

THE IMAGE RESTORATION OF BP

---

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the School

of Communication

University of Houston

---

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

---

By

Nazreen Mehta

May, 2012

THE IMAGE RESTORATION OF BP

---

An Abstract of a Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the School

of Communication

University of Houston

---

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

---

By

Nazreen Mehta

May, 2012

**ABSTRACT**

This study expands on crisis communication literature by examining how BP restored its reputation after the oil spill that occurred on April 20, 2010. Overall, this study was guided by relevant literature in image restoration theory, framing theory, and the situational crisis communication theory. Then, a qualitative content analysis of BP press releases, commercials, and newspaper articles highlighted the relationship between the image restoration strategies used by BP and how the media assessed the strategies. These results indicate an increase in the use of multiple image restoration strategies and media frames. Moreover, this study provides insight into the steps crisis managers should take in the post-crisis stage.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This thesis would not have been possible without the guidance and support of several individuals who in some way contributed to the completion of this study.

First and foremost, I would like to thank Dr. Vardeman-Winter for being the chair of my committee. Her guidance, time, and support helped me to successfully finish this thesis. In addition, I would like to thank Dr. Ni and Professor Emery for being on my committee. Their assistance and input was very much appreciated.

Lastly, I would like to thank my family, friends, and my boyfriend, Tyler. Your constant support throughout graduate school has meant the world to me. I would not have been able to complete my thesis without your words of encouragement.

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Chapter I: Introduction.....1

Chapter II: Literature Review.....9

Chapter III: Methods.....32

Chapter IV: Results.....43

Chapter V: Discussion and Conclusion.....71

References.....86

Appendix.....100

## **Chapter I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### *Context of the Study*

The purpose of this study is to look at the image restoration strategies used by BP when responding to the oil spill crisis that occurred on April 20, 2010. On this day the Deepwater Horizon, an oilrig commissioned by BP, leaked into the Gulf of Mexico. This event had catastrophic results for many publics and organizations.

The first time BP addressed the public was two days after the oil spill occurred. Group Chief Executive, Tony Hayward, stressed that BP was doing everything in its power to contain the oil spill and resolve the situation. The following day BP offered its condolences to those who had lost loved ones (“BP Response Timeline”, n.d.).

Environmentalists, federal officials, oil industry experts and lawmakers criticized BP’s response to the oil spill (Robertson & Lipton, 2010). Some felt that BP was too slow to respond while others felt its apologetic efforts were insincere (“BP Oil Spill Apology”, n.d.). In the early stages after the crisis, BP offered coastal residents cash payments in exchange for giving up their right to sue the company later on. Many people felt that this was one of the ways that BP was just trying to maintain its corporate image instead of maintain its company-public relationship (Brady, 2010).

Ten days after the oil spill, BP posted to its Facebook and Twitter pages. This was the first post that was made since the oil spill occurred. The posts provided the public with updates about the oil spill. The public faulted BP for not making a response sooner that appeased the public and let them know action was being taken (Silverstein, 2010).

In this study, Benoit's (1997) image restoration theory is used to examine the image restoration strategies used by BP in response to the oil spill. Image restoration theory provides researchers and practitioners with a practical framework to assess how effective in the public's eyes BP was in maintaining its corporate image. Image restoration strategies are often used after a crisis when an organization is trying to address the public.

In addition, this study will use the framing theory to observe how different media framed the BP oil spill. It is important to know how the media frame crises because the reporter might frame the story in a way that changes public opinion or the public's perception about an organization.

Lastly, this study uses the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) to see how the media assessed the image response strategies that BP used. Furthermore, this study will see if the media portrayed the organization positively, negatively, or neutrally.

These three theories are being studied together because each theory centers on an organization's reputation after a crisis occurs. For example, the image restoration theory and SCCT are two theories that go hand-in-hand. These two theories provide crisis managers with various steps to assess the threat imposed on an organization's reputation. In addition, the framing theory illustrates how the media will portray a crisis. This portrayal can help to improve an organization's reputation, or can cause more damage.

Readers can expect to learn more information about these three theories from the following study. The need for a reassessment of the image restoration theory to account for a new sub-category will be discussed. Also, the use of multiple image restoration strategies is mentioned. In addition, readers will learn media can use a particular media frame in a variety

of ways. Lastly, readers will be able to learn that matching up the crisis type with the crisis response strategy within SCCT does not always provide a positive organizational reputation.

### *Crisis Communication*

The following section provides a brief overview of crisis communication. Next, what is known about crisis communication is discussed. Lastly, the section discusses how research on instructing and adjusting information in crisis communication is lacking.

Crisis communication has become a very important section of the public relations field. According to Palenchar (2010), “serious accidents are inevitable no matter how hard organizations try to avoid them, especially those related to hazardous systems such as commercial airlines, nuclear power plants, shipping and transportation, and the petrochemical industry” (p. 41). Therefore, crisis communication is essential.

What is known about crisis communication is that crisis managers often try to achieve situational awareness. Situational awareness is when managers feel like they have enough information to make decisions (Coombs, 2010). Knowledge about the crisis situation can help the crisis team to make the best decisions. Then, these decisions must be properly communicated to the necessary stakeholders.

Research that centers on instructing and adjusting information is lacking from crisis communication. This is because the majority of crisis communication research focuses on stakeholder reaction management centered on reputation repair.

### *Framing Theory*

A brief overview of the framing theory is provided in the following section. Then, the use of frames as dependent and independent variables are discussed. Lastly, this section discusses areas of research that are lacking within the framing theory.



Framing theory is often used to describe the way an event, such a crisis, is portrayed in the media. According to de Vries (2004), the main idea of framing theory is that “the reaction to an event is not determined not – or hardly at all – by the event itself but by the way in which such events are interpreted and given meaning” (p. 597). In other words, the media can choose to emphasize certain aspects of a story. The chosen aspect has the potential to impact public understanding and perception about an organization.

Frames can be examined as dependent and independent variables. Frames as dependent variables examine the various factors that influence the creation or modification of frames. For example, a journalist’s framing of an issue may be influenced by socio-structural or organizational variables, and individual or ideological variables (Scheufele, 2006). On the other hand, frames that serve as an independent variable are more interested in the effects of framing. One effect of framing could be an individual’s willingness to participate in a certain action that was mentioned in the frame (Scheufele, 2006).

Research on frame building is lacking from the framing theory. Studies have been completed that address framing factors such as organizational restraints, professional values of journalists, and journalists’ expectations about audiences on news form and content (Scheufele, 2006). However, research is lacking on the types of frames, and how frames form.

### *The Situational Crisis Communication Theory*

The following section provides an overview of SCCT. Next, an assumption that SCCT is based upon is discussed. Lastly, this section discusses how future research on the public’s perception of crisis response strategies is needed.

SCCT is essential for crisis managers in the post-crisis stage. According to Coombs (2007), SCCT “provides an evidence-based framework for understanding how to maximize the reputational protection afforded by post-crisis communication” (p. 163). This theory is important in the public relations field because shows crisis managers how stakeholders will respond to the crisis, which in turn, can impact the organization’s post-crisis communication.

SCCT is based on the assumption that an organization’s reputation, also known as how the organization is perceived by its publics, is a valued resource that is threatened by crises (Coombs & Holladay, 2002). One way to preserve the organization’s reputation is through a strategic communicative response (Coombs & Holladay, 2002). This response will have assessed the crisis situation and selected a crisis response strategy that best fits with the given situation.

