability to conduct public relations more effectively. All three participants, despite a variety of education in public relations, agreed that experience was more critical in public affairs than formal training.

Training was credited for providing a foundation for practitioners. As such, all participants described their military public affairs training as being tactical in nature, lacking a strategic component. Reardon sees that trend continue in everyday public affairs.

> We always want to think about the big picture, but we're so focused on what's going on right now, what's coming across my desk right now, what reporters are calling about right now, that we don't ever think about what effect this is going to have in six months or a year, what's the big strategy. We live for the day in AF public affairs.

Experience also played a key role as a source of confidence in public relations decisions. Reardon perhaps stated it best:

> I think confidence comes from years of experience in doing it, but it also comes from a gut feeling, that you just have to trust in yourself when you give the general advice that your are giving him what you truly believe is the best advice in the best interest in all the things you know and understand. When somebody tells you to do something and you get that feeling in your stomach that this isn't right, then you have to speak up. Honestly, in my mind, that's what it comes down to.

Without the necessary time and experience in public affairs, practitioners seek it from others. Gibson, who has two years of public affairs experience, relies on "peers, coworkers and my deputy as a sanity check if you will, to instill that confidence."

Experience is also a critical component in being able to communication effectively with a myriad of publics, both internal and external. Reardon suggests less experienced practitioners have inherent problems with credibility. "Now that I'm getting old, I'd really fight my fight with the wing commander, but I remember being a lieutenant or being a young captain and the wing commander would be like, 'Why should I trust you, you're as old as my kids?'"

Theme 2: Relationships

Relationships also emerged as a key theme. Elements of this theme included the importance of establishing and maintaining relationships with internal and external publics. The concept of social reciprocity was inherent and involved developing trust. Further, it was suggested that relationships can be furthered through accommodation.

All respondents described a favorable working relationship with their respective organizational leaders. All believed their bosses trusted them and based organizational decision on public affairs advice.

> Reardon: I've never had the general say, "That's stupid" or anything like that. I do a lot of staff summary sheets and I don't think I've ever gotten one back that said, "no, we don't want to do that."
>
> Hague: I think he trusts us. I don't know if he trusts all PA to be honest. I think he was very wary when he got here, but we've got a pretty good shop. I've been in some where it hasn't been very good and the trust isn't there. He trusts us, but I'm not sure if he trusts PA across the board though.

Reardon suggests it is important to establish these relationships as soon as possible, since "gut feelings" are often difficult to convey as advice.

> [Gut feelings are] A very tough sell. That's why you have to have a relationship with your commander. If you haven't developed a relationship during the good times, the weeks when the newspaper comes out and there's no problem, through the good interviews. You have to build a rapport and hopefully the first time you tell the general "that's not how you should answer that" is not a week after you met him.

Theme 3: "Gray" Area

Many aspects of public affairs were considered "gray" areas." While there are general guidelines and policies in place to guide practitioners, respondents believed that every situation is different. Even determining which information to release and which to hold for response-to-query is often unclear.

> Hague: That's a great question. Again, it will be audience based as well as the severity of the situation. So, if the audience is big enough and it affects a lot of people, we'll usually release. If it's something that's nice to know, and a couple people might call in and ask a question, usually I'll just keep it RTQ[1]. The other side of that is whether the public has a right and a need to know, whether they care or not, they have a right and need to know right away, we'll release.

> Gibson: You've now crossed over to the gray area. There are no metric systems out there, there are no when A = B then Z. It's not that clear. I think it's case by case. It depends on your location, who the public is that you have to inform, so there are no clear cut guidelines in my opinion.

The "gray areas" often encountered in public affairs may become troublesome when trying to make recommendations to leadership that may be contradictory to legal advice. Respondents all believed public affairs was at a disadvantage in this area.

> Gibson: You want to stay in your lane as PA, but still answer the mail to the media. It can be very difficult trying to keep all those balls in the air when we have a gray area especially when legal has very clear cut guidance on an issue.

> Hague: There are so many areas where we don't know exactly what needs to be done at what point until we do it and we either get it right or we don't get it right. Whereas, legal is this legal or is it not legal. It all depends on the audience and the audience changes everyday.

Base Exercises

Shaw AFB

Shaw Air Force Base (AFB) began its exercise on Tuesday, December 8, 2004, at about 4 a.m. The scenario involved a disgruntled base employee who caused an explosion (simulated) on base. When emergency response personnel arrived, the employee, hiding in an adjacent building, began shooting (simulated) the responders. There were casualties, wounded personnel and damage to buildings. During the exercise, the base raised its protection level to "Delta," which essentially limits all movement on base and prevents people from entering or leaving the base. The exercise lasted

[1] Response to query is similar to a press release except that it is only released when media queries are received.

approximately 3 hours. Key publics included media, the base's host city, Sumpter, S.C., as well as base personnel.

Gibson at Shaw used the questionnaire two times during the exercise with similar results.

> Initially, I just perused them. I wanted to know how I could fit my response into the nature of the questions again. Starting at 4:30 I ran them twice, and they're pretty much the same response.

Each time Gibson rated culpability high (8), demands very reasonable (9) and potential damage also very high (10).

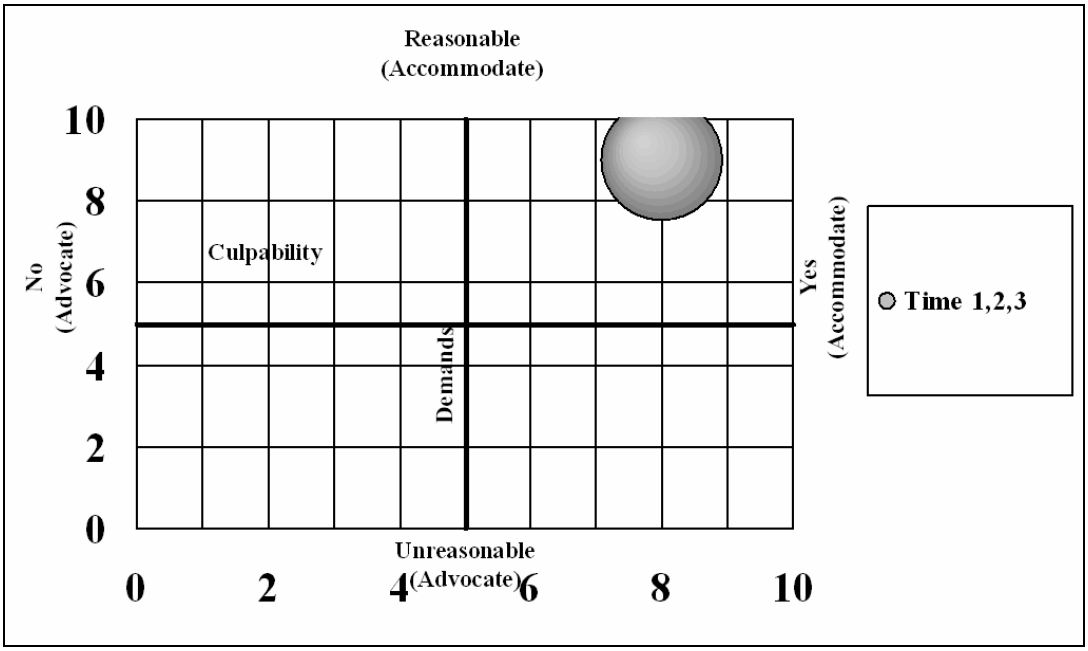

Figure 5-1. Shaw AFB posture during course of exercise.

These ratings were consistent with Gibson's accommodative actions for both internal and external audiences.

> When I learned that it was just an exercise, my recommendations were to send out a real world press release alerting the public and the local media that there was an exercise in force. The reason for that is people came in after the fact during the initial spin up. The thought was that traffic was backed up around the major arteries around the base, so people might consider taking alternate routes or split up shifts, maybe mission essential personnel first and then all others report. So I was thinking about the community and what was going on at the gates. Internally, I

> updated the commander's access channel[2] to inform them [people on base] of the exercise.

Edwards AFB

Edwards AFB began its exercise on Wednesday, December 15, 2004 at about 9:30 a.m. The scenario involved two chlorine containers being spilled on base while being transported. As a result, there were two simulated deaths and nine injured personnel. The spill was associated with the Airborne Laser (ABL) housed at Edwards AFB. The exercise lasted approximately two and a half hours. Edwards AFB is located on more than 300,000 acres, which resulted in different key publics than Shaw AFB. Key publics included media, base personnel and various governmental agencies that had a stake in the ABL, including the Missile Defense Agency.

Hague used the questionnaire three times during the exercise. As more information was learned over the course of the exercise, the public affairs stance became less accommodative. Initially, Hague rated culpability moderately (5), demands as very reasonable (8), and potential damage also moderately (5). The second time the questions were used, culpability and potential damage both dropped slightly to four (4). Demands remained the same. Near the end of the exercise, when most of the details were known, the culpability and potential damage both fell to two (2). Demands only changed slightly from eight (8) to nine (9).

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[2] The commander's access channel is a cable television channel seen only by base residents and is typically used as an internal information tool.

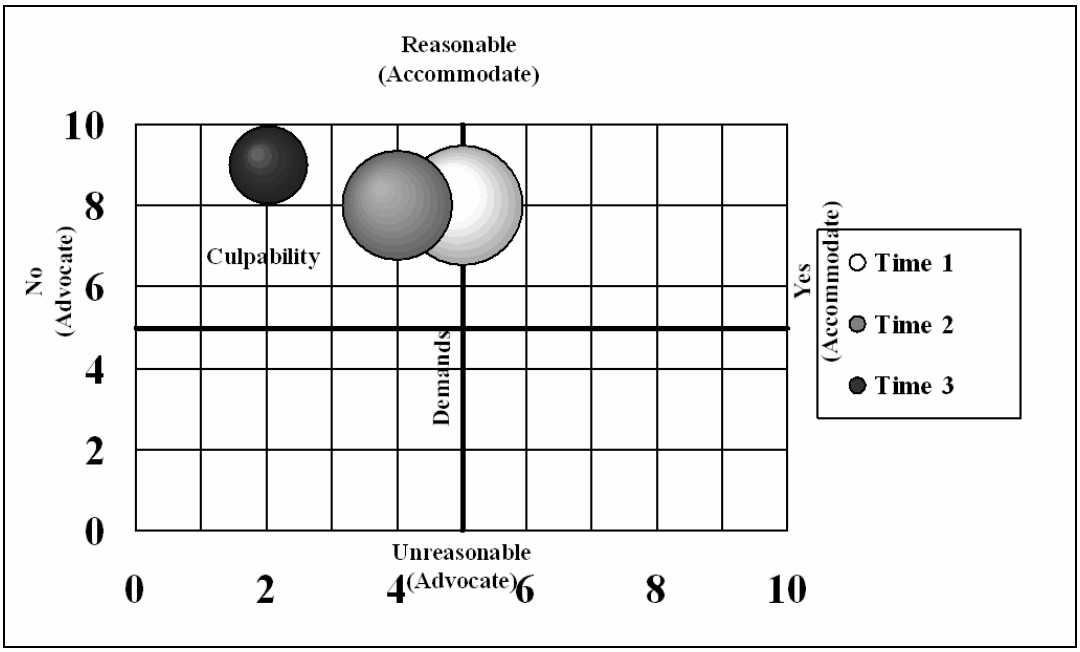

Figure 5-2. Edwards AFB posture changes during course of exercise.

Based on this scenario, Hague determined a less accommodative stance was appropriate.

> Because it was contained and not as serious or a danger once cordoned off, once it was secured on base and everyone was safe, we went into basic response to query mode. We sent out our releases, but we didn't set up a media center, we didn't have the commander speak, that may have come once everything was cleaned and done. Information we sent out on base through internal channels to let people know to stay away from the area. There was no potential danger of a chlorine plumb spreading across the base and getting people sick. That won't happen with chlorine. It was a lot less dangerous than it would have been if they would have spilled some of their other chemicals that they use with the laser. For the scenario, it wasn't as important to get info about safety out, it was more important to let people know to stay away from the area and respond to questions from the public. So we just waited for the calls to come in.

Hague at Edwards AFB used the questionnaire as a validity check after releases were sent out during lulls in the activity.

> It could have gotten in the way, but if it's built into the timeline so as soon as the first release is out, answer the first set of questions and see where you are. As soon as the second release is out, answer the questions and see where you are. If it's built into that checklist type situation where you know you're going to have downtime for a couple minutes it fits perfectly. It was fine. It didn't get in the way

> at all. But if I would have tried to do it at the same time everything else was happening, it could have gotten in the way.

The Graph

PowerPoint graphs provided with the matrix were not used during exercise scenarios due to time constraints.

> Hague: These exercises are quick. Nobody wants to sit in battle staff[3] for more than a couple of hours so they run through them so fast. If this was really happening, we could have been in battle staff for two or three days. At that point, using those graphs and going back and saying, "Sir, this is where we're at, this is why we need to do this, this is why need to have a press conference," instead of just responding to questions. Then it would have been a lot easier to use the graphs.

Despite the lack of use, Hague found validity it the graph.

> It puts your thoughts on paper, I guess. I mean, a lot of the time we know how to do something, but to communicate it on paper or with a graph or something or to be able to say, "Hey, Sir, look at this. Plotting where we are now, this is our situation, this is what we need to be prepared for and this is how we need to react. That I think is very useful because a lot of times just saying it, they're like "yeah, yeah, yeah." It's nice to have something to show for it, I guess, to help justify what you're doing.

Airborne Laser (ABL)

The Airborne Laser project, unlike the two exercises, is a real-world, on-going issue. The project is run by the Department of Defense's Missile Defense Agency where Reardon is the chief of media relations and plans. The ABL "involves putting a weapons class laser aboard a modified Boeing 747-400 series freighter aircraft and using that laser to destroy ballistic missiles shortly after launch" (US Air Force, 2003). The ABL project began in 1996, however, "the effort has been slowed by a series of challenges and is well behind the original schedule" (Tuttle, 2004).

The ABL had two major milestones to achieve before the end of 2004:

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[3] Battle staff is an assembly of base leaders and advisors, which meets in what is essentially the base control center to direct activities during a crisis.

- "First Light" - Fire the actual laser on the ground
- Fly YAL-1A aircraft to determine its airworthiness after being configured and equipped with key laser components.

These milestones were used to establish the dates of November 1 to December 31, 2004 as logical start and stop points in evaluating the matrix in a real-world scenario that had decisive implications for the project. Reardon put the importance of the period in perspective: "The ABL has to prove itself or it's going to get cancelled."

Reardon pointed to Congress as the critical public for the ABL.

> I will tell you when a congressional staffer or Congressman or Senator or someone on their professional staff says they want to see it, we make sure they get to see it. Other groups like reporters and even cadets who we really want to accommodate, but they may only get to see the aircraft from a distance. We might not be able to take them on to the aircraft, which we'd really like to do, but mission dictates. So we are very much accommodating our Congressional audience any way we can because funding is always a question and we want to ensure we get the funding. For other groups, we have to look at the benefit and what tests are going on.

The actual laser was fired on November 10, 2004 in a laboratory at Edwards AFB. And the YAL-1A aircraft successfully flew two times on December 3 and 9, 2004.

Reardon applied the questionnaire after each milestone was met during the period; however, the stance remained consistent throughout the research period.

> You look at the organizational culpability; the numbers were all low because things have gone well with ABL. On the public demands, I kind of put it around three because when it talks about how reasonable are the public's demands, what I would consider reasonable, the general thinks that the media wanting to do interviews left and right is unreasonable. So that kinda puts those down. With ABL, I think we're doing a really good job meeting the requests. For the ABL, I don't think it's having a negative impact, so that number is low.

Figure 5-3 reflects the posture of MDA during the research period, which reflects a stance of organizational advocacy. Reardon says the chart accurately reflects the organization's posture.

> I agree with that because at this point, as it looks right now, that's how it is. Now if something truly bad were to happen, in order to keep that culpability low, we would really have to start meeting more of the demands. If we have some type of accident or incident with the program, then we would have to be more accommodating.

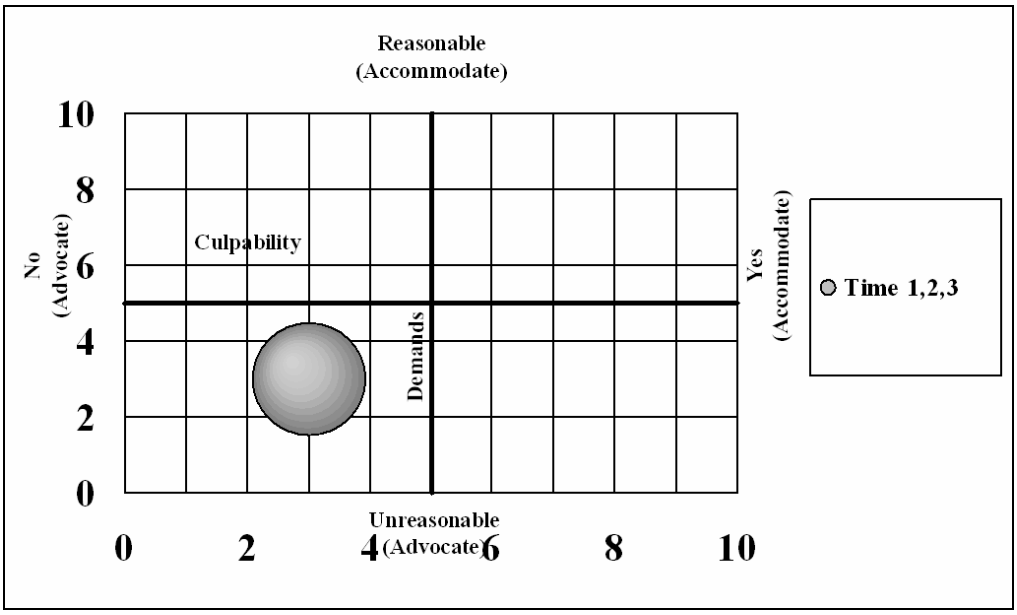


Figure 5-3. Missile Defense Agency reported stance based on the JIM during research period.

ABL Media Content Analysis

The Media

A qualitative and quantitative content analysis of media reports of the two ABL events was conducted to identify how media presented the events and how that presentation may have differed from those of MDA's for the same events.

A total of 20 news articles were gathered from a Lexis Nexis search and Internet search of popular media Web sites using the search terms "Missile Defense Agency" and "Airborne Laser." Only results that addressed the events directly were selected for analysis. Opinion and editorial results were not considered.

Three press releases were sent out by MDA regarding the three events; one for First Light and one for each of the two test flights.

Table 5-2. MDA press releases sent out during period of study.

Release title	Date of event	Date of release
First Light	November 10, 2004	November 12, 2004
First flight "return to flight"	December 3, 2004	December 3, 2004
Extended test flight	December 9, 2004	December 9, 2004

Media coverage fell into two basic categories: Mainstream media, (12 articles) and missile defense industry publications (eight articles). Mainstream media included *New York Times*, *Washington Post* and *Los Angeles Times*. Defense industry publications included *Defense Daily* and *Aerospace Daily & Defense Report*. Appendix I provides examples of language from the two types of media about similar aspects of the project in relation to the actual MDA press releases.