Future research should be completed to assess how people perceive the various crisis response strategies (Coombs & Holladay, 2002). This information will help to see if the stakeholders’ and researchers’ perceptions of the crisis response strategies are in alignment. Such research will provide a “receiver perspective” (Coombs & Holladay, 2002, p. 182) to understand how crisis response strategies are interpreted. However, the following study only examined the media’s perception of the crisis response strategies.

### *Context/Background*

In 1909, the company that would later be known as British Petroleum was founded after a discovery of oil in the Middle East. Today, BP is the world’s fourth largest corporation (CNNMoney, 2010) and employs more than 80,000 people in more than 80 countries and currently operates 16 refineries around the globe (“BP at a glance”, n.d.). During the latter half of the 20th century, BP expanded operations by merging with

American companies such as Standard Oil of Ohio, ARCO, and most specifically Amoco (“Late century”, n.d.). BP is an energy corporation that, besides petroleum, deals in renewable energy such as solar power, wind power, and biofuels. BP currently has sales and operating revenues that amount to more than \$297 billion.

On April 20, 2010, the offshore oil platform known as the Deepwater Horizon experienced an explosion that killed 11 people and injured 17 (Clanton & Hatcher, 2010). Within 36 hours of the explosion, the oilrig was sunk (“BP Deepwater Horizon accident”, n.d.). BP was not the only player involved in this crisis. The Deepwater Horizon was an offshore platform owned by the Swiss company, Transocean, and was under contract by BP (Clanton & Hatcher, 2010). In fact, nine of the 11 employees that lost their lives were employed by Transocean (Clanton & Hatcher, 2010). On January 5, 2011, a White House committee extended fault to Halliburton along with BP and Transocean for their mishandling of the oil spill (Rascoe, 2011). BP and Transocean remain as the most recognizable companies in the crisis.

The laws created to respond to this crisis were created by the U.S. government. In May 2010, the Obama administration created a deepwater drilling moratorium that halted oil production in the Gulf of Mexico for a 6-month period (Kunzelman, 2010). President Obama and his administration also sent a \$69 billion clean-up bill to BP, Transocean, and other companies involved in the spill (Ellis, 2010).

Since the explosion, BP has created a website that gives, in detail, the solutions that it has been working on to solve the crisis. The first solution to the crisis revolved around containing the leak caused by the explosion. BP initially attempted many short-term solutions to the leaking well. The first attempt involved the use of remote operated underwater vehicles

to close the “blowout preventer.” When this failed, it tried to use a containment dome, which had worked in the past on leaks that occurred in shallow water. BP tried several other tactics through May and June with most of them finding little to no success in stopping up the leak. Finally, relief wells were drilled and became the most successful tactic at stopping the leak.

The next solution that BP implemented was the compensation of people involved in the event as well as communities affected by the spill. After meeting with President Obama in June 2010, BP started the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill Trust, a \$20 billion response fund that would be created over the span of a few years to help those affected by the crisis (Hall, 2010). Along with the response fund, BP provided grants for implementing clean up as well as grants to promote tourism to Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida. Most of these grants were in the range of \$15 million to \$25 million (“Compensating the people”, n.d.).

BP provided solutions in the areas of cleanup and ecological rehabilitation. BP hired local fisherman to use their boats to provide transport as well as pull skimmers and oil booms (“Offshore and onshore clean-up, n.d.). BP also dropped chemical dispersant into the water to help break down the large amounts of oil that was spilling (Khan, 2010). BP also employed people and technology to help cleanup and protect the coastline and marshlands (“Offshore and onshore clean-up”, n.d.). Along with rehabilitating the environment, BP worked with groups to help fish and other wildlife recover from the oil spill.

Whether voluntarily or by request of the government, BP took steps to provide solutions following the disastrous event. BP worked with Gulf Coast communities to provide cleanup of the spill as well as provide monetary support. BP is still working closely with these areas to ensure that the oil spill is continuing to be taken care of.

This study will provide future researchers and practitioners with a better

understanding of the image restoration strategies used by organizations in the post-crisis stage. In addition, this study will illustrate if image restoration strategies are a solution to appeasing the public's concerns. It is important to find out if these strategies are successful because they can help maintain the mutually beneficial relationship with the public, which is the key to public relations.

### *Plan of Study*

This study discusses BP's response to the oil spill through its use of image restoration strategies. First, a literature review grounded in image restoration theory, framing theory, and SCCT provide a framework for the case. Second, a content analysis is presented that showed if BP's image restoration tactics were effective through examining BP's press releases and commercials. Additionally, a content analysis showed how the media framed the BP crisis. Lastly, a content analysis showed how the media assessed BP's response strategies through SCCT. Looking at BP's press releases, commercials, and newspaper articles gave a well-rounded view of the public relations messages used in the oil spill crisis. By examining three different types of media I was able to find similarities, differences and trends among the three outlets. Finally, implications and recommendations are given along with future research suggestions.

## Chapter II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### *Literature Overview*

Several bodies of work frame this study, including the image restoration theory and case studies on which image restoration strategies have been used in the post-crisis stage. Secondly, framing theory is described, which provides important insight on how crises are often portrayed. Additionally, technological crises were studied as BP suffered from a crisis of this nature. Lastly, SCCT is discussed and includes the steps crisis managers must go through when a crisis occurs.

#### *Image Restoration Theory*

The following section will provide an overview of the image restoration theory. The image restoration theory context is discussed followed by an examination of the image restoration strategies, suggestions for effective image repair, and recommendations for utilizing the image restoration strategies.

*Image restoration theory context.* The image restoration theory was created by Benoit. The purpose of image restoration theory, in relation to this study, is to differentiate between the different strategies an organization can utilize following a crisis. According to Benoit (1997), “The key to understanding image repair strategies is to consider the nature of attacks or complaints that prompt such responses or instigate a corporate crisis” (p. 178). Furthermore, Benoit (1997) explained that “An attack has two components: (1) The accused is held responsible for an action and (2) That act is considered offensive” (p. 178). Essentially, responsibility takes many shapes so it is unreasonable to judge an organization unless it is responsible for an action, and offensiveness is subject to perception. Benoit

(1997) noted that, “for both conditions, perceptions are more important than reality . . . the important point is not whether the business in fact is responsible for the offensive act but whether the firm is thought to be responsible for it by the relevant audience” (p. 178).

Image restoration strategies focus on “how organizations respond to accusations or accounts after being accused of a transgression” (Ulmer, Sellnow & Seeger, 2010, p. 303). This theory is more exhaustive than earlier theories, such as apologia (Benoit, 1997, p. 178), as it offers five broad categories of strategies.

There are two key assumptions that provide the foundation for the image restoration theory. First, corporate communication is conceptualized as a goal-directed activity. Second, maintaining a positive reputation for the organization is one of the central goals of this communication (Coombs, 2010).

An important aspect of the image restoration theory is that corporations have multiple audiences. For example, an organization might face stakeholders, local citizens, employees, or politicians during any stage of a crisis. It is essential that the organization recognizes who its audiences are and choose an image restoration strategy they will understand and positively respond to.

*Image restoration strategies.* Benoit created five categories of image restoration strategies: denial, evasion of responsibility, reducing offensiveness, corrective action, and mortification. In defining the five categories, Benoit explained (1997):

Denial and evasion of responsibility address the first component of the persuasive attack, rejecting or reducing the accused’s responsibility for the act in question.

Reducing offensiveness and corrective action, the third and fourth broad category of image restoration, concern the second component of persuasive attack: reducing

offensiveness of the act attributed to the accused. The last general strategy, mortification, tries to restore an image by asking forgiveness. (p. 179)

Denial occurs when an organization refutes its involvement in the crisis. One example of denial was in 1991 when Pepsi-Cola accused Coca-Cola of charging its other accounts higher than it charged McDonald's. Coca-Cola directly rejected Pepsi-Cola's accusations when the senior vice president and general manager released a printed letter stressing that the charges were "absolutely false" (Benoit & Czerwinski, 1997, p. 40).