Both types of media conveyed the same basic information about the ABL tests; however the distinction was found in the clear disparity of the language used in the press releases and missile defense industry publications as compared to mainstream media news stories. Table 5-3 presents an overview of the manifest content of press releases and media articles by source.

Table 5-3. Manifest content analysis of press releases and media content.

Source	Overall neutral to positive tone	"Facts-only" lead	Program problems cited	Military source directly quoted	Critic directly quoted
MDA press releases	100%	100%	66%	0%	0%
Mainstream media	75%	75%	67%	67%	33%
Missile defense industry	100%	100%	25%	50%	0%

Perhaps the clearest difference between the sources was the frequency where problems with the program were cited or detailed. The statistic that shows the problems being cited in both the press releases (66%) and in industry publications (25%) is somewhat misleading because these articles referenced one shorten test flight due to an

"anomaly." Both sources also reported the problem fixed. This did not affect the tone of the articles.

Conversely, 67% of the articles by the mainstream media contained some degree of negativity about the ABL project. These criticisms were much broader and conveyed a far more negative tone. In fact, 25% of mainstream media articles were written around the criticisms, only briefly mentioning the recent ABL tests. Key criticisms included cost overruns, missed testing deadlines and ineffectiveness of the program.

Only one of the eight defense industry publication articles even mentioned that the program might be cancelled if the tests failed. Generally, these articles were factual and consistent with MDA press releases. There were no comments addressing funding issues, ineffectiveness of the program or testing delays.

Military officials were only directly quoted in 67% of mainstream media articles and not quoted at all in press releases or industry articles. Of those articles that cited problems, 62% used a direct quote from the military source. This majority is likely attributable to the fact that MDA conducted a media teleconference during this period. Interestingly, only 38% of those articles that cited program problems had an overall negative tone.

From an accommodative perspective, the mainstream media articles (25%) used language that implied a lack of accommodation, using statements such as "working in secrecy at Edwards AFB" and relying on unnamed MDA officials speaking "on condition of anonymity." This language was not present in either the press releases or industry publications.

Missile Defense Agency

Reardon characterized the MDA's approach to the media as aggressive, but still "reserved from a PA standpoint."

> We didn't announce anything prior to. We just said it was going to happen by the end of the year and we kept that very vague, by the end of the year. Yet we knew, internally, what the plan was and we made the decision that we were not going to announce anything prior to, but we pre-wrote all the different releases for post-events.

The lack of accommodation seen in some (25%) of the media content may be attributable to MDA. Reardon admits not announcing upcoming tests and events results in criticism from media outlets.

> If you put it out there and it's in print or if you tell a reporter that then you get, "Well, why didn't that happen?" No matter what answer you give them the perception is that we failed at it. We did it and failed at it and didn't want to tell them or we're trying to cover something up. So from our perspective, we don't mind telling you what we've accomplished, but we don't want to tell you what our plans are for the next week or the week after because we haven't done it yet and schedules may slip or things may happen. From a Boeing perspective, they see it as they want to show the program is active and going along. And we see it as, we don't want to be held accountable for something that may or may not happen.

The content analysis showed that none of defense industry articles offered criticism of the program, although one technical problem was reported. Reardon says there are reasons the industry publications tend to report issues more favorably.

> I think that's because the trades all tend to be here [Washington, D.C.], and they do talk to industry a lot, I think they're better educated on the program. Plus you can only beat a dead horse so long and people aren't going to continue to spend the astronomical amounts of money they spend to get those publications if they're constantly being belittled and berated in them. And the trade publications, their audience is industry and government, so it does them no good.

Conversely, the mainstream media's coverage of the events tended to focus on negative aspects of the programs. Reardon sees the disparity in press coverage of MDA activities as logical.

> When you look at the mainstream media, they're educating a different public and they're always wondering about how much money we're spending no matter what program it is. These programs are not simple. I've been here almost 4 years and truly don't understand everything that goes on. So with a trade reporter you tend to have someone who has a science or engineering background and just ended up becoming a journalist for whatever reason and they truly have an interest in it. A mainstream reporter is out to report the news, so you have to spoon feed them and when they get frustrated it goes back to money and evil and you're no good.

Other issues and possible misunderstandings may be attributable to the fact that the "First Light" press release did not explain why it took almost two days for the results to be released. As a result, most of the coverage came out over the weekend. Reardon admits this was not good from a public relations standpoint.

> The reason for that is when they fired up the laser the first time, it actually fired for less than a nanosecond, which I can't even fathom in my mind. It's not visible to the human eye. So after they did it and everything appeared to work, they then had to do several tests to verify that yes, in fact, the laser did fire. Initially, we had hoped they would do the test on a Monday and we could release it on Wednesday. I don't think I truly understood it would take a day and a half to verify the test worked because I live in a world of missiles where we know in 20 minutes if we had a success. So, it's a learning curve. From a PA standpoint, yeah, it's crappy because it came out on a Friday of what was a 4-day weekend for the majority of the country because Veteran's Day was Thursday. From a PR standpoint that was just bad.

As a result, many mainstream media quoted anonymous sources and referred to tests being conducted in "secrecy." Reardon said that was a common practice.

> Which means it was none of us in PA. I never experienced this as much before I came to Washington D.C. Even though I'm telling them the truth, they can choose to believe it or not and yet there are people within every organization here, I've found they let information out on the condition of anonymity. That is just flagrant here and it's not just MDA. That comes from the fact that we have a free press. There are a lot of people that will confirm things as long as you don't use their name.

As with the two base exercise scenarios, the graph was also not used during the ABL research period. The primary reason cited was due to the fact that the organization's posture did not change over the course of the study. Therefore, there was

no need to demonstrate changes in posture or convince leadership of a change in direction.

Research Questions

The research questions sought to determine how useful the JIM might be to public relations practitioners in the Air Force. In general, each question was answered by the research to some degree, which helped gain an understanding of the value of the JIM. The results are discussed in terms of how the study answered the research questions.

RQ1: Are three questions sufficient to identity an effective stance of an organization (i.e. does it fail to address a key aspect of a crisis)? In general, participants validated the questionnaire; however, participants used the questionnaire differently. For example, Hague preferred using all the questions each time.

> I found it helpful [to go through all the questions]. If I would have just asked how culpable are we? Could I have picked a number pretty close? Yeah, but it helped me narrow down where we were on the scale. Especially in the first questionnaire that I did because after that I could just base it off what I wrote for the first one. The first one definitely helped me narrow down where we stood.

Reardon also preferred to use the complete set of questions.

> I thought all the questions were good. I liked having the specific questions because each time, if you put it to a specific event, more than one question really gets your mind thinking about it.

Conversely, Gibson found the main three questions equally valid. “The first 3 are fine and gets you off and running in a different mindset during a crisis. I don’t think I used the other ones.”

RQ2: Is the 3-D graphic representation an effective tool to inform or communicate with leadership?

Since the graph wasn't used to inform leadership, the value of the graphs to communicate remains to be seen. However, Hague did believe it would have provided extra justification if she had needed to "sell" an idea to leadership.

> It puts your thoughts on paper, I guess. I mean, a lot of the time we know how to do something, but to communicate it on paper or with a graph or something or to be able to say, "Hey, Sir, look at this. Plotting where we are now, this is our situation, this is what we need to be prepared for and this is how we need to react. That I think is very useful because a lot times just saying it, they're like, "Yeah, yeah, yeah." It's nice to have something to show for it to help justify what you're doing.

Similarly, Reardon saw it a potential communication tool for leadership.

> I liked it because it would be a tool you would have to go into the boss and say, "Sir, look. We need to be in this quadrant and we're down here. In this situation we need to get out of this and get to here." So it gives you something to go in say, "This is what it looks like right now and this is what we've got to achieve."

RQ3: Does greater experience as a public affairs practitioner help or hinder use of the application? Participants felt it would be of greater benefit to practitioners with less experience. Hague, for example, has seen more credibility bestowed on more senior practitioners, which required less "selling" of an idea to leadership.

> I'm not brand new, but not a 20 year PA either. I would say it would be most helpful for somebody at my level or with less experience than I would for our center PA who's a lieutenant colonel. I don't know if it would help her. It's not because of helping her know where they stand, because I'm sure it could be useful in that way, but as a justification tool for bosses, I don't think she would need it because of her rank and her experience. I don't think that she would get the same kinds of questions or push-backs that I would. I know that because I've seen it. If she goes to battle staff and there's any kind of situation, she says this is the way it needs to be done and this is why. And they usually just take her word for it. In the same situation if I were to do that, they'd probably push-back a little bit.

Reardon also agreed that even practitioners with more experience would find the matrix useful in communicating to leadership.

> Anytime you have something you can show the commander that it's not just you saying it, you have something to show him that you can validate why you need to do what you need to do, then it's a good tool.

RQ4: Did the application cause the organization to change its stance? All participants did express some change in posture to a more strategic level. The application's recommendations were consistent with what Reardon would have normally done, however, the application, "helps you to focus."

Hague believed the application gave the crisis perspective.

> Going in and doing all the steps, I wouldn't have changed any of that because that's basically how we're trained and that's how I'm used to doing it. Because I know how to do it that way, it keeps me on track. But as far as thinking about the broader picture and instead of getting pissed off about the public calling with stupid questions, you know, overall, they're pretty reasonable demands.

Gibson actually modified his recommendations to a more strategic level based on the application.

> The organization's culpability, I think, that I might have changed my mindset a little bit. Typically my mindset would be, and I don't mean this in a bad way, but forget about the downtown community right now, I'm dealing with a crisis at the here and now. I'll deal with them later when I can. Well, in all actuality, I talked to the wing commander a little bit about where my mindset was going during the exercise. I said, "Before when we just simulate that we're going to call Sumpter or the chief of police, I think that my folks need to get in practice doing that because that's the only way we will be able to strengthen our relationship and how we actually do respond in an emergency."

RQ5: Is accommodation the ideal posture of an organization even during crisis? That is, do all crisis situations drive organizational posture toward accommodation (upper right quadrant of the graph)? As with many questions, it depends. In the case of Edwards AFB, the trend, although slight, was to move away from accommodation. Immediate concerns and questions were addressed on a response to query basis. As a result, relationships still were maintained. Hague took a strategic level justification for this stance.

> It's not just the doing, it's also why are we doing this and that's where it all ties together. Yes I need to get this information out, but why? Who cares? So we

> make them wait. What does that matter? Well, because if you make them wait, then they start to speculate and they don't have trust in what you're doing.

Based on the situation and more publics in greater proximity, Gibson took a more accommodative stance. Gibson cited several reasons for the stance.

> The first and foremost, and maybe it's not the way I should have been thinking, but during that timeframe as things were really getting excited and we had the sniper attack now, now it's getting closer to the school time. We've got two schools on base that are public school systems and now we've created more of a crisis on top of our crisis. Because now parents don't know what's going on. They've sent Johnny off on his bus, they can't get in touch . . . know what I mean? My primary should have been getting in touch with my key personnel downtown to help assist in (a) getting the word out and (b) lining up our downtown emergency response teams. In a small community like we have here, a lot of those are volunteers that you sound the alarm and they come.

The MDA stance was most strongly toward organizational advocacy. Reardon saw this as an acceptable stance.

> I think our culpability is low because I think we do a good job of communicating what has happened, but we may not do the best job we could do at meeting the public's demand for information. Is that going to change? Not as long as the program is moving along.

RQ6: Does the JIM adequately function at the strategic level? As previously cited, there were clear examples where the application caused participants to think of the larger picture and beyond the details of the scenario. Hague saw the application as a guide after the initial press release.

> I think I could have used it more after the first release goes out because usually there's not much in it [the first release] anyway because it's so quick to go out. Then to sit down and say, "OK, what kind of things can I expect?" And to make me step back and take a look at where we stand and if I needed it to try and get more information out of a certain organization or get backing from leadership for the next go around, I would use it for that. Kind of like a stepping stone.

Reardon saw its function as a tool for presenting a strategic direction to leadership.

> We spend a lot of time here when editorials come out rebutting editorials. I think something like this would help us have not so many of those editorials. From my perspective here, I could see it with the editorial boards, for a need for the boss to

better communicate, to show him. You know, apply it to a series of editorials and apply it to the graph, then take it in to show him this is where it shows up on the matrix and this is what we need to do because we want to get up here.

CHAPTER 6
DISCUSSION

General Discussion

How an organization deals with a public is a complicated matter. A multitude of variables come together to create a stance and posture toward a given public in a given situation. During the course of events, an organizational stance may change several times or remain constant.

The foundational elements of the Juxtaposed Integration Matrix (JIM) originated with the situational variables identified with the contingency theory of accommodation. These variables included: "urgency of the situation; characteristics of the external public's claims or requests; characteristics of the external public; potential or obvious threats; and potential cost or benefit for a corporation from choosing various stances" (Cancel, Mitrook, & Cameron, 1999, p. 189). Additionally, the relative power of the two publics in an interaction was identified as a variable (p. 190). The goal was to encapsulate each of those variables within one of three general questions that address organizational culpability, perceived threat and level of potential damage to the organization. In this way, a public relations practitioner could take in all of the complexity of a situation in a simplified manner to help guide their decisions.

Conceptually, it is similar to taking a trip in a car. There are literally hundreds of factors, internal and external, that determine whether the car gets to a given destination. It would be impossible for the driver to attend to all these internal and external factors and functions without the use of the instruments and gauges. These tools are critical to

allow the driver to attend to where the car is going and deal with unexpected hazards of the environment. Similarly, the JIM is designed as an instrument to give the practitioner a way to keep their eyes on the road so they can arrive safely at their destination.

This study found that the JIM was most effective at validating practitioners' positions, especially at the strategic level. Practitioners found it useful to both validate their decisions and in one case led a practitioner to consider a more strategic approach, although the overall stance was unchanged. At Edwards Air Force Base, the JIM led the practitioner to consider not only aspects beyond sending out a press release to the bigger picture of why send the release and what will this release accomplish.

The questions in the matrix, in these cases, did not cause the organizations to change their stance toward a given public, but it did cause them to carefully consider that stance. In each case, the matrix reassured practitioners of their stance and even justified that stance. This ties into the question of how do public relations practitioners deal with the dominant coalition. Specifically, how they convince leadership of a course of action. Studies (Plowman, 1998; Grunig et al, 2002) have shown that public relations practitioners' participation in the dominant coalition is dependent partly on "their ability to solve problems for the organization" (Plowman, 1998, p. 258). As such, being able to convince leadership of a course of action is critical to having public relation's advice implemented.

Although the matrix and specifically the graph weren't presented to leadership, all participants felt the matrix provided them something tangible they could present to leadership to bolster and justify their recommendations. Practitioners also believed that

using the matrix as a type of tangible evidence would be useful to even those with more experience.

In a larger sense, this study looked at practitioners faced with different scenarios and different sets of challenges. Each reacted differently according to their respective publics and situational variables. Despite these variations in circumstances, the participants reported that the JIM was still useful to them, even as the parameters of a situation shifted.

The exploratory inquiry of Air Force public affairs also showed, from an Air Force perspective, that most strategic thinking comes from experience in the field of public relations. Plowman (1998) also reported "significant correlations between inclusion in the dominant coalition and both education and experience in public relations" (p. 243). Perhaps the greatest benefit of the JIM is that it was useful to practitioners, regardless of their level of experience. In some cases it was a new strategic view of the situation; in others it was confirmation and validation of their decisions. This seems to indicate that the JIM helps close the experience gap between practitioners by giving those with little experience a greater strategic vision, similar to that of more experienced practitioners.

In many cases, this is a difficult proposition for practitioners.

> Although expertise in public relations may seem essential for organizations, organizations and their managers vary greatly in the extent to which they recognize and empower the function. Two reasons seem to explain why: (a) Senior managers with the most power in the organization—the dominant coalition—often fail to recognize and appreciate their dependency on the public relations function, and (b) public relations practitioners often lack the expertise needed to meet that dependency even if the dominant coalition recognizes it. (Grunig et al., 2002, p. 3)

This study provides evidence that the JIM offers a logical and practical tool to practitioners to validate recommendations and accurately assess a situation.

Theoretical implications

Contingency theory of accommodation provided the fundamental foundation for this study. Participants clearly understood the concept and validity of such a continuum, as has been seen in previous research (Cancel et al., 1999; Reber & Cameron, 2003; Reber et al., 2003). This is the advantage and disadvantage of such a continuum. On one hand, it is able to accurately portray a public relations environment. On the other hand, this accurate reflection also brings with it all the complexity of such an environment.

The JIM provided further validation in the concept of a continuum and that the business of public relations is complex and an organizational stance still "depends." The understanding offered by Cancel et al. (1997) remains valid today. "It depends upon the ethical implications in the situation. It depends on what is at stake. It depends upon how credible the public is. It depends upon a whole lot of things."

The study showed the public affairs officers did attempt to accommodate their respective publics; however, practitioners made conscientious decisions on how much they should accommodate a public. Each public, based on situational factors, required a different level of accommodation. The organizations did not adopt the same posture for all publics, largely based on elements of the matrix: culpability, public demands and potential damage, which were developed from the contingency theory's situational variables.

Contrary to Cameron (1997, p. 34), some participants did not "seek ways to be accommodative." Interestingly, even as Hague moved away from a position of more organizational accommodation, she did so with the idea of maintaining the relationships with publics. This philosophy points away from the concept of accommodation to a more relational perspective. As Ledingham (2003, p. 184) points out, "the degree to which an

organization and its key publics can accurately predict each other's position can act as indicators of relationship state." This position seems, at times, to even transcend the five relevant dimensions of the relational perspective of trust, openness, involvement, investment, and commitment (Ledingham, 2003). Hague and Reardon each made calculated decisions to forego aspects such as openness and involvement of the public.

This is consistent with findings by Reber, Cropp, & Cameron (2003).

> The boundary-spanning role of public relations is important in working through the contingencies involved in a difficult business and regulatory environment and how those contingencies preclude accommodation in some instances but nevertheless led to a successful outcome. (p. 21)

Further, excessive accommodation has been suggested to even be detrimental to an organization.

> The contingency theory posited that indiscriminate adoption of accommodative public relations would strain organizational resources, especially time and energy. It also holds that excessive accommodation of publics will erode management's confidence in the practitioner's judgment, even in his or her loyalty to the organization. (Reber, Cropp, & Cameron, 2003, p.5)

Practitioners adapted their level of accommodation and often formed decisions on anticipated outcomes of their actions based on specific circumstances and publics. This goes beyond contingency theory, which "depicts the stance of one organization toward a given public, not the outcome of interaction with that public. The outcome (win-win, win-lose or lose-lose) is beyond the purview of the theory, with its focus on decisions leading to an organizational stance in terms of greater or lesser accommodation of a public" (Cancel, Mitrook, & Cameron, 1999, p. 173).

As such, contingency theory only provides the stepping-off point in a crisis communication — a foundation to build a crisis communication model. Beyond this

theory and the idea of accommodation, practitioners tended to move toward effects-based actions based primarily on factors presented in the JIM.

The qualitative content analysis also indicated that some publics were not accommodated. In some cases a relatively high degree of advocacy was maintained even though there were clear instances where the JIM provided practitioners a clear understanding of their posture toward a public. Reardon accepted some responsibility for a lack of accommodation.

> You take heat for that and I think part of that falls back on us because we don't spend as much time as we should with those mainstream publications. And that goes right back to the fact that we don't talk about things until they've already happened.

While the contingency theory established a continuum on which practitioners work, it does not determine or explain these actions. One possible explanation for this posture is the issue of relative power.

> In situations in which organizations have greater power than their publics, they can get the greatest benefit by practicing asymmetric forms of communications . . . organizations are unlikely to practice public relations symmetrically until a public gains roughly equal power. (Cancel et al, 1997, p. 47)

This concept ties directly into the JIM's question of the threat by a public. L. Grunig (1986) also found that activists may be ignored by an organization because "the threat was not great enough."

Similarly, the JIM's questions of organizational culpability and potential damage also reflect relative power. In these instances, culpability would decrease an organization's relative power. Conversely, perceived potential damage to an organization would increase the public's relative power. Each of these issues (culpability, threat and potential damage), based on contingency theory's situational variable, pushes the

organization along the continuum. In each case, practitioners, using the questions, agreed that the JIM accurately reflected their posture.

This is consistent with the initial findings about situational variables by Cancel et al. (1999, p. 191).

> Situational variables determine how much closer to pure accommodation or farther away from pure accommodation the corporation's stance moves. It is possible that an organization's stance may not move from its predisposition stance if none of the situational variables are powerful enough to influence the position or if the situational variables cancel out each other's influence.

Practitioners also found validity in the JIM approaching a crisis from three different aspects. Cancel et al. (1999, p. 191) also saw the practitioner's stance toward a public driven by numerous variables and combinations of those variables.

> This study's finding also offer strong evidence that a corporation's and its public relations practitioner's situational decisions regarding a particular external public at a particular moment result from dynamic combinations of variables at work in a situation at any given juncture in the episode. This finding supports the argument that how organizations relate to their external publics and thus how organizations practice public relations often is not simply the result of the influence of one variable or even the result of the result of a small number of variables.

Theoretically, the bottom line remains the same – it depends. However, this research has helped move contingency theory's situational variables closer to growing legs and allowing them to crawl from the primordial mud of public relations theory and into the workplace. The end result is that the JIM addresses some of the parsimony obstacles present in contingency theory – a critical step in its evolution.

Limitations and Future Research

The scope of this research was primarily limited by the context of the scenarios and participation. As such, the ability to generalize or apply these findings to other public relations situations is limited.

Additionally, this study looked at the public relations activities within the context of the Air Force. Findings represented here may or may not be applicable to other public relations activities beyond a military setting. Future research should consider the look at how the JIM might benefit public relations in corporations or philanthropic organizations.

Similarly, the JIM was only applied to crisis communication scenarios. However, each participant believed the matrix could be used in other aspects of public relations. Future research should test these suppositions in areas such as community relations and internal information.

This study did not explore the impact the JIM had on the ability to communicate with leadership or other publics. Rather, it was strictly used an internal tool. Therefore, the conclusions drawn from this study are based solely on public relations practitioners. Future research should include in-depth interviews of organizational leadership as to the effectiveness of public relations efforts using the matrix.

Future research should consider the ability of participants to maintain situational awareness. If practitioners are not fully aware of the crisis and changes in the situational climate, it is impossible to effectively respond in any meaningful way – with or without an instrument. "A crisis cannot be managed effectively if the organization is blind to its details" (Coombs, 1999, p. 111).

Another potential limitation in future research is that this matrix does not identify the component to make the instrument work – the publics. Instead it assumes key publics have already been identified. For example, active publics are likely to be applied to the matrix more frequently since communication with active publics is more likely to produce cognitions, behaviors and attitudes than with passive publics (Grunig, 1997, p.

24). Coombs (1999, p. 131) also points out that, “Although initial response has a mass media emphasis, follow-up communication can be better targeted to individual stakeholders.”

Conclusion

Public relations practitioners deal with many gray areas. This research shows that practitioners thought experience best prepares them to deal with innumerable potential crises. While relationships with publics and issues such as trust are vital, ultimately, public affairs practitioners must make critical decisions often based on “gut feelings.” Good education, good professional development training programs, and good decision-support tools combine with intuition and experience to hone the best reactions. However, practitioners often have no certainty that their efforts will turn out the way they intended. Additionally, even if their experience and “gut feelings” are correct, their advice to leadership often seems counterintuitive and may be rejected in lieu of more clear guidelines.

This is the labyrinth practitioners must navigate during a crisis. This research, at least in part, has validated the JIM as a tool that practitioners can use to substantiate their advice and help them present their advice to leadership in a more tangible light.

The ultimate aim of the JIM is to enable effective communication by beginning at the strategic level, ultimately setting the overall direction of an organization’s efforts. “Communication is essential to shortening the duration of the crisis because it is at the heart of the initial response, strengthening reputation management, informing stakeholders, and providing follow-up information” (Coombs, 1999, p.133). This study suggests the JIM has the ability to help practitioners think more strategically about a situation.

This study also reveals, however, that while the JIM may help practitioners think more strategically, that ability does not necessarily equate to a more accommodative stance toward a public. A variety of factors influence practitioners' actions and recommendations. As with the relational perspective, "communication functions as a strategic tool in the building and maintaining of organization-public relationships" (Ledingham, 2003, p. 194). Through this communication in a crisis situation, relational issues like power, commitment, openness, mutuality of understanding and control are truly realized and solidified with publics (Ferguson, 1984; Ledingham, 2003, p. 185).

Despite the advantages the JIM might offer to practitioners, this application should only be the beginning of a larger crisis communication plan that includes relationship building, environmental scanning and other efforts that might otherwise mitigate crises.

While this instrument does not guarantee perfect crisis communication, this research indicates it does have the potential to help practitioners at least consider strategic-level issues and appropriate organizational stances during a contingency situation.

APPENDIX A
JUXTAPOSED INTEGRATION MATRIX TRAINING GUIDE

Purpose of application: This application attempts to address crisis communication at the strategic level. That is, how much an organization can accommodate a public's demands or how much the organization must advocate for its own interests. Ultimately, this tool may help public affairs (PA) practitioners decide how much they can accommodate a public during a crisis and will provide a visual representation to help leadership understand PA's advice. For our purposes crisis is defined as either "an unstable or crucial time or state of affairs in which a decisive change is impending; especially one with the distinct possibility of a highly undesirable outcome or a situation that has reached a critical phase" (Merriam-Webster, 2004).

Overview: The vast majority of crisis communication training and research deals only with the tactical level, specifically what to say and when to say it. This application tries to take a step back to determine the organization's stance before addressing specific tactics. The direction is based on a scale the goes from advocating your own interests on the low end to accommodating a public on the other.

This application tries to do this with a few questions that can be answered quickly. Similar to a checklist, these questions are designed to give the user a sense of how to approach a crisis. This includes determining the public stance and identifying recommended actions. The goal is to give practitioners a way to choose an effective stance with some degree of confidence. It also offers a way to present these findings in a simple, graphic way to leadership.

Application Details: Research has identified key situational elements of a crisis situation. Situational variables are those that are specific and dynamic during a particular situation. These include: urgency of the situation; characteristics of the external public's claims or requests; characteristics of the external public; potential or obvious threats; potential cost or benefit for a corporation from choosing various stances, and relative power of the two sides in an interaction.

This research will focus exclusively on contingency theory's situational variables because of their impact on a crisis situation and how they can be applied to a crisis communication model.

Three questions attempt to address these variables. Application users rate the each area of a crisis on a scale from one to ten. Each of the questions has several index to help frame the key question. The main questions are:

1. **How culpable[1] is your organization?**
2. **How reasonable are the public's demands?**
3. **How damaging is the situation to the organization?**

For example, an organization that feels it cannot meet the public's demands would rate it low and would be less able to accommodate that public. As a result, they would likely advocate for their organization more than the public. On the other hand, if the situation is potentially very damaging, the organization would rate it higher on the scale, making it necessary to accommodate to lessen damages.

Responses are then plotted on a graph to tell an organization where its stance should be on the scale. Each question helps focus the overall stance. The self-reporting scale is represented below

Advocacy **Accommodation**

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

x-axis

Low----------(organization's culpability)----------High

y-axis

Unreasonable-------(complainant/public's demands)----------Reasonable

z-axis

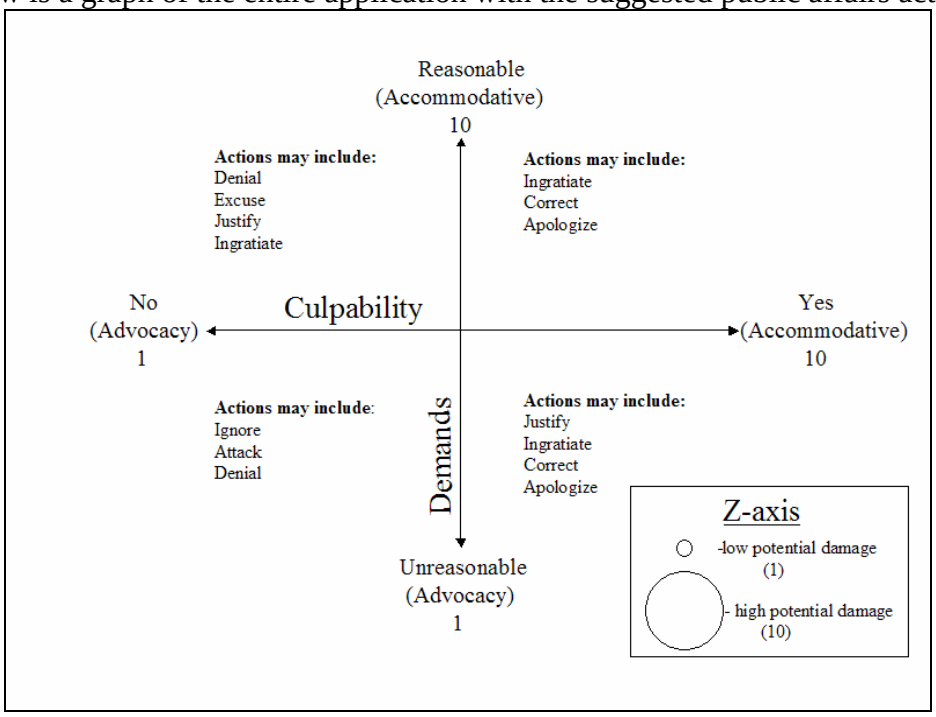
Low----------(potential threat damage)----------High

Based on the results, certain general actions are suggested. Researchers have identified eight possible actions an organization can take during a crisis situation. These include:

1. Attack the accuser: confronts the accuser; may include threats of a litigation
2. Denial: no crisis exists or explain why there is no crisis
3. Excuse: deny intention or claim lack of control to reduce responsibility
4. Ignore (strategic inaction): the organization does not publicly respond to or address the issue
5. Justification: downplay seriousness to reduce perceived damage
6. Ingratiation: praises stakeholders or remind them of organization's past good deeds
7. Corrective action: take steps to repair damage and prevent a repetition
8. Apologize: offer a full apology; may include statement of responsibility or plea for forgiveness and could offer compensation

[1] Culpability is operationally defined as "meriting condemnation or blame especially as wrong or harmful" (Merriam-Webster, 2004). Responsibility is not directly addressed in this definition, partly because this definition assumes moral, legal, or mental accountability.

Below is a graph of the entire application with the suggested public affairs actions:



(Note that this represents a 3-D graph, so that the z-axis point is represented by circle size. That is, the larger the circle, the closer to you and therefore, more potentially damaging the situation. Think of seeing a bear in the woods, the bigger he looks, the great threat he poses.)

Example scenario[2]:

To illustrate, assume a car manufacturer was accused of improperly installing seatbelts and this negligence was possibly responsible for three deaths. Using the application, the manufacturer may initially rate itself high (8) in culpability, the public's demand for compensation as reasonable (8) and the potential damage (through either litigation, publicity or both resulting in economic losses or damaged reputation) as high (8). The graphed response would then help the manufacturer determine its stance on the continuum (Time 1). In this case, the company would be very accommodative and might do things such as offer a full apology, compensation, and announce corrective actions to prevent future occurrences.

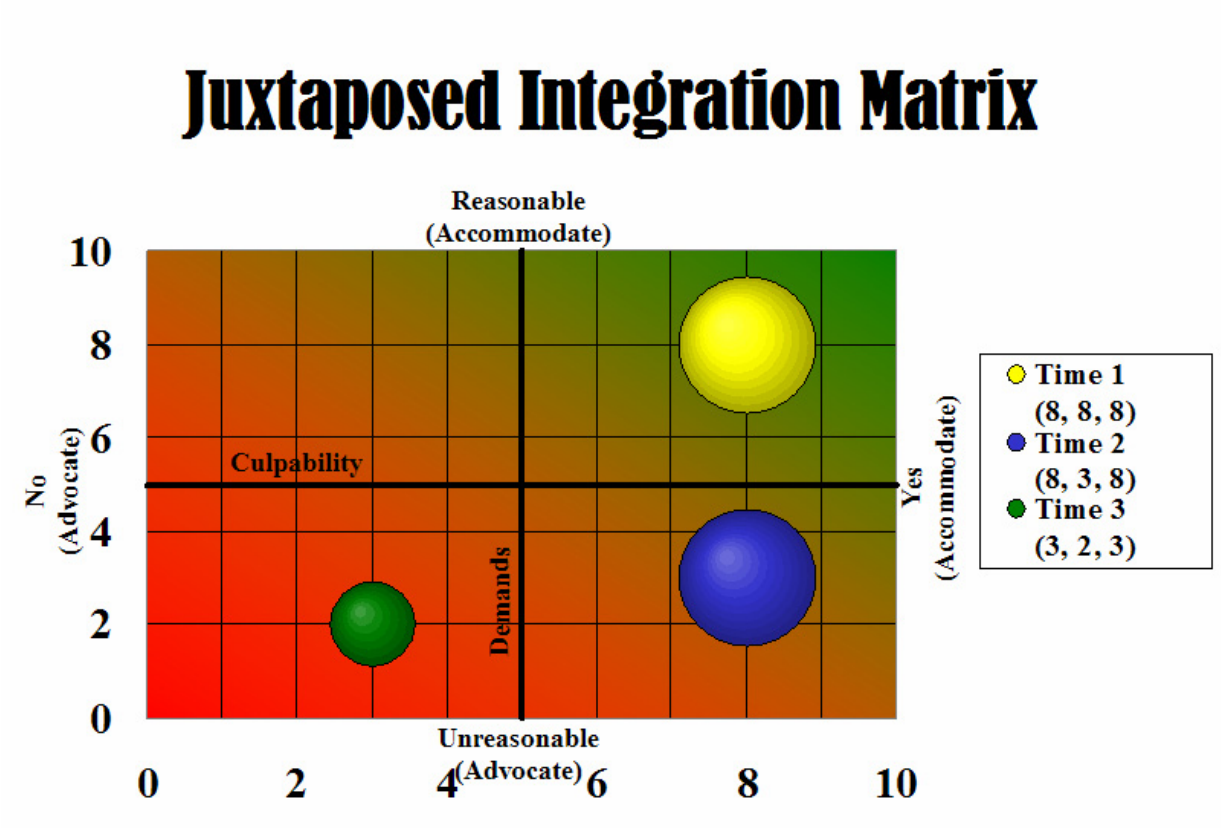
If the situation were slightly altered where the demands were considered unreasonable (3) the company's stance would need to change (Time 2). Instead of being almost purely accommodating, the company's response may change slightly to include ingratiation and offering alternate reparations other than those demanded. Since the

[2] This research will focus on how the matrix applies to military public relations. This example is for illustration purposes and is not meant to suggest application to such a corporate crisis or that the matrix is equally valid across all scenarios or between corporate and military practitioners.

potential damage is still high (large circle), the demands can't simply be ignored or minimized. This small change in the scenario results in a subtle move along the continuum toward some advocacy, but is still predominantly accommodative.

Finally, assume it later came to light that the deaths were attributed to the car owners tampering with the seatbelts. Self-rating would dictate a very different stance by the car manufacturer. For example, culpability may go down (3), demands may lessen (2) and potential damage to the manufacturer would also likely go down (3) (Time 3). In this scenario, the company may challenge the accusers or state that there is no crisis.

Graphically this is how the manufacturer's stances would look where the organization moves from an accommodative response to a position of advocacy.



Note: Potential damage is represented on the z-axis by the size of the circle—larger is more or potentially more damaging to the organization. Background colors are designed to correspond to the stance, i.e., red represents advocacy; green represents accommodation. As such, the upper right quadrant indicated the greatest accommodation and the lower left quadrant represents the greatest advocacy.

How to use the application:

1. Answer the three questions at the on-set of a crisis based on your knowledge of situational factors
2. Plot results on graph (using attached PowerPoint template)
3. Use results to determine actions, organization's posture, or to brief leadership
4. Answer pre/questions again as circumstances change
5. Plot results on graph (using PowerPoint template)

6. Use results to determine actions, organization's posture, or to brief leadership
7. Repeat process as necessary

Key limitations:

1. Does not address specific tactics
2. Assumes situational awareness (does not tell you how to assess situation)
3. Must be reapplied as circumstances change--stances are only valid for as long as circumstances remain constant.
4. Assumes key publics have already been identified
5. Only beginning of a larger crisis communication plan that includes relationship building, environmental scanning and other efforts that might otherwise mitigate crises.

Value of the application

1. Offers predictability
2. Helps create messages that are appropriate for complex circumstances
3. Can track message effectiveness
4. Changes in stance over time (longitudinally)
5. By quickly identifying its stance, an organization can take control of the situation.

What to look for in using the application:

1. Are three main questions sufficient to identity an effective stance of an organization (i.e. does it fail to address a key aspect of a crisis)?
2. Is the graphic representation an effective tool to inform/communication with leadership?
3. Would this be useful for other situations (i.e. is it only applicable to a crisis)?
4. Did the application cause the organization to change its stance?
5. Did it reinforce your position or did it recommend something different?
6. Were the actions appropriate for the quadrants?
7. Did it help it help leadership understand ***why*** PA recommends a stance?

APPENDIX B
QUESTIONNAIRE WORKSHEET

Date _____ Time_____
Description of circumstances at this time or how have circumstances changed in these areas?
Culpability:_____
_____
Demands:_____
_____
Potential Damage:_____
_____

A. Organizational Culpability

a. How likely is it that the organization done something morally, ethically, or legally wrong?

Not at all likely — Very likely
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

b. How likely is it that the public will *perceive* the organization has done something morally, ethically, or legally wrong?