Evasion of responsibility is used when the organization attributes the crisis to actions of another party. This technique can be used in four different ways. The first way is through *provocation* in which the organization says that the wrongful act was a reasonable response. *Defeasibility* occurs when the organization asserts that the offensive act occurred only because of lack of information or ability. An *accident* claims that the wrongful act was not committed on purpose. Lastly, responsibility can be evaded by claiming that the act was committed with *good intentions* (Blaney, Benoit, & Brazeal, 2002).

An example of the evasion of responsibility occurred when Sears was accused of overcharging on auto repairs. The chairman stated that "we would never intentionally violate the trust customers have shown in our company for 105 years" (Benoit & Czerwinski, 1997, p. 42). Thus, Sears continuously claimed the organization was operating with good intentions.

Reducing the offensiveness happens when the organization tries to make the crisis seem less threatening. Examples of reducing the offensiveness include stressing the good traits of the company, saying the act was not serious/offensive, stressing more important



considerations, reducing the credibility of the accuser, or providing compensation to the victims (Blaney et al., 2002).

Exxon used reducing the offensiveness after the Exxon Valdez oil spill when Chairman Rawl stated that “Exxon has moved swiftly and competently to minimize the effect this oil will have on the environment, fish, and other wildlife” (Benoit & Czerwinski, 1997, p. 42). Words such as “swift” and “competent” help to offset reputation damage, if accepted (Benoit & Czerwinski, 1997).

Corrective action occurs when the organization implements steps to solve the problem or prevent a repeat of the crisis. AT&T used corrective action in 1973 after the company experienced a breakdown in long distance service to and from New York City. The AT&T chairman announced the organization had taken “corrective and preventive action at the affected facility including a thorough examination of all facilities and practices, from the ground up” (Benoit & Czerwinski, 1997, p. 44).

Mortification occurs when an organization takes responsibility for the crisis and apologizes. AT&T also used mortification after the 1973 server breakdown. The chairman released a statement that accepted the responsibility and apologized to those who were affected (Benoit & Czerwinski, 1997).

In addition to the five image restoration strategies, Benoit (1997) employed eight suggestions for effective image repair. The first step is to use persuasive rhetoric effectively. Rhetoric is the words and actions taken by organizations to achieve specific goals, build relationships, or repair its image (Ihlen, 2010). Persuasive rhetoric should be used through concrete information to get a certain public to act or think in a certain way. By doing this the organization has achieved transparency. Transparency can be accomplished by providing

adequate support for claims, avoiding arguments that might backfire, and choosing an appropriate spokesperson (Benoit, 1997, p. 183). Secondly, a company that is at fault should admit it immediately. Third, at times it is possible to successfully shift the blame. Fourth, if factors beyond one's control can be shown to have caused the offensive act, this may alleviate responsibility and help restore image. Fifth, it is important to report plans to correct and/or prevent recurrence of the problem. Sixth, corrective action cannot assure success. Seventh, minimization cannot always be expected to improve one's image. Lastly, multiple strategies can work together (Benoit, 1997).

Benoit (1997) recommended utilizing the image restoration strategies according to three salient crisis elements. The first element is preparation before the crisis. In the pre-crisis stage, an organization should identify and reduce risks that can develop into a crisis. This is known as the prevention stage (Coombs, 2010). During the prevention stage, organizations should take actions to prevent risks from occurring. This can be done by eliminating the risk completely, reducing the likelihood of a risk manifesting, and reducing the threat of a risk (Coombs, 2010).

In addition, before a crisis occurs companies should do a great deal of planning and develop a crisis management plan (CMP). Pre-crisis planning will reduce response time and possibly prevent missteps in an organization's initial crisis response (Benoit, 1997).

The second element is to identify the nature of the crisis. When a crisis occurs, it is vital that the organization clearly understands the nature of the crisis and the accusations or charges that have been brought forward. An organization must know both of these things to appropriately respond. Also, knowing the perceived severity of the alleged offense is important (Benoit, 1997).

In the crisis response stage, the organization's spokesperson must provide accurate information to stakeholders about the crisis (Coombs, 2010). Furthermore, the organization should provide information with regards to how the damage is being minimized, and how the organization will maintain normal operations. Reputation repair begins in this stage.

The third element is identification of the relevant audiences. An organization must know who the salient audience is and tailor the message to fit the audience. It is best to prioritize audiences, making sure the most important audience is appeased first (Benoit, 1997).

An organization's audience can include employees, shareholders or donors, customers or clients, government regulators, community vendors, and the media (Hagan, 2010). Organizations need to find out which of the previously mentioned publics are the most important. This can be done through a relationship audit to determine whom their key stakeholders are, how those stakeholders stand on various issues, and assess the quality of the relationship (Hagan, 2010). Active publics should be the organization's focus of communication, especially during a crisis. An active public that is ignored has the potential to become activist publics causing the organization more problems (Hagan, 2010).

#### *Previous Image Restoration Studies*

The following section reviews a variety of image restoration studies that have been conducted by different researchers. These studies are relevant to the current study through the theories explored, media used, and verbiage of response messages.

In 1997, Benoit and Czerwinski examined the image restoration strategies USAir used when responding to negative charges about the safety of its plane's management policies. The image restoration strategies were executed through a series of advertisements

published in 47 newspapers. Bolstering, denial, and corrective action were used in each of the advertisements.

In 2008, Pfahl and Bates examined the image restoration strategies used by the four sponsors involved in the Indianapolis Motor Speedway tire crisis. The crisis occurred when fourteen cars withdrew from the race after two team drivers crashed their cars and ripped their tires in a practice race. The four sponsors used all of the image restoration strategies when addressing the public.

Finally, in 2002, a study of Firestone's image restoration campaign was done by Blaney, Benoit, and Brazeal. The campaign was implemented after the Bridgestone-Firestone Corporation recalled 6.5 million ATX and Wilderness AT tires that caused the deaths of 271 people (Blaney et al., 2002). Mortification, corrective action, reducing offensiveness through bolstering, and denial were all used in the campaign.

*USAir crisis and using multiple strategies together.* The three strategies chosen by USAir were not executed effectively. Although USAir demonstrated corrective action, its plan of action did not reflect the previous charges made against the company. USAir denied the charges with a self-serving assertion that "our planes are safe" (p. 48) when a direct and forceful denial would have been more effective. Finally, Benoit and Czerwinski agreed that the bolstering efforts were not as effective as they could have been. Bolstering would have been more effective had the organization chosen an appropriate spokesperson. For example, the public might be more persuaded about the mechanical safety of the planes through a statement from mechanics, not flight attendants (Benoit & Czerwinski, 1997).

From this study, the public relations field can learn that a company is most persuasive when it admits fault and apologizes. The public will have more respect for an organization

that admits its faults rather than an organization who is constantly denying claims. In addition, this study showed that various image repair strategies might not work when used together. The situation and type of image restoration strategy play an important role in how well the strategies will work when combined. This study will guide my current study because I will be able to find out if BP used multiple strategies together, and how well they worked.

*Motor Speedway crisis and contradictory messages.* Pfahl and Bates (2008) believed that the four sponsors should have come together for one response to the public. This would have shown the public that the four sponsors were working in unison to deal with the repercussions of the crisis. Lastly, some of the organizations' messages were contradictory. For example, the FIA expressed regret to the fans, but revealed its corrective actions prior to the race in an attempt avoid blame and culpability (Pfahl & Bates, 2008).

This article will be beneficial for future research and for public relations practitioners. First off, this article reminds practitioners that not all image repair strategies are conducted by a single actor. A group of different individuals might form during a crisis and implement certain image repair strategies.

*Bridgestone-Firestone crisis.* According to the authors, bolstering was a reasonable choice chosen by the company because reminding the consumer about the company's long history in the advertisements was quite plausible (Blaney et al., 2002). On the other hand, shifting the blame to consumers was a poor choice implying that the accidents were caused by operator error rather than defective tires. Corrective action was an appropriate strategy because it showed the public that action was being taken, but was believed to have come too late. Overall, the authors viewed the campaign as a failure.

*Similarities to the following study.* The previous case studies were chosen because of their similar characteristics with the following study. Each case study involved a well known organization whose reputation was put into question after a technological crisis. The following study will mirror those results as BP is a well known company that experienced a technological crisis. These similarities are important because they provide a frame of reference to guide the study.

*Case studies similarities and differences.* In addition, the case studies have similarities and differences within themselves. Each case study examined the image restoration strategies of an organization after a technological crisis occurred. Secondly, image restoration theory guided each case study. Lastly, two of the three case studies found that corrective action is an appropriate strategy to use, if executed in the right way. Corrective action works best when the actions taken actually correct improper procedures (Benoit & Czerwinski, 1997).

The differences in the case studies had to do with the sample. Two of the three case studies solely looked at printed documents including press releases, press statements, and advertisements. The Firestone case study (Blaney et al., 2002) also looked at printed documents, in addition to Congressional hearings. Lastly, the USAir case study (Benoit & Czerwinski, 1997) suggested that bolstering is not an effective strategy to use at times. On the other hand, the Firestone case study suggested that bolstering is effective.

One important lesson to be learned from the previous case studies is the importance of choosing an image restoration strategy that the public will respond to positively. If the strategy to restore the company's image does not resonate with the public it is likely that the public will continue to see the organization in an unfavorable way. Organizations should

conduct research in the pre-crisis stage to find out which image restoration strategy the public is most susceptible to. Knowing this information ahead of time can save the organization valuable time in the post-crisis stage.

*Challenges to employing image restoration strategies.* The previous case studies stress the difficulties with the shifting the blame image restoration strategy when multiple parties are involved in crisis. Organizations involved in a crisis might experience difficulties forming a unified strategy to deal with the crisis. Furthermore, some organizations might experience a “conflicting choice” (Pfahl & Bates, 2008, p. 141) in crafting a response message. This will complicate crafting a single response message for multiple publics.

In addition, it is difficult to know the amount of blame that should be placed on an organization when multiple parties are involved. It is not easy to decipher which organization had more responsibility for the crisis (Blaney et al., 2002). Therefore, this study will look at the shifting the blame image restoration strategy as the BP oil spill involved multiple parties. From this finding, practitioners should be more cautious of shifting the blame when a crisis involves multiple parties.

*Best practices for employing image restoration strategies.* According to the previous studies, image restoration strategies should be used on a case-by-case basis. Practitioners should be cognizant that crises are multi-layered and dynamic. Practitioners should not assume that current incidents require the same rhetorical choices as previous incidents that appear similar (Pfahl & Bates, 2008). Furthermore, image restoration strategies that worked well in a previous crisis might not work together in another crisis (Benoit & Czerwinski, 1997).

Another main finding of the previous studies is the importance of choosing the right media. A media should be picked that allows the organization's message to come across clearly and with no noise. TV is a good media because the organization can purchase time on the morning and evening networks during primetime (Blaney et al., 2002). Furthermore, when responding to claims made by another organization, the company should use the same forms of media (Pfahl & Bates, 2008). This is to ensure that the targeted public sees both organizations' messages.

Also, it is important to use certain verbiage when communicating with these media. Overall, it is essential that the information provided is specific and relevant to the issue at hand. Claims should be explicitly addressed, not implicitly (Benoit & Czerwinski, 1997).

The current study will see if BP, an organization with previous crises, has utilized different image restoration strategies than in the past. Also, this study will examine the verbiage BP used in their response messages.

### *Framing Theory*

The following section will provide an overview of the framing theory from a mass communication perspective. In addition, this section will discuss how there is a lack of studies regarding framing crises in public relations. Lastly, the different types of crisis frames are mentioned.

*Framing theory from a mass communication perspective.* Framing theory is used for understanding how social movement organizations, media, politicians, and businesses articulate their causes and mission and advocate issues to their publics. It is based on the assumption that how an issue is characterized can have an influence on how it is understood by audiences (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2006).



Frames are used to articulate the organization's position on a particular subject. Framing theory argues that schemas are created by individual actors to socially understand, justify, and/or respond to an issue (Potter, 2008).

Entman (2007) described framing as "the process of culling a few elements of perceived reality and assembling a narrative that highlights connections among them to promote a particular interpretation" (p. 164). Framing shapes and alters the public's interpretations and preferences through priming, the introduction of certain ideas that encourage audiences to feel, think, and decide in a certain way.

Practically, framing refers to the selection and emphasis of certain aspects of issues. Framing occurs as journalists choose an aspect of a perceived reality and make it more salient in a communicating text. It is important to understand journalistic framing because it influences public understanding (Andsager & Powers, 2009).

Framing research is useful for identifying strategic messages created by public relations practitioners. In addition, framing analysis provides crisis managers with useful insights into the appropriate crisis response strategies to minimize the damage to an organization's image. Frames will influence the public's perception and impressions of the organization (An & Gower, 2009).

According to Scheufele (1999), there are two types of frames: media frames and individual frames. A media frame is defined as "a central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events" (Scheufele, 1999, p. 106). Media frames allow journalists to quickly identify and classify information and put it together for efficient relay to the intended audiences. Individual frames are defined as "mentally stored clusters of ideas that guide individuals' processing of information" (Scheufele, 1999, p.107).

*Framing studies of crises.* Through my research I noticed that there is a lack of studies that frame various crises. The majority of framing studies deal with crisis communication and perception management with the media rather than how the crisis was actually framed. Therefore, there is an even bigger need for this study.

*Types of crisis frames.* Several researchers (An & Gower, 2009; Hong, 2007; Iyengar, 1999) have conducted content analyses to examine the frames employed by the media after a crisis occurs. An and Gower (2009) discussed several types of frames consistently used in the U.S. news coverage: human interest, conflict, economic consequences, morality, attribution of responsibility, and level of responsibility. Iyengar (1999) expanded the level of responsibility frame creating two sub-frames: episodic news frame and thematic news frame. Hong (2007) added a health severity frame for when a medical outbreak occurs.

The *human interest* frame brings an emotional angle to the crisis, and provides an emotional response from the public. The *conflict* frame is used in a way to reflect conflict and disagreement among individuals, organizations, or groups. The *economic consequence* frame reports how the crisis will affect an organization, group, individual, or country economically. *Morality* frame puts the crisis in the contexts of morals, and social norms. The *attribution of responsibility* frame defines who is responsible for the crisis. The *episodic news* frame focuses on certain individuals or specific events, while the *thematic news* frame places the issue in a general context at the societal/governmental level (An & Gower, 2009).

One commonality found among the previous research was how universal each frame is in the sense that every newspaper and journalist uses them. The conflict frame is commonly used in the U.S. news media. Furthermore, the more serious newspapers tended to use the conflict frame more throughout various stories in comparison to other newspapers

(An & Gower, 2009). A serious newspaper is widely read by businesspeople and focuses on current events and financial issues. An example of a serious newspaper would be *The New York Times* (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). The morality frame is one of the top frames used in quantity and is commonly used among journalists (Iyengar, 1999).