Not at all likely — Very likely
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

c. How likely will perceived culpability have the same effect on organization as actual culpability?

Not at all likely — Very likely
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

d. Based on your responses above, how culpable is your organization (chart this response)?

Not at all culpable — Very culpable
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

B. Public Demands

a. How reasonable does your organization consider the public's demands?

Not at all reasonable — Very reasonable
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

b. How reasonable do you believe the public considers its demands?

Not at all reasonable Very reasonable
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

c. How likely will meeting these demands have a significant negative impact on the organization?

Not at all likely Very likely
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

d. How likely will <u>not</u> meeting these demands have a significant negative impact on the organization?

Not at all likely Very likely
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

e. Based on your responses above, how reasonable are the public's demands(chart this response)?

Not at all reasonable Very reasonable
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

C. Potential Damage

a. How likely is it that the organization will suffer damage to its reputation as a result of this situation?

Not at all likely Very likely
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

b. How likely is it that the organization will suffer financial loss as a result of this situation?

Not at all likely Very likely
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

c. How likely is it that this situation will have a significant negative impact only on a part of on the organization?

Not at all likely Very likely
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

d. Based on your responses above, how potentially damaging is the situation to the organization (chart this response)?

Not at all damaging Very damaging
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

APPENDIX C
GIBSON INITIAL INTERVIEW

Capt. Mark Gibson
Chief of Public Affairs
20 FW, Shaw AFB, Sumpter, SC
Pre-Interview
Conducted via telephone on Monday, December 06, 2004, 11:58:16 AM

Gibson: Been in the job since beginning of July 2004. I crossed trained into PA in 2002. Total military time 17 years in May 05. Before cross training, personnel officer, then protocol, then PA.
JHC: How would you describe or categorize that training that you've gotten since you've been in PA in regards to crisis response?
Gibson: At the DINFOS level, I would say dealing with the media and just learning how to craft your messages, not necessarily during a crisis, but that course teaches you to think on your feet.
JHC: It sounds very tactical in nature.
Gibson: Extremely.
JHC: Did the training deal with long-term relationships or was more geared toward a one-way type of communication?
Gibson: Restate that for me.
JHC: A lot times messages are pre-ordained in that the public really doesn't matter, it's just this is what we're going to put out. So I'm curious, are the messages one-way or are you thinking about the publics that are receiving those messages?
Gibson: I think it's a little bit of both, but it's not an even mixture though, not a 50/50. I do have canned answers, if you will, that I can use for just about any scenario that I can refer back to, but that's just from a time management perspective. I would say maybe 30% of it is consider who the audience is and what information do they absolutely need. For example, if I'm dealing with the city of Sumpter and the chief of police or fire marshal call me because they see a black plumb of smoke over the base, they I would definitely craft my answer to them to help them decide what they need to do as far as assisting the base.
JHC: Other than DINFOS, have you had another PR/PA training?
Gibson: My undergrad is in comm., my masters in professional comm., my second masters is in education with an emphasis on public relations and managerial and superintendent roles.
JHC: How has the training compared with experiences in the real world?
Gibson: The most influential was my first masters in professional communication from Park Univ. I refer back to a lot of that in doctrine theory and different pieces to what I do here on a daily basis with the local media or when I dealing with the internal questions.

JHC: How has your training helped you explain your decisions to a boss?
Gibson: To be brutally honest, that is on a case by case basis and that is on the individual. I don't think there is any training out there that can actually teach to deal or communicate with a particular supervisor because they're all different. Getting your word and your message across, basically how valid your position is on the exec staff, determines how well you will communicate with your leadership.
JHC: How much of your crisis comm. knowledge has come from training and how much from experience?
Gibson: 75% is from real-world, on the job.
JHC: What kind of training or media training has your wing cc had?
Gibson: He has received minimal. The only PA familiarization that he's received as a commander and what to expect from his PA is done through our MAJCOM and our MAJCOM director of PA, but on a whole, he's an 0-6, he's been in over 20, he has opinions of public affairs and what he's dealt with over those years, but as far as expectations, might be a better word, on what he should be getting from his PAO and if you're not getting that then you need to contact the director.
JHC: Was he there when you arrived?
Gibson: He arrived about 3-4 weeks before I did.
JHC: How would you characterize your relationship with your commander?
Gibson: I would characterize it as if I'm at his door it must be serious. I don't have to go through a gate-keeper, I have direct access anytime, and I also know not to take advantage of that. If there's something I can make a decision on, then I'll make a decision at my level. If I need him to read in on something or if I need a vector from him then he knows it's pretty important. I would say it's very good, he's very cautious when it comes to the media, with reason. On the most part, I'd say he's very PA savvy.
JHC: Do you have any regular meetings and how would you characterize those meetings? Is it very formal, etc when you have meetings?
Gibson: Like a PA planning or scheduling meeting?
JHC: Yeah, anything during the week where you get your direct input to the boss?
Gibson: Negative. Just on a case by case. I wish we did, but. . .I talked to some of my peers and every Monday morning by like 9 oclock they have a vector check with their boss. Mine, his personality, his schedule are driven a little differently. He maintains his flying hours, etc, so I don't have that luxury unfortunately.
JHC: So when y'all do talk, it's fairly to the point and not real casual?
Gibson: {laughs} No, we don't talk about football scores.
JHC: Do you think that he trusts PA?
Gibson: I do and the reason why I know that is the interaction that I see or I get from other group or squadron commanders, it's clear that he had to be the one to plant the seed or put them in my direction.
JHC: Do you think he understands what PA is all about and does on a day to day basis?
Gibson: Absolutely. Early on in our relationship here, we had some hurricanes and a tornado rip through the base here and he was on-scene and I was dealing with the media and it was perfect. He came back and commended by staff saying that PA is a "precision guided munition."
JHC: Have you seen cases where he based his decisions on your recommendations?

Gibson: Absolutely. I've seen it through the UCI, the phase II exercise, and many MAREs.
JHC: Do you sometimes feel at a disadvantage over other council like legal because much of what we do is gray areas instead of black and white rules?
Gibson: Absolutely. You want to stay in your lane as PA, but still answer the mail to the media. I can be very difficult trying to keep all those balls in the air when we have a gray area especially when legal has very clear cut guidance on an issue.
JHC: How do you determine what info to release or hold for RTQ when there is a gray area?
Gibson: You've now crossed over to the gray area. There are no metric systems out there, there no when A = B then Z. It's not that clear. I think it's case by case. It depends on your location, who the public is that you have to *inform*, so there are no clear cut guidelines in my opinion. Other PAs might have and if they do, I wish they would share it with me.
JHC: Based on that, when we give advice, where does the sense of confidence come from when making a PA decision?
Gibson: I think it would be experience. Now coming from a guy who doesn't have a lot of experience, just a couple in PA, I rely on peers, coworkers and my deputy as a sanity check if you will, to instill that confidence. An example is recently we had an incident and I went ahead and just made a decision and ran it through my staff. Most of them concurred and by the time it came down to no kidding time to brief the boss, I believe he felt pretty confident because I took the time to research it and run a sanity check.
JHC: Is there anything else that helps inform you decision during a crisis?
Gibson: With the exercises that we do and the more experience a person in this chair has in the PA world, and crafting and developing messages that informs the public during a time of crisis, I think it's a knack. I don't think you can just go up on the world stage and be the next briefer for the space shuttle crash. I think that takes a lot of time and hands-on experience and that's where our exercises come into play.
JHC: What would you say is the ultimate goal when communicating during a crisis or what do you hope to achieve?
Gibson: My goal as the PA is to get the most current, up-to-date information out in a timely manner. When I say up-to-date, during a crisis there are so many changes happening frequently that even if they are changing, I still want to get the info out there. For example, if we have an explosion on the base and I know we have X number of people injured at this time, at 1140 today local I can report I have X number injured, I want to do that in a timely manner.

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APPENDIX D
GIBSON FINAL INTERVIEW

Capt. Mark Gibson
Chief of Public Affairs
20 FW, Shaw AFB, Sumpter, SC
Conducted via telephone on Thursday, December 09, 2004, 12:45:26 PM

JHC: What was the scenario and crisis specifics?
Gibson: An explosion which was a decoy for us to deploy our emergency response personnel. When they responded, there was a terrorist that was hiding in an adjacent building that was clipping them [the responders] off one-by-one. He was a disgruntled base military employee that had been recently kicked out or discharged or something like that. It was an ambush. There were casualties, people wounded and damage to buildings.
JHC: Was it all contained on the base?
Gibson: Correct.
JHC: What was the PA response to this?
Gibson: Well, it kicked off at 4 a.m. I live about 35 miles from the base. By the time I hit the gate it was already at Delta (FP Con). I'm on the exec staff to report to the battle staff, it was difficult for me to convince the young man at the gate that I understand you're in Delta, nobody in or out, but he's [wing cc] is calling for me, as a matter of fact, here he is right now. Talk to him. From a PA standpoint, I knew we were going to have some sort of exercise and to be typical in nature to be around at the 8 oclock hour. Had no idea it was going to kick off at 4 so the element of surprise was definitely there. I didn't know if this was real-world or not. Although not necessary, I went ahead and initiated an office recall. Everyone was in the office within an hour so that was a pretty remarkable feat.
JHC: So you went to the battle staff?
Gibson: Well my deputy got here first and went to the battle staff and started taking notes for the initial pre-brief. Then once I got here I relieved her.
JHC: After you gathered some of the initial details, what kind of PA recommendations were you making at that point?
Gibson: When I learned that it was just an exercise, my recommendations were to send out a real world press release alerting the public and the local media that there was an exercise in force. The reason for that is people came in after the fact during the initial spin up. The thought was that traffic was backed up around the major arteries around the base, so people might consider taking alternate routes or split up shifts, maybe mission essential personnel first and then all others report. So I was thinking about the community and what was going on at the gates. Internally I updated the CAC to inform of the FPCON and the exercise.
JHC: Did you generate an exercise release?

Gibson: We sent out an initial release within the first hour. I stood up the media center and then they activated the DCG and I have a person at the DCG and the media center. So it's a triangle of comm. and it starts with me and I relay it to the media center. I get my info from the DCG, I compile it and decide what is going to be on the initial press release then I forward it to the media center. This is all done on Blackberries, bricks or phones. All of our templates are loaded into the Blackberries. In the past during a MARE, I went on scene and actually sent the release to the media from my Blackberry. In that particular scenario, I had a release out in 20 minutes.
JHC: What was the content of the initial release?
Gibson: Very generic and basic. If you were driving to work, it's nothing you wouldn't have seen yourself—you saw a plumb of smoke, you heard an explosion and I left it at that. I left it very generic and the matter is under investigation type of deal.
JHC: You didn't mention any of the fatalities?
Gibson: Not at that stage because I didn't know:

First exercise release content:

Shaw AFB has experienced an explosion and I think I added something about the gates. I don't have it with me.

Second exercise release content:

Due to an explosion at 4:45 today only mission essential personnel are permitted on base on the airfield and other normal activities are terminated. The base schools are closed until further notice. More information will be provided when available.

JHC: Did you use the questions from the matrix?
Gibson: Yes. Twice. Initially, when I went down there with my deputy sitting there I just perused them. I wanted to know how I could fit my response into the nature of the questions again. Starting at 4:30 I ran them twice, and they're pretty much the same response.
JHC: How did that compare with what you would normally do or suggest a different stance?
Gibson: No. Don't think so. I think I knew what my concerns were going in and I was just standing by to assist where needed. That's pretty much the reactive mode for most crisis situations when it comes to just supporting the commander.
JHC: Did it give you any additional insights or any additional value?
Gibson: If anything, before going into it, the organizations culpability, I think that I might have changed my mindset a little bit. Had I not experience the backup in the traffic . . . let's say I was already on the base like I normally have been and not been aware of what was going on the arteries surrounding the base, so I think I had that as a mindset as far as our culpability is concerned, we have a much higher culpability because of our supporting community. So that changed my mindset which would normally be around a 5 or 6 to around 8 or 9 both times for what I thought we need to do as far as what accommodations were. Typically my mindset would be, and I don't mean this in a bad way, but forget about the downtown community right now, I dealing with a crisis at the here and now. I'll deal with them later (3:03) when I can. Well, in all actuality, I talked to the Wing CC a little bit not specifically about your research, but about where my

mindset was going during the exercise. I said, "Before when we just simulate that we're going to call Sumpter or the chief of police, I think that my folks need to get in practice doing that because that's the only way we will be able to strengthen our relationship and how we actually do respond in an emergency."

Conversely, if I did not increase my awareness for Shaw's culpability downtown to be a little bit higher, then I would have been at the 5/6 range on the axis here and probably would have dealt with them later. Whereas now it gave me a better insight to say, "No, don't simulate that press release downtown, send it to them. *In an actual emergency, responders downtown can do a recall if they need and be ready to assist the base in a moment's notice.* So he like that, he liked the forward thinking.

Historically, previous PA's have not been very proactive in this office, where I'm kind of greedy and like to be at every table, I want to get into the fight, even if I don't belong, I want to get there.

That's a long answer to say, I don't think it did anything any differently from what I would normally do in a reaction mode in a crisis, but I do think it changed the mindset prior to going into it and determining culpability.

JHC: That ties into the public's demands a little bit.

Gibson: I actually put that higher. In my opinion, their needs are higher because they're not sitting around this big table and they don't have a panoramic camera going around the whole base monitoring the situation. They don't know. They heard an explosion. They saw smoke. So I thought their demand is higher.

JHC: What was your rationale in thinking they need to know? Why would you tell them that?

Gibson: Many, many different reasons. The first and foremost, and maybe it's not the way I should have been thinking, but during that timeframe as things were really getting excited and we had the sniper attack now, now it's getting closer to the school time. We've go two schools on base that are public school systems and now we're created more of a crisis on top of our crisis. Because now parents don't know what's going on. They've sent Johnny off on his bus, they can't get in touch. . .know what I mean? My primary should have been getting in touch with my key personnel downtown to help assist in A. getting the word out and B. lining up our downtown emergency response teams. In a small community like we have here, a lot of those are volunteers that you sound the alarm and they come.

JHC: how did you rank them?

Gibson: At first, public demand as 10, but then as 9. Not much different, but still higher than what I thought our culpability was. To me the threat was the highest. (10) because I knew there were sniper activity.

JHC: Were the subquestions necessary or were 3 questions only necessary?

Gibson: The first 3 are fine and gets you off an running in a different mindset during a crisis. I don't think I used the other ones.

JHC: Anything you would change?

Gibson: I liked how it was layed out in as far as the publics and the threat no matter where you put it, 12or3 or 321---they're probably in the correct order as far as importance.

JHC: From a PA perspective, did it make the job more effective?

Gibson: Absolutely. I think so because of informal Q&As between me and the commander and the group commanders (where I wasn't a hero with XP) because I was asking a lot of pointed questions that people said hey that makes sense, why aren't we doing that?
JHC: Any other applications for PA?
Gibson: Absolutely. Here's a good example, we had a situation arise and I'll use hypotheticals, but we had an organization that wanted to make a donation to an org or base, which is fine and we appreciate that, but we have to run some wickets through legal, the make sense test, and it was all pretty much last minute and they were going to do a press conference and they wanted to donate all this stuff to the wing commander. He wasn't available so they wanted the next eligible (ranking) person to go down and represent. It was last minute and the legal folks weren't that excited or motivated to do the research in such a quick manner because they were afraid they would miss something. Well, if you went back to the diagram and the chart and would want to know what's our culpability here, what's the complaint or public's demand, or what's the potential damage within com rel. Is this a company that has been doing this for years and now we are building a relationship with the community and would they take offense if we didn't go down there and show a presence? So I would say you could run it for the same thing or anything in PA from internal to media. We just had an IFE, well with all the arteries around the base, somebody saw that or heard it on a scanner. I can blow it off or I can do the RTQ or not even answer them at all, but now what does that do with my relationship with that media outlet I work with on a daily basis? I working on getting my good news stories out there, then hopefully when I have a rape case, death, or murder on base, then I can work with them a little bit easier.
JHC: Did you play with the graph?
Gibson: Beyond the scope of what we were doing.
JHC: Anything else you want to add?
Gibson: If you put yourself into the crisis situation because of the all the people you have to brief, then in a crisis situation, less is more. If you have less, straight to the point, concise information, in a model like this, that if you studied it and understood it, they you could deduce and take your own deductions where you wouldn't have to go through so many layers of the onion. Just keeping it simple with the first three questions aided me immensely.
JHC: Just leave it with 3 questions?
Gibson: Because that gets you thinking in the right direction. If we're not culpable at all, OK that's fine, but is there any damage to your relationships downtown, the news anchors or producers.

APPENDIX E
HAGUE INITIAL INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Capt. Catie Hague
Chief of Public Affairs
95th ABW, Edwards AFB, CA
Conducted via telephone on Thursday, December 09, 2004, 6:52:28 PM

JHC: How long have you been in public affairs?
Hague: Been in the job since two years. Enlisted from 92-93. USAFA grad in 1998 and went into PA (+/- 6 yrs).
JHC: How would you describe the training you've received so far for responding to a crisis?
Hague: Of course, we have the DINFOS schpiel where they give you the basics of crisis communication. Not a lot though. So I don't think I really learned a lot from crisis communication at DINFOS. I've learned the most from on-the-job incidents. . .just being thrown into it and working your way through it. I've had some really awesome NCOs/NCOICs who kind of know the AFI inside and out, put our checklists together and gone through all that stuff with us and exercises have been great, obviously for learning that stuff. I've probably learned the most from a/c accidents, mishaps, suicides or anything like that we've worked. Pretty much I've learned by doing.
JHC: Have you had any other PA training other than through the AF?
Hague: I'm in a master's program at the Univ of Missouri. IWAC course at Maxwell.
JHC: How has real world crises experience compared with your training?
Hague: The training's good. The base has the checklist, here's what you need to put here, what kind of info to release and not release. All the basic information is great to have, to start with. But as far as the actual experience, you don't really realize how people are going to react to things until they do. Recently we've had a couple suicides and a couple missing people and things like that. At first you think, "Oh, this isn't really that big of a deal, not the F-22 that just crashed. But anything with people I've learned is absolutely the most important thing and it's amazing how people react to it. Something like that I never learned through training. We've had a lot of deaths lately. You don't really think of that as being as big a deal as an F-22 going down, but sometimes it's bigger.

We also had something that is sort of a crisis comm. issue, but didn't realize it before hand, it's like "Oh, this is no big deal." Our housing just got cut by 188 and people are being evicted from our base, which I'm like, "OK, we'll put a PA plan together; we'll get some information out, blah, blah, blah." People were absolutely terrified and pissed. I couldn't believe how angry they were because they had no answers. Were they going to get financial aid to move, were they going to get help from the govt, all these kinds of questions. Something I didn't learn from training right there

was how important something that affects homes and personal finances can be at times than something like an a/c accident.
JHC: So you had to ID the crisis?
Hague: Yeah. You don't realize it's a crisis until you go "Oh, shit!"
JHC: How would you define a crisis?
Hague: Oh, that's a great question. How would I define a crisis? Wow. Probably from a PA standpoint, probably anything that causes panic or concern from the people that we work for—from the base populous, the community. Anything that really just makes people worry about some aspect on what we do.
JHC: By that definition, that places at lot of responsibility on you to be able to ID and be in touch with those publics.
Hague: Oh, yeah. We gotta know who we're dealing with. The housing thing was a big one for me because I didn't realize how serious people were going to take it. I didn't ID it as well as I could have.
JHC: More that the crisis, this was a long term, relational deal?
Hague: Yeah. The main thing we learn through training, you know, they focus on things like an a/c going down, chemical spills, tornadoes, earthquakes, serious natural disaster type things, but they never give you training on something that is just personal. People don't consider that a crisis, but it really can be.
JHC: What kind of PA training has your boss received?
Hague: (wing cc) Actually he's pretty good, which is nice. He's been a commander at 4 different places and just came from Langley. We did some additional media training with him, but I think most of his training has come from his PA's and they've done an excellent job. The only thing we really need to give him was Hollywood media training, which is something we get here.
JHC: How would you describe your relationship with your boss?
Hague: He just got here in June. I haven't known him for too long, but he's very driven. I won't say micromanaging, but he can be if people don't respond the way he wants them to. He's very PA savvy and understands the importance of what we do. I probably talk to him at least 3-4 times a day. He trusts what we do, understands what we do, and really supports what we do, which is amazing considering some of the bosses I've had in the past.
JHC: 3-4 times a day?
Hague: e-mail, phone conversations, he'll stop by. We have so much news that comes out of Edwards with all the testing that goes on that we're constantly in the news somewhere.
JHC: Do you think he trusts PA?
Hague: I think he trusts us. I don't know if he trusts all PA to be honest. I think he was very wary when he got here, but we've got a pretty good shop. I've been in some where it hasn't been very good and the trust isn't there. He trusts us, but I'm not sure if he trusts PA across the board though.
JHC: Do you think he has a really good sense of what you do?
Hague: Yes I do. When he got here, we briefed him for about 3 hours on what we do. Just being able to talk to him on a regular basis, I have great access, which is awesome. I can call him up at his home, on his cell phone or whatever, and because of that, he's always aware of what we're doing. I guess access is the answer to that I guess.

JHC: Does he base some of his decisions on your advice?
Hague: I would say he does, but I think he has already got there before he needs by advice. There are times when I've been able to sway him one way or another on certain things, recommending some course of action, but most times we're on the same page for any communication related topic. He's PA savvy, he gets it. Because of that, he usually asks for it before I have to give it to him.
JHC: Is PA at a disadvantage sometimes over other counsel because of the gray areas?
Hague: I do. Sitting in battlestaff during an exercise is a great example where's there's information that we need to get out right away, but we're waiting on information. There's so many areas where we don't know exactly what needs to be done at what point until we do it and we either get it right or we don't get it right. Whereas, legal, is this legal or is it not legal. It all depends on the audience and the audience changes everyday.
JHC: On do you "sell" your stance to the boss when you're dealing with gray areas?
Hague: I give him my analysis of the audience first. I'll go to him and say, "Sir, we've got 188 people that are about to lose their homes, this is their main concern. They're concerned with what kind of help we're gonna give, where they're going to go, how much money they're going to get. These are the things our audience wants to know. Now if you don't have those answers then you need to tell them you don't have them and you're working to get them." So I always start with the audience he's talking to, who he's communicating with, and once I do that, I think he usually gets a better understanding of why I'm choosing to give him advice one way versus another.
JHC: How do you determine what to release and what to hold RTQ?
Hague: That's a great question. Again, it will be audience based as well as the severity of the situation. So, if the audience is big enough and it affects a lot of people, we'll usually release. If it's something that's nice to know, and a couple people might call in and ask a question, usually I'll just keep it RTQ. The other side of that is whether the public has a right and a need to know, whether they care or not, they have a right and need to know right away, we'll release.
JHC: What level would you say your confidence is in your recommendations to the boss?
Hague: I don't go to him with a recommendation unless I'm 99% sure I'm right because he's one of those guys who doesn't what to hear it unless you're sure. That doesn't mean it always going to work out the way we want it to work out, but I do quite a bit of research and check with a lot of different people. I check with AFMC PA, I use SAF/PA to validate what I'm thinking and make sure I'm on the right track and then I go to him.

If I had to make a decision right on the spot without checking all that stuff, I would tell him I'm not confident in this, this is my gut feeling.
JHC: You would have some level of confidence on the gut feeling based on what?
Hague: Experience and training.
JHC: During a crisis, what is the goal of your communication?
Hague: Ooh. Goal? Well, let's see. Um. My overall goal, no matter what's being released or when it's being released, or who I'm talking to, or whatever is getting the most accurate information that I can. I would rather be late and get it right.
JHC: What part does a particular public play in that goal?

Hague: It might depend on the situation, but I feel like if the info is accurate, then I'm serving whatever public I'm trying to communicate with and if I don't get it right, then I've failed them. Ultimately, the reason that I have that goal is because of the public. They deserve to have accurate info, not just some BS I've come up with because I'm trying to get it out fast.

APPENDIX F
HAGUE FINAL INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Capt. Catie Hague
Chief of Public Affairs
95th ABW, Edwards AFB, CA
Conducted via telephone on Thursday, December 23, 2004, 12:55:14 PM

JHC: Could you describe the scenario for the exercise?
Hague: A chlorine spill associated with ABL on base. Two containers that were being transporting, both were leaking by the SIL. All contained on base (301k acres). Chlorine starts dissipating as soon as its spilled. Mostly all gone by the end of the exercise. Two simulated deaths, 9 injured, no missing. Both dead were civilians, one govt, one contractor. Started at 9:30, over by 11:30-noon.
JHC: From a PA perspective, what did you do?
Hague: I'm on battlestaff. The first thing we did is start checklists, logs, gathering info. Sent out initial press release. Since it's ABL there's more to it than a normal release. Everybody wants their fingers in it because it's such a sensitive program. The release went out within an hour, but it was very bland. It was just: There was a chemical spill on south base. So far, there is one dead, 10 injured. Emergency response teams are at the site. More info as it becomes available.

No mention of ABL in the first release. Chlorine is chlorine. We weren't sure it was associated because there are tons of other programs down there.
JHC: Were there additional facts that you withheld?
Hague: Nothing that we withheld. We were pretty sure it was ABL related, but it hadn't been confirmed and we had to get the release out.
JHC: Having to get the release out was based on the AF timeline?
Hague: Right, but also based on the media calls coming in. We were being bombarded with media calls in the first hour. We had no info to give until the release went out and everybody had seen it and signed off on it. That's the other issue with ABL. It's not just the ABW commander to approve it, its also MDA, HQ, SAF/PA, which shocks me we did it in an hour. It's just the sensitive nature of the program. Releasing info is painful with MDA.
We did 3 releases.
Second release added that it was a chlorine spill, it was ABL, it was at the SIL, but no reason for the spill at that time. We didn't know if it was an accident, somebody doing it on purpose, no idea. We had location, updates on where people were being taken, that a lot of it [chlorine] was dissipating in the area, contained on base. (out less than an hour after the first release).
JHC: How would you characterize your PA strategy?
Hague: Because it was contained and not as serious or a danger once cordoned off, once it was secured on base and everyone was safe, we went into basic response to query

mode. We sent out our releases, but we didn't set up a media center, we didn't have the commander speak, that may have come once everything was cleaned and done.

Info we sent out on base through internal channels to let people know to stay away from the area. There was no potential danger of a chlorine plumb spreading across the base and getting people sick. That won't happen with chlorine. It was a lot less dangerous that it would have been if they would have spilled some of their other chemicals that they use with the laser. For the scenario, it wasn't as import to get info about safety out, it was more important to let people know to stay away from the area and respond to questions from the public. So we just waited for the calls to come in.

JHC: Did you have to sell any of this to wing leadership?

Hague: No, they're pretty good about this. If this had been a real situation, I probably would have some push back on a couple issues, more from the MDA standpoint than it would be from my boss. That's because they're very sensitive about releasing information because the program isn't as secure as it could be. So they're worried about stuff like that.

JHC: Used the worksheet 3 times?

Hague: Yes I did.

JHC: Describe your experience using these questionnaires.

Hague: I thought the questionnaires were pretty cool. The only thing I had problems with was the tool itself because I don't know what I'm doing when it comes to graphing. As we went through the exercise things changed, but not too drastically though because it wasn't a very severe scenario. It could have been a lot worse. I had to read (c) of the first question like 3 times to understand what you were trying to get at.

JHC: The idea is that would perception be the same as reality.

Hague: Right. That's what I finally figured out after reading it a couple times. That's the only one I had difficulty with. Everything else I just went through as things happened. Obviously I did all my stuff first, then when I had a couple seconds to do the questionnaires, I did that.

I did all my checklists, logging and put out my initial release and then I went back and I said OK, for this portion of the exercise, how culpable are we? Well, it depends. At the beginning I don't know. We don't have all the information, so I was kind of in the middle on that one.

I did the same for public demands. Went through right after the initial release and asked how reasonable are the publics demands. Well, they're pretty damned reasonable. I think they have every right to know what's going on, so. . .Now some questions were asking for the names of those killed and they know better and you tell them once and they say, "we sill want to know who it is." Well, that's great, but you're not going to know until their family has been notified. So there were a couple things I didn't think were reasonable.

For the last part, could this be potentially damaging? Yes, because this is a huge program, but it's chlorine so again it was in the middle.

And I did the same thing for the other two releases.

JHC: Did the questions give you a broader perspective or change the way you thought about anything?

Hague: In some ways it did. Going in and doing all the steps, I wouldn't have changed any of that because that's basically how we're trained and that's how I'm used to doing

it. (1527) Because I know how to do it that way, it keeps me on track. But as far as thinking about the broader picture and instead of getting pissed off about the public calling with stupid questions, you know, overall, they're pretty reasonable demands. So that was something I was able to sit back and think about and realize we're doing pretty good here. We're not doing anything wrong, we're not giving any information we're not supposed to be giving.

And the same with culpability, like how big of an issue is this? A lot of times, like right when you walk into a situation, you're freaking out. Oh my, this is the worst thing that could happen and we're pumping out information here and there, everybody's screaming and yelling at each other and information is not accurate, blah, blah, blah. But after looking at the questionnaire and going through it and realizing if I was actually determining where we are as far as a crisis, we're doing ok. This is not that bad. You know, it almost calms you down. I don't know if that's the point of it, but I was like it's okay, it could be a lot worse. It's potentially damaging, but it's not going to kill us. So that was pretty helpful, I thought, for putting it in perspective. (1704)

JHC: Were there any parts of the crisis you feel it didn't address?

Hague: How supported were we by leadership. I thought that might help. I don't know where it would fit into here, but just an additional piece of crisis communication. You need to be prepared for not getting what you want, for not being able to release what you want, for not getting the support you need. That was pretty apparent in our exercise because, yeah, my boss is supportive, yeah headquarters is supportive, SAF/PA was great, but MDA in a real situation would have taken over that entire information release process. I know they would have.

JHC: This seems to go back to the idea of selling your position. If you did have to sell it, would these questions given you any extra ammunition to do that?

Hague: Oh yeah. Definitely, because I would have been able to say to them, "OK, listen guys." Now I probably would have been able to make the argument anyway, but just having a number scale, having something in front of you to say, "On a scale from one to ten, this is a five, this is not critical, this is not a big deal. It's not like your laser just shot down a 747 in the air. We're talking chlorine here; it's not a big deal. We have to get the information out because we need people to trust what we're saying. This is really important and in this type of situation you need to let me do my job and release what I can release when I need to release it."

I think it would have helped in that sense, however, if it was something that was a 10 on the damaging scale it would have been a lot harder to sell.

I think it's very useful as far as numbers go and being able to put it on a scale of one to ten what you're dealing with.

JHC: *explains how to use graph and shows results on graph.*

1st question 5-8-5

Hague: (response to doing graph). Oh, how easy!

JHC: The second one was a 4-8-4.

Hague: Oh, they're like on top of each other.

JHC: Then the last one was a 2-9-2.

Hague: Cool!

JHC: The idea here is if you had to sell it to somebody, you can show them where you started and where our position has moved over time. It was very damaging, now we

think it's less damaging. On the scale, it might be telling you that you can be less accommodating because we're not as culpable, it's not as damaging, while the demands are still reasonable. We can advocate for our own needs more so than if we'd done something wrong.

Hague: And that's totally true. That's what's so amazing about it. I mean in this situation everything was pretty much clockwork. It wound up being an accident, it was contained, yeah, we lost some people, but it wasn't anybody's fault I guess you can say. It's not like the base did something that's absolutely apprehensible. Now that makes sense. That's kinda cool. I like your little graph.

JHC: Even using the line graph, the grouping would be close, but the trend would still be moving toward advocacy and away from accommodation. (Jim's thought: but remaining accommodating might increase publics perception of your org because you are doing something you didn't have to do.)

Hague: So, big picture, there's no need to apologize, but you don't want to get to ignore. Explain more than apologize is where we were.

JHC: As you went through the questionnaire the 2nd and 3rd time, did you need to answer the subquestions or just stick with the 3 main questions?

Hague: I found it helpful. If I would have just asked how culpable are we? Could I have picked a number pretty close? Yeah, but it helped me narrow down where we were on the scale. Especially in the first questionnaire that I did because after that I could just base it off what I wrote for the first one. The first one definitely helped me narrow down where we stood.

JHC: Did doing the questionnaire interfere with what you were doing?

Hague: It could have if I didn't do it the way I did it. If I had tried answering the questions while I was getting the release out, talking to people, and making sure I had the right information. It could have gotten in the way, but if it's build into the timeline of as soon as the first release is out, answer the first set of questions and see where you are. As soon as the second release is out, answer the questions and see where you are. If it's built into that checklist type situation where you know you're going to have downtime for a couple minutes it fit perfectly. It was fine. It didn't get in the way at all. But if I would have tried to do it at the same time everything else was happening, it could have gotten in the way.

JHC: So just to clarify, the responses that you got from it were an affirmation rather than a guiding force.

Hague: Yes. I think I could have used it more after the first release goes out because usually there's not much in it anyway because it's so quick to go out. Then to sit down and say, "OK, what kind of things can I expect?" And to make me step back and take a look at where we stand and if I needed it to try and get more information out of a certain organization or get backing from leadership for the next go around, I would use it for that. Kind of like a stepping stone.

It puts your thoughts on paper, I guess. I mean, a lot of the time we know how to do something, but to communicate it on paper or with a graph or something or to be able to say, "Hey, Sir, look at this. Plotting where we are now, this is our situation, this is what we need to be prepared for and this is how we need to react. That I think is very useful because a lot times just saying it, they're like "yeah, yeah, yeah." It's nice to have something to show for it, I guess, to help justify what you're doing.

JHC: That's kinda the idea, how do sell something that you don't really know why you're doing it, even if you know it's the right thing to do?
Hague: I think you absolutely dead-on on that. I know to walk in, I know to open my book and start my checklists, I know I have an hour to get my initial release out and I know a lot of it is not going to be detailed. I know all that. I know I might have to fight my boss on some things, but I probably won't have to fight him on the initial release because there's nothing in it. So when I do have to start sending details and talking about deaths and that stuff, so what can I use to show him that what I'm doing is not my own idea of how it should be done, that this is, no shit, how it works and why it works this way. I think it would ease a lot of bosses to be honest to see something on paper.

My boss is very interested in reading this by the way once you're done.

JHC: Is there anything you would have changed?
Hague: I would have put some information in there about the leadership aspect. I don't know how that would be built into your matrix or your graphs, but you have demands from the publics, but what about the response from your leadership. From an exercise, and this is the difference, you'll get all the support you need, because they know that's how it's supposed to work. But real-world you're going to run into a lot more problems. Just having something leadership related would have been helpful too, but I don't know what that is. Are you getting support? Are you not getting support?
JHC: You could look at it a couple of ways. Each set of questions looks at a specific public. So you might consider leadership a public.
Hague: Which they are, I guess that's what I'm getting at. A lot of times you're not selling this to people outside the base or on the base, your selling it to your boss.
JHC: Right. Otherwise it doesn't get anywhere, like selling it to the media.
Hague: Exactly.
JHC: So you can do a worksheet for the boss or look at the worksheet as the way to address leadership.
Hague: Right, but the reason I say this is because in this scenario there was a lot more leadership that I had to convince than just my boss. It had to go through 3 or 4 different agencies to even send out a bland initial release, which is ridiculous, but that's how that program works. Same with the F-22.
JHC: Is it more beneficial with someone with a little experience or is there value for someone with a lot of experience?
Hague: That's a good question. I'm kind of middle I'd say. I'm not brand new, but not a 20 year PA either. I would say it would be most helpful for somebody at my level or with less experience than I would for our center PA who's a Lt Col. I don't know if it would help her. It's not because of helping her know where they stand, because I'm sure it could be useful in that way, but as a justification tool for bosses, I don't think she would need it because of her rank and her experience. I don't think that she would get the same kinds of questions or push-backs that I would. I know that because I've seen it. I she goes to battlestaff and there's any kind of situation, she says this is the way it needs to be done and this is why. And they usually just take her word for it. In the same situation if I were to do that, they'd probably push-back a little bit.
JHC: Do you think there might be any other applications for it in other areas of PA besides a crisis communication tool?

Hague: Could I have used it for the mobile home part situation? Oh, yeah. Could I have used it for BRAC, for housing reduction? Sure. Any type of talking to or relating to the community where they're demanding information. I think it may be something that's kind of hot, but not necessarily a crisis. Environmental would be a great example. Any environmental issues that deal with the community off-base, it could have definitely been used. It could probably be used in community relations more than anything and environmental PA. They're dealing with that kind of stuff all the time and it's not necessarily a crisis situation where you're dealing with RABs and the community on certain things. How much information do you need to provide, how accommodating do you need to be? It's not just the doing, it's also why are we doing this and that's where it all ties together. Yes I need to get this information out, but why? Who cares? So we make them wait. What does that matter? Well, because if you make them wait, then they start to speculate and they don't have trust in what you're doing.
JHC: Did you discuss any of the specifics with your boss?
Hague: Not too much, just kinda, hey I'm gonna be doing this.
JHC: Why were the graphs not used?
Hague: That's the other thing. These exercises are quick. Nobody wants to sit in battlestaff for more than a couple of hours so they run through them so fast. If this was really happening, we could have been in battle staff for 2 or 3 days. At that point, using those graphs and going back and saying, "Sir, this is where we're at this is why we need to do this, this is why need to have a press conference." Instead of just respond to questions. Then it would have been a lot easier to use the graphs.
JHC: Do you have access to a computer at battle staff?
Hague: Yes.
JHC: Anything else you'd like to add?
Hague: I thought it was kind of neat to see how I did things and then follow up and see where we stand and see that this is about right. This is what I think and I got some backing for that. Again, I don't think it can be used as you're going. I think it has to be built in. Like if we're going to use it to justify what we're doing, then it's got to be built into certain points through out the crisis that are a little slower where you have time to pull the justification and say this why. . .a lull time to show your boss.
JHC: What happens if you out your release then do the matrix and realize you've done something horribly wrong?
Hague: True. That's why I said, I think you're OK with the initial release, but I don't know. That would be my concern. The initial release is going to be standard and probably be very bland. You've only been there an hour and you're not going to get to the point where you're going to know too much information that can be released at that time. So I think it would work, but it you can't do it while you're going, then you run the risk of that mistake.
Hague: You could probably push it up from doing it after the first release, but you would have to know those questions and have to have been trained on them. Otherwise you'd have no idea what you're talking about. I'd already read the questionnaires before I got in there, so I knew what they were but still I had to think, " OK, on a scale of 1 to 10 . . . " I think it would be great here because of all the engineers. They love graphs.