These frames will give practitioners a good idea of how crises could be framed in the future. Having knowledge of these frames can help practitioners know if one media uses a certain frame. For example, if an organization wants the crisis to be framed around morality, the practitioner should go to a media that is known for using the morality frame.

These frames will guide my current study. I will use these frames to see how the BP oil spill crisis was framed. However, it is possible that my study will develop new frames that can help practitioners and researchers in the future.

#### *Situational Crisis Communication Theory*

The following section provides the SCCT context. This section walks through each step of SCCT to illustrate how a crisis manager can assess an organization's reputational threat. In addition, previous case studies that have used SCCT are mentioned. Then, similarities and differences within each case study are discussed. Lastly, this section emphasizes the benefits of the previous studies to the current study.

*SCCT context.* SCCT is a theory used to identify crisis response strategies. This theory is based on the assumption that stakeholders will make attributions about the cause of a crisis (Coombs, 2010). Attribution theory is used as a stepping stone for further knowledge and to determine which crisis response strategies are appropriate for a specific crisis. Attribution theory states that people will assign responsibility for negative, unexpected events. Thus, crises fit perfectly into Attribution theory (Coombs, 2010).

Crises vary in the sense that stakeholders might attribute the cause of the crisis to the organization or to external factors. The stronger the attributions of organizational control, also known as crisis responsibility, the greater the reputational threat posed by the crisis. SCCT shows that crisis managers can use this discourse to “(1) alter attributions about the crisis, (2) change perceptions of the organization in crisis, or (3) a combination of the two” (Coombs, 2010, p. 110).

The purpose of SCCT is to find a post-crisis response strategy that best fits with the given crisis situation. Prior to choosing a response strategy, the organization must make an assessment about its reputational threat. SCCT uses three factors to assess the reputational threat of a crisis. These factors are: crisis type (frame), crisis history, and prior reputation.

*Crisis type.* Crisis type is the frame used to define the crisis. Previous literature has identified three frames used to categorize crises. The three frames take into consideration the level of crisis responsibility. The three frames are victim, accidental, and preventable. The *victim* type has low attributions of organizational crisis responsibility. Examples of a victim type crisis include workplace violence, natural disasters, and product tampering. The *accidental* type has modest attributions of organizational crisis responsibility. Technical-error product harm and technical-error accident are examples of the accidental type crisis. Lastly, the *preventable* type has strong attributions of organizational crisis responsibility (Coombs, 2010) with examples such as human-error accident, organizational misdeed, and human-error product harm.

Responsibility of the crisis poses a threat to an organization’s reputation. According to Coombs (2007), the reputational threat to an organization “increases as stakeholders’

attributions of crisis responsibility to the organization intensifies” (p. 166). Thus, the crisis frame/type offers the initial reputational threat.

*Crisis history.* The second factor used to assess the reputational threat of a crisis is the organization’s crisis history. Crisis history refers to the number of crises an organization has experienced in the past. According to Coombs (2007), the attribution theory states that a history of crises suggests that an organization has an ongoing problem which needs to be addressed. Thus, organizations that have experienced previous crises will have more reputational threat than an organization’s first-time crisis. Furthermore, a history of crises will make stakeholders treat the current crisis as more severe. For example, a victim crisis will be treated like an accidental crisis and an accidental crisis will be treated like a preventable crisis (Coombs, 2010).

*Prior reputation.* The last factor used to assess the reputational threat of a crisis is prior reputation. An unfavorable prior reputation suggests that the organization has a history of treating stakeholders poorly. Furthermore, an unfavorable prior reputation suggests that “an organization shows little consideration for stakeholders across a number of domains, not just in this crisis” (Coombs, 2007, p. 167).

There has been limited support in research that a favorable reputation produces a halo that will protect the organization’s reputation during a crisis. In fact, according to Coombs (2010), an organization with an unfavorable prior reputation makes a crisis more difficult to manage by intensifying the reputational threat. Similar to crisis history, an unfavorable prior reputation means stakeholders will treat a victim crisis as an accidental crisis and an accidental crisis as a preventable crisis (Coombs, 2010).

*Response strategies.* After the organization has assessed the reputational threat, a response strategy can be chosen. SCCT organizes crisis response strategies based on whether they were used to alter perceptions of the crisis or the organization in crisis. Four groups of crisis response strategies have been identified: deny, diminish, rebuild, and bolstering (Coombs, 2010).

*Deny* involves removing connections between the crisis and the organization. Denial is based on the notion that if an organization was not involved, it will suffer no damage from the crisis. *Diminish* involves reducing the attributions of organizational control for the crisis or the negative impact of the crisis. If an organization can lessen its connection to the crisis and lessen people's negative perceptions, the organization is less likely to suffer. *Rebuild* involves direct efforts to improve the organization's reputation. An example includes saying and doing things to benefit the stakeholders, and taking positive actions to counterbalance the crisis. Lastly, *bolstering* involves drawing upon the goodwill that was experienced in positive relationships with stakeholders to protect the organizational reputation (Coombs, 2010).

*Previous case studies.* In 2010, Claeys, Cauberghe, and Vyncke completed a study that attempted to provide empirical evidence for SCCT. The study measured the impact of crisis type and crisis response strategies on perceptions of corporate reputation for 316 consumers in a 3x3 between-subject experimental design.

Fussell Sisco, Collins, and Zoch conducted a study in 2010 that used SCCT to examine the response strategies used by the Red Cross. A content analysis was completed of 1,585 newspaper articles that related to the Red Cross from a ten year time period.

*Similarities within the case studies.* Both case studies confirmed Coombs' assumption that corporate reputation is least favorable when an organization is confronted with a

preventable crisis. In this type of crisis, organizations are considered responsible. Claeys et al. found that respondents perceived the organization's reputation less favorably in the case of a preventable crisis than in the cases of both the victim crisis and the accidental crisis (Claeys, Cauberghe, & Vyncke, 2010). The study completed by Fussell Sisco et al. found that 44% of the newspaper articles listed the Red Cross crises as preventable. Furthermore, more than half of those articles revealed a negative corporate reputation (Fussell Sisco, Collins, & Zoch, 2010).

Fussell Sisco et al. take this assumption one step further by citing that articles listing an organization's previous preventable crises have a more negative tone than other articles. The authors found that the majority of articles that discussed a previous Red Cross crisis were coded as negative in tone (Fussell Sisco et al., 2010).

*Differences within the case studies.* A difference among the case studies deals with crisis type and crisis response strategies. Claeys et al. concluded that matching the crisis type with the crisis response strategy does not lead to a more positive perception of firm reputation. This contradicts a finding made by Coombs and Holladay (Claeys et al., 2010). However, Fussell Sisco et al. found that matching the crisis type with the crisis response strategy does lead to a more positive perception of firm reputation. Although the Red Cross did not align the crisis type and crisis response strategy, the authors conclude that doing so would have resulted in a positive perception (Fussell Sisco et al., 2010).

The similarities and differences among the case studies will be beneficial to the following study. As mentioned in the introduction, many people faulted BP for the oil spill crisis claiming that it was preventable. Using SCCT, I was able to assess what type of crisis the oil spill actually was. If the crisis was preventable, I was able to see how favorable BP's

corporate reputation was. Based on those findings, I was able to assess if my findings were in alignment with the other case studies and confirm Coombs' assumption.

In addition, I will be able to see, through SCCT, if BP matched up the crisis type with the crisis response strategy. If so, I will see if the match up process led to a more positive perception of the organization's reputation. In addition, I will be able to discover what strategy BP should have used and what would have been the most beneficial to its reputation.