APPENDIX G
REARDON INITIAL INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Maj Cathy Reardon
Chief of Media Relations and Plans
Missile Defense Agency, Washington D.C.
Conducted via telephone on Sunday, November 07, 2004, 2:09:18 PM

JHC: What is your background and what do you do?
Reardon: I'm a career public affairs officer. My title is Chief of Media Relations and Plans, but I do a little bit of everything. I work with the media everyday by answering press inquiries on various programs, setting up interviews for the dozen general officers and SES folks that we have here. Obviously I sit in on interviews. I travel with the same people when they go around the U.S. or just when they go over to Capitol Hill to testify.

I also have accounts like you do at the MAJCOM level. One of my main accounts is the ABL which is actually an AF program which we own and are funding. When the a/c gets to a certain point in its maturity and development, it will be turned back over to the AF, but currently we (MDA) are the owners of it. I deal with all aspects of that program to include environmental impact, media, basing issues for the a/c, interface with the AF, and boost phase issues.
JHC: Are most publics you deal with primarily external?
Reardon: Yes, but you'd be surprised how much we have to do to educate the people who work within the agency. We have a lot of very technical engineers and scientists who work their small portion. So we have a fairly robust program to educate our own people. We put out a weekly electronic newspaper. We have people out in Alaska, New Mexico, Huntsville. We are geographically separated. That is one of our on-going problems is that we have to educate our own people about all the other on-going programs because they are so focused on their one aspect of what they do in MDA that it's a on-going struggle to teach them there's more going on than just their one thing.
JHC: How long have you been doing PA?
Reardon: 16 years in May, commissioned in 1988.
JHC: How would you describe the relationship with you boss or commander?
Reardon: In this job I have one person between me and the general, the director of communications who is a retired AF Lt Col, who I get along with really, really well. The neat thing is when I'm working on an issue, I can say "Rick," (that's my boss) "I'm going to run this by the general." No problem. At other jobs, like a MAJCOM you have so many layers you have to go through . . . remember when you were at a wing and you have to get to the wing commander and you just have to get through the secretary? I have the same thing here. It's really cool. If the general is physically here and you have something you need to talk to him about, you can get into see him, which is amazing when you think about what they do here.
JHC: Would say this relationship with the general is based on trust?

Reardon: Very much so. What's really neat, is that when the general's not here, I have several SES (SES6) people I'm comfortable going to and we have the same kind of access. So with this program (ABL) where we're realizing something that been so many years being developed, they understand the public's right to know or need to know, they understand we have time commitments because reporters have deadlines and stuff like that. I think they do a very good job understanding what we need to do for the program.
JHC: Do you find they base their decisions on your advice?
Reardon: I think so. Rick gives a lot more advice to the general than I do at this point, but when I have my time with the general, I've never had the general say, "That's stupid" or anything like that. I do a lot of staff summary sheets and I don't think I've every gotten one back that said, "no, we don't want to do that." So if it's an interview or a visit request to go see the ABL, I have to weigh in my mind what benefit is this to the program before I send it in to the general. So when I say, I think we should do it, he (general) might call you in and say "why again do you think we should do this?" 99% of the time it just comes back without question.
JHC: Has this trust been cultivated and earned over time?
Reardon: Over time. And I have to prove it with Rick, my immediate supervisor. It's a step process. When Rick trusts me and says, "Yes, you can go into the front office." He could stop me and say, "No, I'll take care of that." So you work to build up that trust, get to know these people and it's a good thing because when the general sees me he doesn't say, "Where's Rick?"
He just says, "Cathy's working this issue so okay." So even thought Rick is the Director of Communication, I get the same level of respect. I appreciate that they don't blow us off.
JHC: How would you define a crisis?
Reardon: A crisis is something that you don't expect to happen. There are crises that you can prepare for and then there are others that you can even fathom, like the Pentagon being hit with an airplane. A crisis can also be, like when I was at a wing, when a plane goes down. You train for that, your practice for that, but when it happens it's still a crisis.
JHC: What kind of training have you received to help you prepare of the expected or unexpected crisis?
Reardon: I've done a lot of different training. I think the thing I've learned that as a public affairs officer, going into to any given situation, I always try to think of everything we can think of whether it's good or bad. You know, when you prepare for an event, you ask, what if we have an a/c accident? What are all the different types of questions we can be asked? I do that for every given situation. When we do an intercept test here, we sit and think about not only how did it happen, but explain to us what went wrong, we get into all the money issues, and all the negative types of things. I've also learned that you have to remain calm no matter what the crisis is. You have to have a level head. When talking to a reporter during a crisis, I've learned no to say anything that can be misconstrued.
JHC: These sound like lessons of experience, not formal education in the AF.
Reardon: But it also education in the AF. When you go to DINFOS as a 2Lt, you have virtually nothing to base DINFOS on. So when I look back at the things they taught us at DINFOS, I realize that was a good thing. You pull those things back out. I've also

learned things from crisis communications courses, a PRSA . . . you go to the different two and three day courses. I remember going to one called "How to deal with an angry public." I was stationed at Shaw at the time and I thought, when am I ever going to do this? Just two weeks ago when we were doing the public hearings, I was definitely dealing with the angry public. And I knew from my training that there wasn't any way we were going to win. So I have had a lot of opportunity to learn, but you also learn just by living through different things.

JHC: Would you agree the AF is good at teaching tactical level decisions and not so good at strategic level thinking?

Reardon: Yes because they teach us to deal with the situation as it's occurring, but it's the on-going thing I can remember ever since I've been in the AF. We always want to think about the big picture, but we're so focused on what's going on right now, what's coming across my desk right now, what reporters are calling about right now, that we don't ever think about what effect this is going to have in 6 months or a year, what's the big strategy**.** We live for the day in AF public affairs.

JHC: If we're that far in the weeds, how do we know we're doing the right thing for a month from now? Where does the confidence come from in those decisions?

Reardon: I think confidence comes from years of experience in doing it, but it also comes from a gut feeling, that you just have to trust in yourself when you give the general advice that your are giving him what you truly believe is the best advice in the best interest in all the things you know and understand. When somebody tells you to do something and you get that feeling in your stomach that this isn't right, then you have to speak up. Honestly, in my mind, that's what it comes down to.

JHC: That seems to put us (PA) at a disadvantage when we sit across the table from other advisors like lawyers who are not going off "gut-feeling" who have a law or statute or something . . .

Reardon: And that is frustrating. We don't have something . . . you know, the lawyers deal with law. We deal with perception. We literally, in my mind, deal with how people see us. That's what we're trying to address and if we want to be seen as the good stewards of the tax-payer's money then we need to standup when have a mistake that goes bad and we need to say, this is what happened, this is where the mistake was made or computer glitch or whatever it was. A lawyer - cut and dry and a lawyer is never going to batten? from his laws, but for us, we have to do what's right. Does that make sense? We have our regulations, our directives. We don't have a lot, but what we do have is a lot of other people that do public affairs that offer you can call or consult with. That's one thing about being a PA officer, you have to not be afraid to ask somebody for help or ask a question or say, "I don't understand." You grow into that position you're in. When you're at that table and giving the general advice, if you're not 100% confident on the advice you're going to give him, you know there's plenty of people you can call to double check and say, "Am I going the right way with this?" If I am, I'm good. If not, tell me why it's not what I need to do.

JHC: Even if you're right and even if other PAs confirm that, you still have the challenge of selling the boss you're right and a lot of times it seems counterintuitive to the commander to start airing you're dirty laundry. Is it safe to say that our gut-feelings, while right, are still a tough sell in a lot of cases?

Reardon: A very tough sell. That's why you have to have a relationship with your commander. If you haven't developed a relationship during the good times, the weeks when the newspaper comes out and there's no problem, through the good interviews. You have to build a rapport and hopefully the first time you tell the general "that's not how you should answer that" is not a week after you met him. You really have to hope that . . . sometimes when they don't [take the advice], that's when you need to go the MAJCOM PA and say "I need help." Now that I'm getting old, I'd really fight my fight with the wing commander, but I remember being a Lt or being a young captain and the wing commander would be like, "Why should I trust you, you're as old as my kids?" I went to a meeting a couple of weeks ago and there was a retired SMSgt who was at SAC when I was a 2lt at my first base and my boss got fired and I was the chief of PA after 4 months on active duty. He was telling the other people in the meeting the "stupid Cathy" stories. "When Cathy used to call us . . . " He told a story about when we was on the IG team at SAC and went to a someplace where the wing commander had a 2Lt, like me, for a PA and he didn't want her. He [wing cc] kept telling him to move her, I need someone more senior. Come to find out, she [pa] looked kind of like his daughter, so every time he looked at her he saw his daughter who he thought was lazy and good for nothing. He said, "We're not moving her for that, get over it."

JHC: We talk about the tactical things because DINFOS is really good about saying here's your AFI, here's your fill-in-the-blank press release, and then it comes time to go in with the boss and they say, "OK, why do we need to do this?" And the Lt says, "Well, that's what they told me to say." Do you think we could do a better job giving our junior people a bigger picture, rather than just the tactical details?

Reardon: I think we should and I think a way that that could be done is to bring in some real-world scenarios and the senior PA that did it. Have a real person there that they can ask, "How did you do that?" I think it's really hard to put something in writing to say this is how you handle a situation. We also talk to other PAs at conferences. We all know each other because we have the phone book. You sit and talk to the these people and everyone's got amazing stories. Then you can turn around and call them and say, "I've got a situation similar to what you had . . . " But when they go to DINFOS they are so young. All that was scary to me then. I've heard the argument that maybe you should put them at a base for a year first, but then they're at a base for a year floundering and it all depends on whether they get a good PAO. Sometimes when you're at a wing, the last thing you need is a 2Lt attached to your beltloop. Half the time you're spent fixing what the Lt did . . . "what the Lt meant to say . . . "

JHC: How do you determine where you fall on the continuum of advocacy vs. accommodation for the hostile audience you mentioned?

Reardon: The hostile audience was, we were process of completing a programmatic environmental impact statement on the overall ballistic missile defense system. The draft report is complete, they [communities] have had time to look at it and make comments. The purpose of the meeting is to say, this is what's in the report, again, they've had time to review it . . .

JHC: And this is a regulatory or legal requirement?

Reardon: Yes. . . . and they get to stand up and make their comments for the record. The problem is that most people that come to make comments don't want to talk about the actual EIS, they want to complain about other things. At this one, we had a room that

was too small, we had a room for 80 and over 100 showed up, so it was standing room only. So we limited the time for comments to 3 minutes and we had about 35 people sign up give comments, so we knew we were going to be there for hours because you really let them go to about 4 minutes then start giving them warnings. You really try to accommodate them. Many of the comments were bashing Pres. Bush, and I'm there in uniform and you're taught not to frown and you can't nod because it looks like you're agreeing with them and you don't want to do that, so have this thing that's half way between a not frown and but not a smile. So you kind of acknowledge what they're saying. At one point, the moderator put the sign up because this guy was going on and he starts yelling at the moderator about how you all are being paid to be here and we're here on our time and our dime and blah, blah, blah. We had a point right there where they all started standing and cheering for this guy. And the moderator said continue. Without any of us saying anything because we were all in the front of the room taking the heat, it was decided people would be allowed to give their comments and when they got done they would sit down. And we weren't going to time anybody. You have to be nice when you talk to these people, but the bottom line is that the ballistic missile defense system is still going to go no matter what. 100 people showing up in Sacramento, CA is not going to change the program. But you have to be careful of is that the Sacramento Bee is there, so from my aspect, we did the right thing by accommodating that guy and just letting it go and not looking like the bad people. It was ironic because after the guy bitched at us, and he talked for like 12 min and people cheered for him. You know, after he made his comments, he put on his coat and left. He couldn't stay to hear the other 20 people. But after he got aggressive, then everyone after him who had any sort of aggression got sort of mean at the podium. One of the people in our group even went out to get the hotel security to make sure everything was OK when they all left.

JHC: Have you had similar hostile publics with the ABL?

Reardon: With the ABL, we haven't had a lot of negative stuff because day-to-day it's out at Edwards right now and no one has access to it. I'm sure when it gets based some where, then it will start. And some poor base PA will get stuck with the complaints. Some bases and communities are fighting to get it because it may help them with future base closings (BRAC). But when the AF makes a basing decision, there are facilities that have to been built to accommodate that a/c, to accommodate the chemicals. The chemicals in and of themselves aren't dangerous, chlorine and hydrogen peroxide and stuff, there are still Environ impacts and we'll still have to go out and to EI and you are going to have people who are upset at that point. Where ever it goes there will be people who say, "Why is this coming here and why wasn't I given a chance to say no before it got here?"

JHC: Where would you put those publics you're working with now, like Congress, on that continuum?

Reardon: I would say we're very much accommodating them. The plane is at a critical juncture right now with getting the plane ready to fly again. They've done a lot of modifications to it out at Edwards plus they're getting ready to fire up all the modules and actually fire the laser for the first time. It's going to be a series of tests and they're working 24/7 on continuous shift work, so we have to look at all the visits that want to go out there, and trust me there are quite a few visits. Everybody wants to go out and see that airplane. I will tell you when a congressional staffer or Congressman or Senator or

someone on their professional staff says they want to see it, we make sure they get to see it. Other groups like reports and even cadets who we really want to accommodate, but they may only get to see the a/c from a distance. We might not be able to take them on to the a/c, which we'd really like to do, but mission dictates. So we are very much accommodating our Congressional audience any way we can because funding is always a question and we want to ensure we get the funding. For other groups, we have to look at the benefit and what tests are going on. The bottom line is that we try to work around all of them.

APPENDIX H
REARDON FINAL INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Maj Cathy Reardon
Chief of Media Relations and Plans
Missile Defense Agency, Washington D.C.
Post-Interview
Conducted via telephone on Wednesday, Jan 26, 2005, 12:05 PM

JHC: I set the logical start and stop dates as 1 Nov and 31 December 2004 to cover the ABL tests and associated news coverage for the media analysis.
Reardon: Yes, it was a pretty busy time for the ABL.
JHC: Ken Englade in New Mexico doesn't bless the releases he sends out does he?
Reardon: No. He writes them, gets the program manager to bless them, then they still have to go through the general, General Obering.
JHC: During that window, how would characterize the PA strategy?
Reardon: We had an aggressive approach, yet from a PA standpoint we were still quite reserved. We didn't announce anything prior to. We just said it was going to happen by the end of the year and we kept that very vague, by the end of the year. Yet we knew, internally, what the plan was and we made the decision that we were not going to announce anything prior to, but we pre-wrote all the different releases for post-events. When I say different releases, we wrote a success release, a not successful release. As a standard format here, should the information leak that the event's going to occur, as has a tendency to happen, we also had a release saying we planned to do it, but because of weather or something it has been delayed. So if someone finds out and approaches us, we don't lie and say, "No, we weren't going to do it." We have a release ready to go.
JHC: So you prepared aggressively?
Reardon: Prepared aggressively and once the even occurred, we planned to make the program director from both the government side and industry side available for interviews. Plus we had a plan that we wanted to have video available of first flight within a couple of hours to try to get the LA news. If we could get it to LA in a reasonable amount of time, we had a chance of making CNN and those kinda things. From the standpoint of missile defense that is, I don't want to say a new approach, but once the plane took off, we really wanted to get the word out that we had achieved this milestone. Normally, when we did these things under General Kaidish, I could be a spokesperson, Rick could be a spokesperson, and that's where it would stop with the PA. Making Col P available and her counter part at Boeing available [for interviews] wasn't something we hadn't normally done before. What we ended up doing after the first flight, and it worked really well, was a press conference, but we did it all over the phone. People could call into Boeing and they have a phone system that will allow up to 20 people in on a conference call and that's how we did it. We sent out the phone number electronically and we had 17 people call in. It was handled just like a press conference.