### *Technological Crises*

According to Shrivastava (1994), technological crises cause major harm and disruption caused by hazardous industrial products or production systems. Technological crises can cause major damage to human life and the natural environment. In addition, these crises can account for loss of human lives, a tarnished company image, and economic damage.

*The Union Carbide crisis.* An example of a technological crisis was the Bhopal disaster that occurred on December 3, 1984, at the Union Carbide Corporation pesticide production plant. This crisis had damaging effects and is one of the most well known crises. According to Shrivastava (1994),

The Union Carbide Corporation pesticide production plant was located at the edge of the city in a densely populated area. Forty tons of Methyl Isocyanate (MIC) leaked from underground storage tanks. It spread over neighborhoods around the plant. It killed 3,000 people and injured 200,000 others. Before the incident was over nearly 400,000 residents fled the city in two major waves of evacuations. In addition, the accident killed 2,000 animals and injured 7,000. (p. 245)



Past research shows that multiple failures contributed to this crisis. There were failures within the plant, within Union Carbide Corporation, and in the external environment (Shrivastava, 1994).

During the initial post-crisis stage, Union Carbide distanced itself from the Indian press. In fact, staff was instructed not to talk to reporters or outsiders (Sen & Egelhoff, 2002). Union Carbide made several attempts to shift the blame. However, the blame could not be shifted to anyone but Union Carbide.

*The Exxon Valdez crisis.* Another technological crisis with devastating results was the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill which happened early in the morning on March 24, 1989. The *Exxon Valdez* oil tanker struck Bligh reef in Prince William Sound, Alaska. According to Shrivastava (1994),

The oil that drifted ashore blackened 1,275 miles of shoreline beach. The best efforts of the company and government agencies were unable to clean up the beaches. Sea bird deaths climbed from 28,000 in 1989 to 580,000 in 1991. Estimates of sea otter casualties ranged from 872 in 1989, to 5500 in 1991. Herring fisheries lost at least \$12 million. (p. 248)

Exxon Corporation suffered greatly after this crisis. The corporation spent over three billion dollars in clean up operations and paid one billion dollars in damages. In addition, affected groups filed over 1,500 law suits including 58 class action suits against Exxon Corporation (Shrivastava, 1994).

Past research (Moore, 1999; Pauly & Hutchinson, 2005) shows that Exxon's reputation was in jeopardy after the oil spill. The organization was faulted for its delayed response. Exxon acted defensively in its response to its publics, and, at times, shifted the

blame to other groups such as the Coast Guard (Pauly & Hutchinson, 2005). At times it seemed that Exxon was taking responsibility for the crisis through mortification. However, Exxon was simultaneously claiming that the spill was unavoidable (Moore, 1999).

*The Chernobyl crisis.* The Chernobyl crisis is another hugely researched and well-known crisis among the public relations field. The Chernobyl disaster that occurred on April 26, 1986, was one of the most catastrophic technological crises in decades. The accident happened at Unit 4 of the nuclear power station at Chernobyl, Ukraine.

The crisis began when the engineers at the Chernobyl nuclear plant conducted an experiment using the plant reactor. The reactor exploded causing the surrounding graphite to ignite. The graphite burned for nine days, releasing huge quantities of radiation into the environment. According to Greenpeace International, the accident released more radiation than the deliberate dropping of a nuclear bomb on Hiroshima, Japan, in August 1945.

The results of this crisis were devastating. The explosion killed 31 workers. Military helicopters dropped 2,400 tons of lead and 1,800 tons of sand in an attempt to absorb the radiation and smother the fire. Over half of the men involved in the clean up received radiation doses 500 times the limit for the public over one year. Today, the ones who survived are still suffering from damage to their health (Greenpeace International, 2008).

It is important to study technological crises because of the damage they can cause. Technological crises occur when there is a human error, such as an individual breaking a machine, or when something goes wrong with the system as a whole. Technological crises raise concerns about public safety and raise questions regarding technology-society relationships (Shrivastava, 1994).

In addition, it is important for practitioners to study technological crises because “society experiments with new technologies until a major crisis occurs, then learns lessons about risk, safety and crisis prevention and management” (Shrivastava, 1994, p. 15). Practitioners need to understand the causes and consequences of technological crises. Practitioners should develop risk analysis and management techniques, and crisis prevention and management programs. These developments will help the organization and practitioners anticipate, prevent, and cope with technological crises (Shrivastava, 1994).

The three previous crises all conducted similar public relations to BP. Each organization, including BP, was faulted by the media and public for poor reputation management. According to the introduction and literature review, many felt that the organizations were too late to respond and often shifted the blame onto other parties. The current study will assess how BP managed its reputation through the image restoration strategies, and how the media framed the crisis.

### *Research Questions*

Previous research suggests the field of public relations must learn when to use certain image restoration strategies, which strategies will be most effective, and to be cognizant of how the media will portray crises. It is essential that the practitioner knows this information and is prepared when the time comes to address the public. In order to better understand which image restoration strategies should be used and how events are framed in the media, the following Research Questions (RQs) were addressed:

RQ1: What image restoration strategies did BP use to respond to the oil spill that occurred on April 20, 2010?

RQ2: How did the media frame the BP oil spill?

RQ3: Using SCCT, how did the media assess the response strategies BP used?

### **Chapter III**

#### **METHODS**

##### *Methodology*

Since the purpose of this study was to analyze responses after a crisis and examine how the crisis was framed, data was collected and analyzed using qualitative methods to discover a variety of responses to each research question. Qualitative methods found the breadth and depth of responses and frames rather than generalizing the amount of certain strategies and frames through quantitative methods. According to Lindlof and Taylor (2011), qualitative approaches “study human symbolic interaction in the various contexts of its performance” (p. 4). As the purpose of this study was to understand which image restoration strategies are used in the post-crisis stage, a qualitative approach was appropriate. Qualitative seeks thick, rich descriptions of a phenomena rather than quantifiable, generalizable data (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011).

##### *Content Analysis*

It was essential that this study analyzed BP’s actual wording in its responses to the public after the oil spill. This study also analyzed how certain media portrayed the oil spill. Analyzing documents was a sufficient way to gather results. Different themes arose within each document and were placed into certain categories where data was more readily available for analysis.

Studying documents is useful in qualitative research. Official documents are often a site of claims to legitimacy, power, and reality (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). It was important to study the documents in relation to “the institutional settings in which they are constructed, interpreted and used. Such research emphasizes the spatial, temporal and practical contingences associated with the texts” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011, p. 235). Furthermore, many

groups and organizations create documents for public consumption which can play a major role in a researcher's study (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011).

For this study, I conducted a content analysis. A content analysis was the ideal way to gather information as it allows the researcher to make inferences by systematically and objectively identifying specified characteristics or messages (Twycross & Shields, 2008).

As discussed in the literature review, case studies have shown that printed documents such as press releases and newspaper articles are an acceptable way to analyze image restoration strategies. Thus, it was beneficial to study printed documents in my study. Many studies (Benoit & Zhang, 2004; Cowden & Sellnow, 2002; Fortunato, 2008; Weber, Erickson, & Stone, 2011) have been completed in the same way and served as a guide to my study.

*Advantages of content analysis method.* There were several advantages to conducting a content analysis. The first advantage was their informational richness. Documents are often "rich sources of information – contextually relevant and grounded in the contexts they represent" (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011, p. 235). In addition to being rich in the amount of information, the documents were rich in quality. Documents are richly infused with the idiomatic speech, history, and cultural logics of the people who made them (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011).

These documents will always be available which presented another advantage of completing a content analysis. Most of the documents can be found on the Internet based on the Internet's wide breadth and depth of information. All documents were found at the University of Houston using online databases or through the Internet.

Finally, all of the documents I reviewed were from trustworthy sources. These documents have been viewed for accuracy by internal or external authorities, such as an auditing company. Such documents are used as a reliable basis for organizational actions and decisions (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011).

*Disadvantages of content analysis method.* The main disadvantage of a content analysis was the time needed for completion. It can often be time consuming and tedious to sort through numerous documents and place the information into the various categories after deciphering which category is the best fit (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011).

Another disadvantage to a content analysis was the limited viewpoint. A content analysis only shows one perspective that does not morph over time. From looking at organizational documents, you do not get the publics' actual perspectives (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011).

### *Sample*

Documents consisted of press releases from BP's website, BP commercials, and newspaper articles. The BP press releases and commercials were used to answer Research Questions 1 and 3 while the newspaper articles were used to answer Research Questions 2 and 3. I looked for documents that were released between April 20, 2010, and July 15, 2010. This timeframe was chosen as it was in the post-crisis stage when BP was actively reaching out to the public. I looked for three things in these documents: which image restoration strategies were used, how the crisis was framed, and how the media assessed the response strategy used.

*Sample for Research Question 1.* The BP press releases and BP commercials provided the sample to answer Research Question 1. To find the BP commercials I used

Youtube. I used “BP oil spill commercials,” “BP oil spill interviews,” and “BP oil spill news conferences” as the keyword search. The keyword search generated approximately 500 hits. I only used commercials that had BP listed as the author who posted the commercial. This was done to ensure that all commercials were real and not parodies. In addition, I included all commercials that had the words “oil spill” or “restoring the Gulf” in the title. These commercials were included because they provided relevant information about the oil spill. To find press releases I used BP’s press release website (<http://www.bp.com/articlelisting.do?categoryId=2012968&contentId=2006635>). I chose to only analyze press releases that related to the BP oil spill. These press releases provided exact data on the oil spill, and thus, led to more accurate results. Press releases that did not pertain to the oil spill were eliminated from the sample.

I found 81 press releases on the BP website that fell within the specified timeframe. Originally, I planned to use all press releases. However, nine press releases did not relate to the oil spill. These press releases contained information about BP’s yearly energy report, BP’s yearly financial data, a media policy, and a biofuels agreement plan. These press releases were removed from the sample. Five BP commercials provided the population for Research Question 1. Some of these commercials did not fall within the specified timeframe. However, BP released a limited amount of commercials after the oil spill, so I thought it was important to use all commercials regardless of its date.

*Sample for Research Question 2.* The newspaper articles provided the random sample to answer this research question. Newspaper articles came from *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Wall Street Journal*, *USA Today*, *The London Times*, *The Houston Chronicle*, *The Miami Herald*, and *The Times Picayune*. These newspapers were chosen



because they are large national and state circulation newspapers. In addition, each newspaper was likely to portray the crisis in a different way. For example, *The Times Picayune*, a New Orleans newspaper, might portray the oil spill differently than a newspaper that is not based where the oil spill occurred.

At first I planned to use the newspaper articles with the most comments on the online version. However, comments on newspaper articles can often be vast in quantity, and at times, irrelevant. Therefore, I divided the oil spill crisis into three phases and chose newspaper articles from each phase.

The first phase of the BP crisis is from April 20, 2010, to May 30, 2010. On May 30, 2010, President Obama put the drilling moratorium into action. This time period showed the public the severity of the oil spill, and that BP must take action in order to repair its tarnished reputation. The second phase is from June 1, 2010, to June 16, 2010. On June 16, 2010, BP created a \$20 billion fund to meet any obligations arising from the oil spill over the next three and a half years. This time period showed the public that BP is taking actions to solve the oil spill. The creation of the BP fund, in addition to other forms of compensation, illustrated BP's commitment to repairing its image by going above and beyond what is expected of the organization. The final phase is from June 17, 2010, to July 15, 2010. On July 15, 2010, the oil finally stopped leaking. During this time period the public saw that BP was successful in its many attempts at plugging the leaking oil. In addition, BP showed transparency throughout each stage of the oil spill phases. These phases were chosen because a significant action occurred on each end date.

To find the newspaper articles I conducted online keyword searches in the EBSCO-Host research search engine. I used the *Academic Search Premier*, *LexisNexis Academic*,

*Houston Chronicle, New York Times, Newspaper Source, and Wall Street Journal* databases. I used “BP oil spill,” “Deepwater Horizon incident,” and “BP crisis” as my keyword search.

From the eight various newspapers, I found 271 articles that fell within the specified timeframe. The articles were placed in chronological order and articles from the same date were placed in alphabetical order. Then, I chose every fifth article from the population. I chose every fifth article because it provided me with approximately the same number of articles from each crisis phase. The 55 newspaper articles that were chosen were the random sample used to answer Research Question 2.

*Sample for Research Question 3.* The BP press releases and newspaper articles provided the sample for Research Question 3. These documents were categorized by image restoration strategy used, media frame used, and how the organization was portrayed. Then, the documents were compared to see how the media assessed the response strategy.

I only used documents that fell within the specified timeframe of April 20, 2010, to July 15, 2010. All newspaper articles and press releases were printed as to have a hard copy on file. Commercials were saved under “My Favorites” on my computer.

From preliminary searches online, I anticipated that approximately 35 documents would be used in this analysis. If the documents in this population did not answer my research questions, I was going to look at news clips from TV stations such as NBC, CBS, ABC, and CNN. It was likely that these clips would have illustrated the image restoration strategies used by BP and how the oil spill was portrayed.

It was possible that halfway through reviewing the documents I would begin to see the same results multiple times. In order to overcome data saturation I planned to look for documents outside the specified timeframe of April 20, 2010, to July 15, 2010. The

documents outside this timeframe might have provided me with more information that could be used to answer my research questions.

### *Data Analysis*

According to Lindlof and Taylor (2011), during data analysis, the qualitative researcher hopes to advance in data management, data reduction, and conceptual development. The researcher must gain control over the rapidly growing data while prioritizing the evidence according to emerging schemes of interpretation.

The overall approach with regards to my data analysis was through an inductive method of construction. More specifically, I analyzed my data using grounded theory. According to Lindlof and Taylor (2011), this emergent theory is “grounded in the relationships between data and the categories into which they are coded” (p. 250). Furthermore, categories developed through an ongoing process of comparing units of data with each other (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). Grounded theory was an appropriate way to analyze image restoration theory, as image restoration is an ongoing process that can continuously develop new categories.

As previously stated, the resulting data took the place of image restoration strategies divided into categories based on BP’s press releases. Secondly, data emerged around how different media portrayed the crisis. The first step in organizing the data was the process of coding. I began the coding process by identifying themes that I was successfully able to find during the content analysis. For the purposes of this study, I looked for the following five image restoration themes: denial, evasion of responsibility, reducing offensiveness, corrective action, and mortification.