That lasted 90 minutes or so. It was very beneficial and we got a lot of good accurate coverage. We deal with more of the trades.
JHC: Who did you identify as the key publics to get the word out about the success stories and milestones?
Reardon: Ken keeps a list of all contacts. We went back over the last six months and made a list of every reporter who had called and inquired about the program. We sent it out electronically to that group. We also subscribe to Bacon's here and he did a listing there to make sure everything was current.
JHC: The reporters came to you, but was there a group you said, "We really need to let these people know what's going on?"
Reardon: We deal with a lot of the same people all the time. I know what you're saying, but I'm sure in the discussion we did pick people that, and I hate to say, have been good to us, you know, have written well about the program, and we wanted to make sure we got it to them.
JHC: When we talked last time, Congress and the missile defense industry were important . . .
Reardon: Congress is very important, but for them, they literally do notifications. Certain members over on the Hill get certain letters saying we're going to attempt this within the next 26 to 36 hours so they do get pre-notified. Because they want those people from the legislative side to be able to stand up and say, "Look at that success that program had." I guarantee you that as soon as we were successful, phone calls were made to make sure those people knew that had actually occurred.
JHC: You don't really rely on mainstream media to get the word to them then?
Reardon: We use a little bit of the main stream media, but mainly use the trades. Right now we're getting ready to do something with the LA Times. You still want to have a focus with the mainstream media, but again, like with this program, because there's the one aircraft that's such cutting edge technology, there's always a chance when the budget rolls around, when you gotta cut something, you cut the things that aren't showing you progress. That's what I've learned. Those are important people so you make sure they know and they understand. When you meet these people on the Hill, they're not going to ask you questions when they don't understand. So you make sure you have as many venues as possible to reach them and explain it to them.
JHC: Does it make you pick and choose which group to accommodate more or less?
Reardon: Right. Now I would tell you that from the industry side, they're going to want to accommodate the legislative side because that's where the money's gonna come from. From the PA standpoint as the government person, yes the Hill is important, but I have to educate the American public on how their tax dollars are being spent.
JHC: Doesn't that make you walk a fine line sometimes between the two publics?
Reardon: That is something we spend a lot of time working with our industry partners on. What are we are we going to release and how are we going to release it? Any piece of literature they want to put out on the program has to come through us. Boeing was struggling because we kept saying, "No, that's not suitable for public release." A lot of that had to do with who our [MDA] director was at the time. For example, Boeing puts out a full-color program update every month. It's always on the same four programs to it's easy to follow and they really try to describe what's going on in generic terms. We mark this product FOUO [For Official Use Only]. We let them take it over to the Hill,

but we have to scrutinize it every month and say, "Are we prepared to talk about that?" It's one thing if you want to sell them something over on the Hill, but are we prepared for that information to beyond that staffer or Congressman? Most of the time it's very generic stuff.
JHC: What might be some of the reasons you wouldn't want to put something out there?
Reardon: We don't mind them talking about what has already occurred. We get consternation when they start talking about what we're going to do next because we're not really sure if that's what's going to happen next. And if you put it out there and it's in print or if you tell a reporter that then you get, "Well, why didn't that happen?" No matter what answer you give them the perception is either we failed at it – we did it and failed at it and didn't want to tell them or we're trying to cover something up. So from out perspective, we don't mind telling you what we've accomplished, but we don't want to tell you what our plans are for the next week or the week after because we haven't done it yet and schedules may flip or things may happen. From a Boeing perspective, they see it as they want to show the program is active and going along. And we see it as, we don't want to be held accountable for something that may or may not happen.
JHC: Have you seen any repercussions from that stance from the media where they think you're being all cloak and dagger?
Reardon: Being "cloak and dagger" about the program in general, we take heat on that all the time. I think that they've just come to understand that we're just not going to talk about what's going to happen.
JHC: I guess it has its advantages and disadvantages?
Reardon: Really what it is, and this is what frustrates me as a PA officer, is that if we do tell them we're going to do something and then for whatever reason we don't do it right when we told them they want to know is it going to be Tuesday night? What are the coordinates? It's like the skit on Saturday Night Live, no matter what you tell them, they always want to know more information. The problem is that instead of us being able to say, "We had a weather delay." Or I'll give you an instance on the SM3 program, we had a guy who had appendicitis out on a Navy ship and they had to sail through the range area and it was going to be a six hour delay. The kid's having an appendicitis, let the boat go. And reporters think we're covering something up and you're telling them the God's honest truth. It's frustrating and you get to the point to where you say, "We just not going to tell you until it's over." It's not all reporters, but there are some out there that no matter what I say, I'm covering something up. You talk to the reporter and you're like, "Dude, did you look at the weather for Kodiak tonight? It's crap. That's why we didn't launch." So they're comeback is, "Well, what would you do if North Korea attacked?" And I'd say, "Well, we'd probably just screw the weather and launch anyway, but we're not going to waste a test asset on bad weather."
Use of questionnaire:
JHC: How many times did you use the questionnaire?
Reardon: I went through it a couple of different times.
JHC: When did you decide to use it and what did it tell you?
Reardon: For the ABL program, I think we came out pretty well. You look at it and you say, like the organizational culpability, the numbers were all low because things have gone well with ABL. On the public demands, I kinda put it around 3 to 5 because when it talks about how reasonable the public's are the public's demands, what I would

consider reasonable, the general thinks that the media wanting to do interviews left and right is unreasonable. So that kinda puts those down. With ABL, I think we're doing a really good job meeting the requests. For the ABL, I don't think it's having a negative impact, so that number is low.
JHC: So basically you're looking at a 3-3-3?
Reardon: Yes.
JHC: So if you graphed that, it would put you down in the bottom, left-hand corner?
Reardon: Right.
JHC: Which would means you don't have to accommodate anybody, not that you don't, but it might suggest you have a lot of latitude to advocate for your self and not accommodate as much as you might need to if something went wrong.
Reardon: Exactly, and yes, I agree with that because at this point, as it looks right now, that's how it is. Now if something truly bad were to happen, in order to keep that culpability low, we would really have to start meeting more of the demands. I say that like if we have some type of accident or incident with the program, then we would have to be more accommodating because we all talk about the potential of something happening to the aircraft and there's only one of them. Literally, they talk about, "Would that be the demise of the program." That's an on-going debate here.
JHC: Did you just look at the questionnaire and get a sense of it or did you go through each question?
Reardon: I looked at each question after the different events occurred. Like we just talked about, I think our culpability is low because I think we do a good job of communicating what has happened, but we may not do the best job we could do at meeting the public's demand for information. Is that going to change? Not as long as the program is moving along.
JHC: Were 3 questions enough?
Reardon: I thought all the questions were good. I liked having the specific questions because each time, if you put it to a specific event, more than one question really gets your mind thinking about it. We had two successful events, but when I looked at this for IF13 it came out a little bit different. And now, of course, we're going to do IF13 again so we'll see how it comes out the next time.
JHC: Did it change what you would normally do?
Reardon: It was consistent with what I would normally do, but you know why I liked it? I liked it because it would be a tool you would have to go into the boss and say, "Sir, look. We need to be in this quadrant and we're down here. In this situation we need to get out of this and get to here." So it gives you something to go in say, "This is what it looks like right now and this is what we've got to achieve."
JHC: Did you use the graph?
Reardon: No I didn't.
JHC: Because everything went well and there was no "selling" to the boss?
Reardon: Exactly. In the last week, the plane flew again and the laser fired 7 times. Well, I think running the laser 7 times would warrant a release. Well, this is a document I could take to the boss and say, "Look, we're down here and we really want to move up and be better stewards and get out of this area." Especially if you have something bad happen and you want to show him we want to do this or that. Anytime you have something you can show the commander that it's not just you saying it, you have

something to show him that you can validate why you need to do what you need to do, then it's a good tool. We don't have a lot of stuff like that. Right now I can go in with an article and say, "Sir, we need to . . . " you know.
JHC: Did the questions give you any additional insights?
Reardon: I think they do. It helps you to focus. We spend a lot of time here when editorials come out rebutting editorials. I think something like this would help us have not so many of those editorials. Right now I'm trying to get the general convinced he needs to do editorial boards when he goes out on the road. So you take a couple editorials and apply this product to them and say this is why we need to be doing editorial boards. I think it would be a very useful tool for everybody to have because you could apply it in almost any situation, whether it's a crisis or a good situation. Like with ABL, I don't know when something's going to turn South.
JHC: You think it has other applications in PA somewhere?
Reardon: Sure. From my perspective here, I could see it with the editorial boards, for a need for the boss to better communicate, to show him. You know, apply it to a series of editorials and apply it to the graph, then take it in to show him this is where it shows up on the matrix and this is what we need to do because we want to get up here.
JHC: Anything you would change?
Reardon: No, I think you've done a very good job.
JHC: Look at 27 articles, there were two different types, main stream media and defense industry publications and they treated you very differently. The main stream media tended to mention negatives . . .
Reardon: We're spending too much money and it's never going to happen.
JHC: but the defense industry never mentioned those things. And much of the articles were identical to the press releases. So how do you see that?
Reardon: You have to wonder who's paying them. I think that because the trades all tend to be here and they do talk to industry a lot, I think they're better educated on the program. Plus you can only beat a dead horse so long and people aren't going to continue to spend the astronomical amounts of money they spend to get those publications if they're constantly being belittled and berated in them. And the trade publications, they audience is industry and government, so it does them no go. When you look at the main stream media, they're educating a different public and they always wondering about how much money we're spending no matter what program it is. And they think, it's been years and years, why isn't the plane being used in the war, why can't you . . . Back in the first Gulf War, JSTARS was close enough that they actually used it. Well for this war, they automatically assume we'll be able to fly the ABL and start lasering and go, you know, it's built. Well, no, we can't do that. You take heat for that and I think part of that falls back on us because we don't spend as much time as we should with those mainstream publications. And that goes right back to the fact that we don't talk about things until they've already happened.

It's aggravating as all get out when they [reporters] know absolutely nothing. These programs are not simple. I've been here almost 4 years and truly don't understand everything that goes on. So with a trade reporter you tend to have someone who has a science or engineering background and just ended up becoming a journalist for whatever reason and they truly have an interest in it. A mainstream reporter is out to report the

news, so you have to spoon feed them and when they get frustrated it goes back to money and evil and you're no good.
JHC: You'd mentioned having an aggressive strategy, but it struck me that with all the success of the tests. They test happened on a Wednesday on the 10th and . . .
Reardon: . . . we didn't put anything out until the 12th.
JHC: Right.
Reardon: The reason for that is when they fired up the laser the first time, it actually fired for less than a nano second, which I can't even fathom in my mind. It's not visible to the human eye. So after they did it and everything appeared to work, they then had to do several tests to verify that yes, in fact, the laser did fire. That took them a day and a half. Now it's just under 5 hours to run the tests.
JHC: I ask because it came out on a Friday and all the coverage was buried over the weekend.
Reardon: Initially, we had hoped they would do the test on a Monday and we could release it on Wednesday. I don't think I truly understood it would take a day and a half to verify the test worked because I live in a world of missiles where we know in 20 minutes if we had a success. So, it's a learning curve. From a PA standpoint, yeah, it's crappy because it came out on a Friday of what was a 4-day weekend for the majority of the country because Veteran's Day was Thursday. From a PR standpoint that was just bad.
JHC: Back to the graph, you still in the lower left-hand quadrant, so would you really consider that any skin off your nose?
Reardon: No. You know, we did it, we were successful and we have really taken any huge hits from it.
JHC: Interesting they quoted anonymous sources in MDA.
Reardon: Which means it was none of us in PA. I never experienced this as much before I came to Washington D.C. Even though I'm telling them the truth, they can choose to believe it or not and yet there are people within every organization here, I've found, that let information out on the condition of anonymity. That is just flagrant here and it's not just MDA. That comes from the fact that we have a free press. There are a lot of people that will confirm things as long as you don't use there name.

APPENDIX I
SAMPLE MEDIA CONTENT COMPARISONS

Topic	Mainstream media	Missile defense industry	Press release
Headline	Northrop laser shows promise Northrop Grumman successfully tests chemical laser MDA calls test significant start Laser success called a start "Test marks antimissile milestone, but only a start"	Airborne laser achieves first light Airborne laser achieves 'first light' in ground test	Airborne laser achieves first light Airborne laser returns to flight Airborne laser (ABL) conducts extended flight test
Story Lead	…the laser blast…may save one of the most beleaguered projects in the missile defense arsenal." (Alburquerque Journal, Nov 14) MDA has fired first beam of light from weapon build for the ABL, but the AF colonel in charge of the program indicated Tuesday how much work remains to make the controversial program succeed." (Dayton Daily, Nov 16)	The MDA announced Nov. 12 a successful first ground test firing for the chemical oxygen Iodine Laser (COIL) that will be mounted in an aircraft to detect and destroy a hostile ballistic missile while it is still accelerating away from the launch pad.	The MDA announced today that it completed a test on Nov 10 that successfully fired all 6 modules of the megawatt-class Chemical Oxygen Iodine laser (COIL) for the AF, a landmark achievement in the development of a directed energy system that will be mounted aboard a modified Boeing 747 aircraft and when deployed will provide a capability to destroy a hostile ballistic missile soon after it is launched, in the boost phase of flight.
Adjectives used to describe test/program	Controversial, one of the most beleaguered projects, over budget Canada, Russia, and swathes of Europe would be at risk… threatened by debris from partially destroyed missiles"	restructured in 2003 to focus on near-term efforts	Landmark achievement for ABL system validates
Access to firing of laser	working in secrecy at Edwards Air Force Base Success of the test was confirmed Saturday by an official of the Pentagon's MDA, who spoke on condition of anonymity	Not addressed	Not addressed

Topic	Mainstream media	Missile defense industry	Press release
Funding concerns	ballooned to more than $5 billion financing of their laser programme might be curtailed …the [Congress'] discontent was prompted by the lack of visible progress, by frequent delays…markedly augmented expenditure costs have soared…could cost another $431 to $943 million	Pawlikowski said in Sept that failure to achieve first light and first flight milestones by the end of 2004 could cause the program to be cut or killed.	Not addressed
Laser program delays	Wednesday's test is more than a year late. The program schedule has slipped so many times, while costs have soared, that the MDA has stopped predicting when it will try to shoot down a test missile" (Dayton Daily, Nov 16)	There is no scheduled time for its first attempt to shot down a boosting rocket."	No date has been set for the test.
Laser ready?	Numerous technical adjustments are still needed a missile agency spokesman said	once some minor adjustments are made…	Ground and flight tests will continue…

APPENDIX J
AIR FORCE PUBLIC AFFAIRS: AN EXPLORATORY INQUIRY

This chapter takes a phenomenological look at what constitutes the nature of crisis communication management in the Air Force. Specifically, how do Air Force public affairs practitioners see their role in managing a crisis with respect to their responsibility in a public position?

The military typically enjoys the luxury of having a favored status with the majority of the public, according to Harris Polls (Taylor, 2004). Despite the controversy surrounding the war in Iraq, "confidence in our military leaders remains extraordinarily strong. The gap between our military leaders and those next on the list is huge. Fully 62 percent continue to have a great deal of confidence in our military leaders. Following are leaders of universities and colleges (37%) and leaders of medicine (32%)" (Taylor, 2004).

This level of confidence is not taken lightly by the Air Force, as the Air Force regulation governing public affairs indicates. "Credibility is our most important asset. It is built over time on a foundation of institutional behavior based on truth, integrity, and accountability. We cannot communicate effectively without it" (U.S. Air Force [USAF], 2001, para. 1.9.2).

Some of this trust may be derived from the way the military conducts public relations. For example, the Air Force differs from many civilian public relations activities since military practitioners are obligated by law to release information unless it

is classified, prohibited by other law such as privacy or exempt under the Freedom of Information Act (USAF, 2001, para. 1.13).

This accountability to the public sets the military apart from the private sector and leaves little room for interpretation of how to respond in a crisis. Many of the Air Force public affairs principles are dictated by the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs (OASD/PA).

According to Department of Defense (DoD, 2000) policy, "information shall be made fully and readily available, consistent with statutory requirements, unless its release is precluded by national security constraints or valid statutory mandates or exceptions . . . the Freedom of Information Act will be supported in both letter and spirit" (para. E2.1.1). It further stipulates that, "Information will not be classified or otherwise withheld to protect the Government from criticism or embarrassment" (para. E2.1.1).

Since policy is generated at the highest military level, it helps ensure the military provides consistent release of information at all levels. Air Force regulations echo these principles.

The goal of this study is to address this issue by answering the following exploratory research questions:

ERQ1: What constitutes good crisis communication in the USAF?

ERQ2: Is there a need for change in USAF crisis communication strategies?

Methodology

Participants were identified through a purposive sample (selection), with the goal of identifying a representative cross-section of Air Force public affairs officers. Participants were chosen based on their positions and experience. All participants were

Air Force officers because they are the ones that must make decisions about crisis communication at their respective levels. The span ranges from a junior officer with as little as three years experience to Colonel Jay DeFrank who, with 26 years of experience, is at the top of the field and also holds a Ph.D. in mass communication. All other participants have at least a bachelor's degree and are currently working toward a master's degree. I believe each presents a different perspective based on education, training, mentors, experience, duty location and rank.

Anonymity of participants' identity was neither offered nor guaranteed since the researcher felt their positions and experiences added to an understanding of their perspective. All agreed to participate based on these criteria. Without anonymity, one potential consideration for participants was possible reluctance to talk about politically sensitive issues with regard to the Air Force. However, it is believed participants still discussed such issues, but in at times in indirect ways.

Below is the list of participants, their duty title, location and years of experience.

Table J-1. Participants of exploratory inquiry.

Name/Rank	Duty Title	Location	Experience (years)
Colonel Jay DeFrank	Deputy Director of Air Force Public Affairs	Pentagon, Washington, D.C.	26
Captain Wes Ticer	Air Force Institute of Technology graduate student	University of Florida	16 (5 as officer)
First Lieutenant Megan Schafer	Associate Editor, Airman magazine	San Antonio, TX	3

The primary method of data collection for this project was the in-depth interview. Two of the interviews were conducted by telephone and electronically recorded. One

interview was conducted in person and recorded as well. Interviews were conducted between October 15 and November 2, 2004.

The use of in-depth interviews was important to grasp the expected variation in responses from practitioners. This method also served the exploratory nature of the research. Interviews allowed participants to explain and elaborate on the subject topics. An initial set of investigative open-ended question topics was developed in a semi-structured manner to guide the interviews. Throughout each interview, related follow-up questions were asked for clarification or further description of their experiences. Some follow-up questions or clarification were addressed via e-mail.

Data analysis

Constant comparative method of data analysis was used by "taking information from data collection and comparing it to emerging categories" until saturation was realized in the data (Creswell, 1998, p. 57).

Before formal data analysis began, all interviews were transcribed verbatim. After which, data in field notes and transcripts were reduced using summaries and visually charted. These charts served as a clear method to compare responses to similar question topics. Commonalities in data were coded based on themes and abstract categories. Dey (1995) refers to qualitative analysis as using "insight, intuition, and impression" (p. 95). Where feasible, summaries and visual representations were sent to interview subjects for verification and feedback. Also called member checks, this allows participants to validate context and accuracy of the product.

This process essentially follows Creswell's (1998) data analysis spiral where the researcher moves from data collection and management through reflecting to describing

and classifying data to presenting the data, "a packaging of what was found in text, tabular or figure form" (p. 145).

Results

The interview process revealed many similarities in responses, generally at the basic or tactical level. For example, on the question of how Air Force practitioners get crisis training, all respondents agreed that it came from experience in the form of base exercises and the Defense Information School (DINFOS[12]) public affairs officer course. In addition, all agreed that this level of training was primarily tactical in nature.

However, as issues become more complex, answers among the three participants began to diverge and differences in experience and knowledge became more apparent. Generally, the greatest disparity in the types of answers was between Schafer, who had the least experience and training, and DeFrank, who had the most experience and training. Ticer's responses tended to generally fall between the two.

For example, when dealing with the release of information to the public, Schafer was most concerned with meeting the requirements.

> The book answer is by reading the AFI and what it states in there, but obviously there are a lot of gray areas. And so any gray area, if it's not a common sense thing, you just get it approved through your wing commander or whatever level is necessary, whether it be your commander, major command, whatever command.

Ticer also advocated the importance of getting out the facts, but went a step further.

> All you can tell is the truth and let the responsibility fall where it may, but that's how I see our role is laying all the information out there and let the consumers decide what they think of it.

[12] The Defense Information School is located at Fort Meade, Maryland. This Department of Defense School is responsible for initial training of all military officers in public affairs.

DeFrank was most concerned with the bigger issue of transparency and impact in a much larger sense.

> Now more than ever before, there is no such thing as local news. Anything that could be picked up in local media can be, can have literally global ramification. What you would think are obscure little things can quickly become national and can have implications if they're mishandled there for the institution. Those are things that once it reflects beyond the local and onto the institution or the institution's relationships, that's when it can go beyond the tactical to the strategic level.

Based on this initial assumption, Table J-2 was used to juxtapose responses to similar questions. This process allowed the researcher to see exactly how strikingly different some answers were, while others were very similar across respondents. In general, DeFrank's answers tended to be focused on a larger scope or long range strategies rather than just the immediate issues of the current crisis as tended to be the case with Schafer. Ticer's responses tended to fall between the others.

Table J-2. Qualitative interview response comparisons regarding crisis communicaton.

Question	DeFrank	Ticer	Schafer
PA Experience(yrs)	26	16 (5 as officer)	3
Describe AF training	Tactical	Tactical to operational	Tactical
Goal of communication	Transparency	Depends on situation	Timely release of factual info
Source of crisis training	DINFOS, exercises	DINFOS, exercises	DINFOS, exercises
How do PAs reach strategic level of development?	Experience, mentors	Experience, mentors	Experience, boss
1st hand crisis example	Lack of F-15 parts	Thunderbird crash	Plane crash
Goal in example	More funding for F-15	Get out facts	Get through crisis
How do explain PA rationale (sell)	Localize/personalize, (how it affects you)	Communicate differently with different groups	Public's right to know
Disadvantage to other advisors (e.g. legal)	Depends on our knowledge & ability to state rationale	Certainly. Nothing regulatory except FOIA	Yes.
Justification for being open	"only exist to do good things for the American people"	"right thing to do"	Public's right to know
Source of confidence in advice	Experience	Experience	Individual (for those w/o exp)

Levels Defined

Based on this analysis, most responses can be categorized into three basic levels: tactical, operational and strategic. The levels can be matched with respondents based on their answers. Further, these answers similarly tend to directly correspond to the level of experience.

At this point, it is important to present an operational conception of these three levels:

Table J-3. Levels of operation defined.

Level	Definition	Example
Strategic (highest level)	What is the ultimate goal?	Develop public trust
Operational (mid level)	How do we reach the goal?	Community outreach plan
Tactical (lowest level)	What are the specific steps to achieve the goal?	Pilots visit local school

Crisis Communication Defined

Based on these three levels, it became evident that these levels of operation not only applied to crisis communication, but also directly correlated to the level of experience of the public relations practitioner.

For example, when asked what the goal of crisis communication was, the respondents emphasized aspects commensurate with their level of experience.

> Schafer: I would say to try and get the factual information out as timely as possible.
>
> Ticer: I guess, using as a foundation . . . the thought of being transparent, especially for a public organization or something that's funded by tax-payer's dollars, you feel an obligation to be as open, and that's generally where your concerns will come. That is, do we need to be this open and this forthcoming with information if no one asks? So I think, essentially, I would look at what happens if we don't do it and if we don't send out this release or if we don't get this

information out what the consequences would be. That's what makes it obvious. If you don't do this, this is what going to happen.

DeFrank: I think the best standard for crisis communication is transparency. You want to be as open and as honest as you can, as quickly as you can. They're [crises] not the kind of things that, if handled correctly, have long term implications for the reputation of the institution.

Themes[13] Identified

Further analysis revealed five explicit themes and four implicit or abstract themes. These themes were most clearly evident in the DeFrank interview transcript. However, to some degree, each of these themes could also be found in the other two interviews, although not as conspicuous.

Table J-4. Themes identified in exploratory inquiry.

Theme	Description
Media relations	This area, according to DeFrank, is key because it ties into all other aspects of public relations. This includes a variety of specific techniques including being responsive, providing valuable information and understanding the media are not "bastards."
Persuasion	This category entails a variety of attributes aimed at convincing the boss (commander) the proper way to go. Elements of this include having credibility and presenting the local perspective to the commander.
Transparency	This is the importance of not hiding things, whether they are good, bad or indifferent. This category specifically talks about information and details of a crisis situation. For example, being forthcoming "within one news cycle" is the goal.
Tactical level	This is the nuts and bolts of crisis communication. DeFrank often referred to this as being at the local level dealing with the details of the crisis as opposed to being an institutional issue. Handling crisis correctly at the local level prevents crises from escalating to a higher level.
Strategic level	This would be defined as the overarching vision that takes an organization in some direction. Specifically, DeFrank talked about this level when a crisis began to go to the heart of the institution.

[13] Themes in this section refer to elements of crisis communication that were explicitly stated during interviews. Abstract themes were those that were implicit in the interviews.

Table J-5. Abstract themes identified in exploratory inquiry.

Abstract theme	Description
Social reciprocity	Like social exchange theory, there was a lot of discussion of doing things that weren't always in your interest so that you become part of the "loop" making it easier to get what you need later. This suggests on-going efforts that lay the foundation for crisis communication. When this is done, much of the battle is already won before a crisis occurs
Relationships	Similar to the first category, except that it suggests the feelings behind the give and take of social reciprocity. This focuses on aspects of relationship theory, especially trust and control mutuality. For example, two organizations could give and take one another and not have a mutual trust. This category allows for that distinction.
Experience	This ties into the "nose for news," ability to predict and having the big picture in terms of strategic communication. During the course of his career, DeFrank began to understand these things by internalizing what he'd seen. This suggests learning from some place other than formal education. Ticer and Schafer both understood this also.
Transparency	As an abstract category, it goes beyond specific examples to an over arching theme. In this case, transparency ties into being completely open in all aspects of the relationship as opposed to instances of transparency in the context of a crisis

These themes, initially identified in the DeFrank interview, were addressed either directly or indirectly by each respondent and are shown below. The implication is that while not all respondents fully understood or always knew how to implement a strategic-level plan, there was awareness that such a plan was important.

Table J-6. Qualitative interview response comparisons for themes.

Theme	DeFrank	Ticer	Schafer
Strategic crisis comm	Goes to heart of institution	Needed to cover all situations	Need to understand public & Air Force for balance
Tactical crisis comm	Nuts and bolts--	Specifics details based on AFI	Based on AFI
Persuasion	Credibility and presenting "local" view to commander	Communicate "where it strikes them"	Based on regulation and common sense
Media relations	Ties into all areas of PA—relationships, responsiveness	Openess—what are consequences for not releasing info	Release of factual info --depends on what you can confirm
Transparency	Yes	Situationally dependent, but obligation taxpayer	Release of factual info-balanced between public & AF needs

Table J-7. Qualitative interview response comparisons for abstract themes.

Theme	DeFrank	Ticer	Schafer
Social reciprocity	Give when it doesn't benefit you	Need to understand rationale of other careers	Balance public/AF needs
Relationships	Based on credibility and mutuality of control	Need to understand audience point of view	balance public/AF needs
Experience	Key to strategic level--not in formal training	Key to strategic level --not in formal training	Key to strategic level--not in formal training
Transparency	Completely open in all aspects of relationship	Theoretical--Depends on situation	Public's right to know, but balance public/AF need

Themes categorized

It also seems plausible that each of the nine themes can also be placed in the same categories.

Table J-8. Themes categorized by corresponding levels of activity.

Level	Theme
Tactical	Tactical
	Media relations
	Transparency (by crisis)
Operational	Relationships
	Social reciprocity
	Persuasion
Strategic	Transparency (institutional)
	Experience
	Strategic

Ultimately, this suggests that as years of experience increase, the level of strategic thinking also increases. Further, the nine themes previously identified also correspond to both experience and the level of response. The following diagram demonstrates this correlation (Figure J-1).

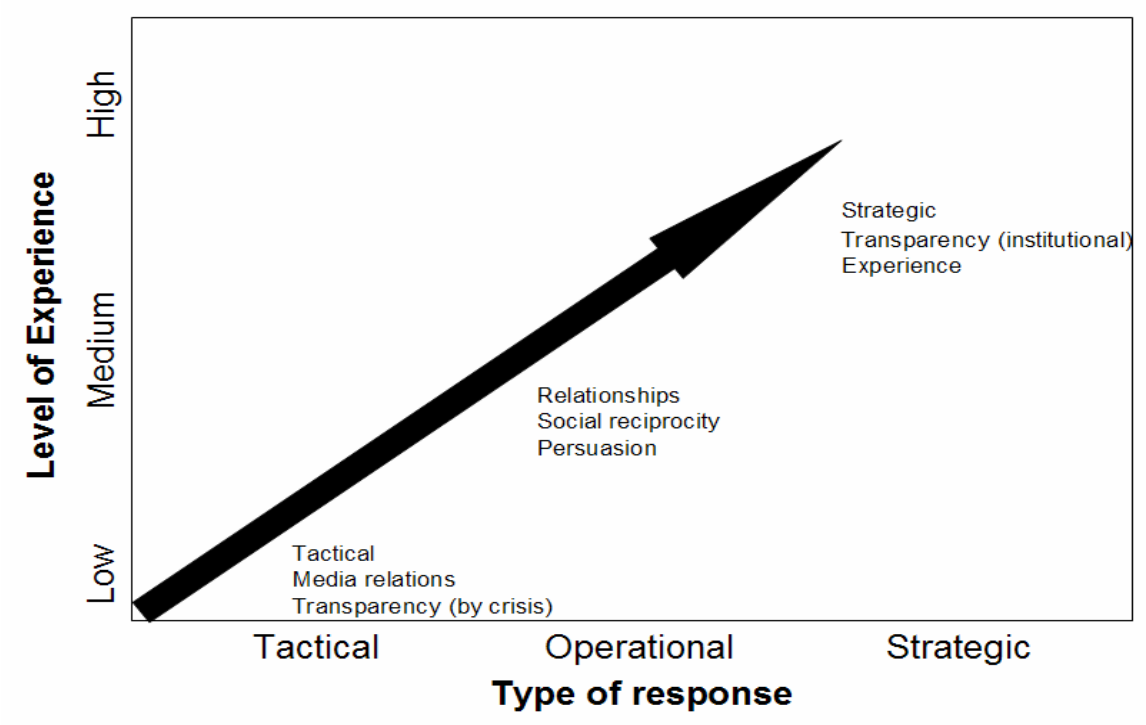

Figure J-1. How level of experience correlates to type of response and comparable themes. Generally, as experience increases, actions tend to move from tactical to strategic levels.

Discussion of Exploratory Research Questions

Accordingly, Figure J-1 addresses the exploratory research questions. The findings suggest that an understanding of the strategic level is critical to successful crisis communication. According to the interviews, good crisis communication is based on transparency, being completely open to the public to whom the Air Force is accountable. This level of transparency, as suggested by DeFrank, is not contingent on whether the issue is considered bad or good. Those subjective values are irrelevant to an overall objective. DeFrank pointed to an example where a lack of F-15 aircraft parts was hampering a mission. As a result, a news story was coordinated to highlight the shortage, which garnered the necessary attention and led to increased funding to fix the problem.

> It's not about good news or bad news, it's about what helps you accomplish your objective. And lots of times bad news is the vehicle for accomplishing what you're

> trying to achieve. It's the far more effective vehicle for helping you achieve what you're trying to achieve.

Ticer echoed these sentiments using an example of an aircraft crash where information was available that could have been released to the media. Despite the fact, that the information was likely to get out through other avenues, some Air Force personnel close to the accident would not allow it to be released. Ticer, while focused on the issue of being transparent, admits "knowing what I know now, I would have looked for the rationale [for not releasing information] earlier because I don't think I found that out until afterward."

This also points to an operational level of thinking in dealing with the crisis.

ERQ1: What constitutes good crisis management in the USAF?

With regard to exploratory research question #1, crisis management strategies employed by the Air Force are sound based on public trust and transparency. However, as this study suggests, those public affairs practitioners with less experience are usually concerned with tactical issues and not able to see the "big picture," especially during a crisis. The level of detail offered during training and regulations is particularly critical for the Air Force, where many junior public affairs officers work in public affairs while waiting up to a year before attending formal public affairs training. The Air Force generally has 400 percent more public affairs lieutenants, which are typically officers with less than four years of service, than it has positions for them. As of August 2004, the Air Force manning level was at 760 percent with 217 people eligible to fill 27 positions (S. McKenna, personal correspondence, August 6, 2004). At times these untrained officers find themselves in positions where they must deal with crisis communication. Reasons for these junior officers being in-charge during a crisis may

include their boss being deployed or simply a gap between bosses after one has left for a new duty station and before a new public affairs officer has arrived.

All three respondents, however, point to the fact that all public affairs officers have assistance just a phone call away. Schafer exemplified both aspects during an aircraft crash at her base.

On February 2, 2002 at Ellsworth Air Force Base (AFB) two crewmembers were killed when their Air Force C-21 aircraft crashed near the base shortly after takeoff (Associated Press, 2002). The incident occurred on a weekend while the senior public affairs chief and experienced sergeant were not available. Schafer, a junior lieutenant, with less than seven months experience and no formal training handled the event with only the help of a few inexperienced staff members.

In the midst of this crisis, Schafer had news release templates and basic guidance about what could legally be released.

Interestingly, even after attending the nine-week formal military public affairs training course several months later, Shafer still remarked, “In my public affairs training, everything was pretty much black and white – do this, don’t do that. I was told there were times when I would need to use my best judgment, but I was never trained in the area of decision making” (Personal correspondence, August 9, 2004).

This example is not intended as an indictment of military public relations training or practices. In fact, the majority of civilian crisis communication strategies are focused heavily on tactics and specifics as well. Finding strategic justification that drives these tactics is difficult in the military as well as the civilian sector.

This example ties back to the experience factor all respondents mentioned. Through training, exercises and real world experiences, practitioners learn the big picture.

> Schafer: I know when I dealt with my first crisis I mean I didn't know what the heck I was doing. I was just following the book and that was the only thing that got me through, as well as making phone calls to higher commands to help. But had I gone through the situation again a year later a lot of it would be confidence in me knowing what I need to do and, you know, knowing the bigger scheme of things.

Even for its most inexperienced practitioners, the Air Force provides somewhat of a safety net of public affairs advisors.

> Ticer: Of course we have a network of advisors in higher levels. Since I came from that role, rarely did anyone do something without asking the advice of someone with a bigger picture.

> DeFrank: We have very few one person shows. And, you're right we have a lot of junior people, but usually we have a lot of junior people who are sent as overages into positions and they're usually careful to place them in places where there are more experienced PAs who can help mentor, guide and supervise them.

ERQ2: Is there a need for change in USAF crisis communication strategies?

Crisis communication often deals with what can and cannot be released. These regulations are very tactical, including such detail as stating that the initial news release must be out in one hour and follow-up news releases should "expect public concerns" and address them. Regulations also offer templates and release authority levels (USAF, 2001). From a typical crisis communication standpoint, few details are left to practitioners to determine on their own. The general guideline is to be as accommodative as possible. Beyond this broad charge to be accommodative because of reasons previously mentioned, regulations provide practitioners little or no justification for the tactics they use.

Today's political and moral climate, however, tends to complicate crisis response. For example, legal experts are often involved in military crisis response issues. At times

this counsel is at odds with public relations efforts. Legal constraints and other issues prevent total accommodation. For example, information that would "adversely affect national security, threaten the safety or privacy of U.S. Government personnel or their families, violate the privacy of the citizens of the United States, or be contrary to law" (DoD, 2000, para. E2.1.4) must be withheld. One author sums up the relationship best. "Courts of law proclaim that a person is innocent until proven guilty, whereas the court of public opinion often declares a person guilty until proven innocent" (Fearn-Banks, 1996, p. 98). This indicates not only that a different strategy must be used outside a courtroom, but also indicates that the public affairs practitioner must have a solid grasp of how the organization's actions fit into the overall picture of a crisis.

Public affairs practitioners are, at times, at a disadvantage over other counsel because the advice is often considered guidance rather than hard and fast rules. As a result, public relations "advice" is at times rejected in favor of what may be considered law.

Kelly Flinn

An example of this was in 1997 when the Air Force attempted to court martial the nation's first female bomber pilot, Lieutenant Kelly Flinn, for lying, disobeying a lawful order and committing adultery. Flinn secured civilian counsel and publicly framed the issue as a case of as "an innocent victim blinded by love" (Morris, 1997). Such framing "led critics to accuse the Air Force of sticking its nose where it doesn't belong - in Flinn's bedroom" (Levins, 1997). Obscured by such publicity were other charges of "lying about the affair and of disobeying her commander's order to break off relations with the man" (Levins, 1997).

According to Lieutenant Colonel Byron James, who helped handle the case at the Air Force Press Desk at the Pentagon said, “She succeeded, in part, due to the fact that her privacy rights combined with legal interpretations of statutory restrictions effectively muzzled the Air Force” (B. James, personal communication, October 6, 2004).

Such legal restrictions prevented Air Force public relations practitioners from correcting public perception of the charges. “Despite warnings from senior people in public affairs that the service was going to get its clock cleaned in the court of public opinion, Air Force lawyers insisted that the service basically do nothing to tell its side of the story” (Air Force Times, 1997). As a result of the negative coverage, the Air Force gave Flinn a general discharge rather than going through with a court-martial to prevent “national embarrassment of court-martialing her amid a rising storm of public protest” (Beck, 1997).

As a result of the Flinn case, changes were made to how the Air Force handles certain issues.

> DeFrank: I think Kelly Flinn drove home there is no such thing as a local event. That what seems like a local disciplinary act can have national ramifications and there was a great deal of discussion . . . to make sure we learn what could from Kelly Flinn. Now we routinely, even here at the Pentagon each year for the new judge advocate [military lawyer] course, we give them a presentation about that. There’s a much better interchange, and a much greater recognition that the ramifications can extend beyond the very narrow legal focuses.

In general, DeFrank points out that “from my perspective and experience, I think crisis communication is one of the things we do best. If I was looking at areas where we needed to change, improve, or focus our efforts, to me that [crisis communication] probably would not be it.” However, DeFrank also admits, “It’s one of the ones where you can’t afford not to monitor it.”

Conclusion

This research confirms there is a direct correlation between experience level and the ability to think strategically during a crisis. While there is virtually no literature that discusses the strategic level of crisis communication the Air Force seems to have little problem with that fact. Practitioners are given enough tactical details and exercises to get them through most crises they are likely to face. When problems go beyond the scope of the tactical details, help is literally a phone call away. Since all levels in the command structure have public affairs practitioners on-call, assistance is available around the clock. This helps fill gaps the level the experience, allowing even the most junior practitioners the ability to manage with a crisis at a basic level.

From a theoretical point of view, all three officer's responses were consistent with the contingency theory of accommodation. All presented a strong sense of a public's right to know and strove to present information in a timely manner. They also presented clear examples that demonstrated how they defended this position even to their superiors.

This desire for transparency, however, contradicts Shoemaker & Reese's (1996) propaganda model. By being transparent, the public and media have access to the information. Clear guidelines established by regulations and laws set clear standards for withholding information based on criteria such as national security.

Through mentoring and experience practitioners move from the tactical to the strategic level. While all interviewees had varying levels of strategic understanding, all understood a basic responsibility to the general public to release information. That alone may be the cornerstone of military public affairs and why polls show such a high confidence in the military.

As DeFrank puts it: “The great thing about an institution like the Air Force . . . as an institution we only exist to do good things for the American people and as an institution in general, we always try to do only the right thing. It really makes it . . . I can’t say easy, but it always keeps you grounded on what you should be doing or what you should be focusing on.”

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