In order to decipher which category each piece of data correctly fit, key words were identified to allow for proper coding in the data analysis stage of this study. With regards to image restoration theories, the different themes were triggered by words like:

- Denial: “denial,” “shift the blame,” “another caused the act”
- Evasion of responsibility: “provocation,” “defeasibility,” “accident,” “good intentions,” “responded to another act,” “lack of information/ability,” “mishap,” “meant well”
- Reduction of offensiveness: “bolstering,” “minimization,” “differentiation,” “transcendence,” “attack accuser,” “compensation,” “good traits,” “act not serious,” “act was less offensive than others,” “more important considerations,” “reduce credibility,” “reimburse victim”
- Corrective action: “plan,” “prevention,” “promise”
- Mortification: “apologize,” “sympathy,” “sorry”

With regards to framing theory, the different themes were triggered by words like:

- Human interest frame: “empathy,” “sympathy,” “compassion”
- Conflict frame: “disagreement,” “winner,” “loser”
- Morality frame: “social prescriptive,” “God,” “religious tenants,” “moral messages”
- Economic frame: “expenses,” “costs,” “financial gains,” “financial losses”
- Attribution of responsibility frame: “solution,” “responsibility,” “action”

In the next step, I analyzed each document and categorized the data while looking for reoccurring patterns. Each document was analyzed multiple times to ensure validity.

*Validity.* Validity was achieved by making sure the results had credibility, transferability, and dependability. Credible results come from the perspective of the

researcher. The researcher should have knowledge about the topic being researched, and experience in coding (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). I achieved credibility by using triangulation. Triangulation involved the use of a wide range of sources (Shenton, 2004). Since I used documents such as newspapers, commercials, and press releases, this method allowed me to verify the strategies and frames that arose against others. Results also achieve validity if they can be transferred to other contexts or settings. I achieved transferability by including sufficient thick description of the study. Sufficient thick descriptions included the process of my study, how documents were analyzed, and descriptive results. This allowed readers to have a proper understanding of the study and compare the results to others they have seen (Shenton, 2004). Lastly, dependable results occur when the researcher has described any changes that have occurred and how those changes affect the study (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). I achieved dependability by describing how I collected data and by explaining what changes were made from my original plan of study (Shenton, 2004).

I printed out each document in order to code them. In addition, I coded the documents through pile-sorting. Pile-sorting is a method used to understand people's perception through an observation of how people classify and group the items of a domain studied (Bernard, 2002). I completed pile sorting by writing each image restoration strategy on the back on an index card. Then, I read through each document and placed them on the appropriate index card with regards to what image restoration strategy was used. A new index card was created when multiple strategies were used. The same process was used to analyze how the media framed the BP crisis.

The different piles told me which image restoration strategy and frame was used most often. The pile that had the most documents in quantity in relation to one another was the

strategy or framed that occurred most frequently. It was important to rank each strategy and frame so I was able to see what strategy/frame was used the most and what strategy/frame was used the least.

It was possible that a negative correlation would exist between the strategy/frame used most often and its effectiveness. In other words, the most used strategy/frame may not have been the most effective. Therefore, analysis of every document was essential. Analyzing each document thoroughly helped me to gauge the effectiveness of each strategy/frame.

Pile sorting was used to answer Research Question 3. I started off the process by reading each document and placing them on the appropriate index card with regards to what image restoration strategy was used. A new index card was created when multiple strategies were used.

Next, I analyzed the newspaper articles. The newspaper articles were categorized by how the newspaper portrayed the organization. There were three categories: positive, negative, and neutral. The positive pile contained documents that spoke highly of BP and praised the organization for its efforts to correct the crisis. Documents that criticized and spoke poorly of the organization were placed in the negative pile. Lastly, the neutral pile contained documents that were rich in facts, did not praise BP, and did not speak negatively of BP.

#### *Personal Interest of Study*

Over my first year of graduate school I became fascinated with the topic of crisis communication. I think it is so interesting to see the various ways crises affect an organization and how that organization deals with the repercussions. In addition, I enjoy

learning about how an organization practices reputation management through the use of image restoration strategies.

I chose to focus this study on the BP oil spill because it was an event that will always be remembered. Furthermore, the oil spill affected all individuals. Some people were directly affected in the sense that they lost their job or a loved one. On the other hand, individuals were indirectly affected by the raising of gas prices and environmental problems. I think this study can help public relations practitioners of the future become more cognizant on how to respond in a crisis and in a way that the public resonates with.

Furthermore, this study will contribute to the field of public relations. This study will show public relations practitioners and researchers that an organization can take the necessary steps to repair their reputation after a crisis occurs. In addition, this study can provide crisis managers with an accurate representation of how an organization's reputational threat is assessed in the post-crisis stage.

## Chapter IV

### RESULTS

#### *Summary of Texts*

A total of 72 press releases, 55 newspaper articles, and five commercials were investigated for this study. The 72 press releases were written by BP and came from the BP website. Three articles came from *The London Times*, eight articles came from *The Times Picayune*, 12 articles came from *The New York Times*, four articles came from *The Washington Post*, five articles came from *The Wall Street Journal*, ten articles came from *The Houston Chronicle*, three articles came from *The Miami Herald*, and ten articles came from *USA Today*. The press releases and newspaper articles were all released between April 20, 2010, and July 15, 2010. Lastly, the five BP commercials were retrieved from YouTube.

The data I collected reveals the patterns of image restoration strategies that were used by BP when responding to the oil spill crisis. Also, the results describe how the newspaper articles framed the crisis, and how the media assessed the response strategies based on SCCT. In addition, the results offer new image restoration strategies and frames that arose. The results are organized by themes that answer my Research Questions.

#### *Research Question 1: The Use of Image Restoration Strategies*

This research question asked, *what image restoration strategies did BP use to respond to the oil spill that occurred on April 20, 2010?* As established in the literature review, multiple image restoration strategies can be used together. Depending on the content of the press release, BP would, at times, employ multiple image restoration strategies into a single press release. When multiple strategies were used together the final strategy was often mortification or corrective action. In addition, BP used certain image restoration strategies in



each of the crisis phases. Finally, a potential new image restoration sub-category emerged.

Therefore, this section addresses *the image restoration strategies used*, the use of *multiple image restoration strategies by BP*, *the image restoration strategies used throughout the crisis phases*, and a *transparency sub-category*.

### *The Image Restoration Strategies Used*

The following section describes the various image restoration strategies BP used when responding to the oil spill. The three image restoration strategies used were *corrective action*, *reducing the offensiveness*, and *denial*. Corrective action was used the most, followed by reducing the offensiveness and denial.

*Corrective action*. The main image restoration strategy BP used when responding to the oil spill crisis was corrective action. BP used corrective action in 52 of the 72 press releases. In addition, corrective action was used in every BP commercial examined. BP used corrective action by asserting that it will “keep looking for oil, cleaning it up if we find it, and restoring the Gulf Coast” (BP, “Gulf of Mexico response: Communities,” August 20, 2010).

It seems that corrective action was the image restoration strategy used when the content of the press release was more informational. It is possible that the purpose of these informational press releases was to change the public’s view of the organization. The public might begin to alter their perception of BP if the organization can show that necessary steps are being taken to correct its mistake. This could imply that BP’s use of corrective action was chosen as a form of persuasion to change public perception.

One example of informational press releases is those titled “Update on the Gulf of Mexico Oil Spill.” BP would issue these press releases each day or every other day. These

press releases updated the public on BP's progress in containing the oil leak and informed the public of the preventative steps being taken to ensure that this type of crisis does not happen in the future. An example of this type of press releases is as follows:

BP started the "top kill" operations to stop the flow of oil from the MC252 well in the Gulf of Mexico at 1300 CDT on May 26, 2010. The procedure was intended to stem the flow of oil and gas and ultimately kill the well by injecting heavy drilling fluids through the blow-out preventer on the seabed, down into the well. (BP, "Update on Gulf of Mexico oil spill – 29 May," May 29, 2010)

*Reducing the offensiveness.* In addition, BP used reducing the offensiveness in 13 press releases. BP attempted to reduce the offensiveness of the crisis by highlighting its willingness to offer compensation. The following is an example from a BP press release where reducing the offensiveness is used:

BP has already provided \$170 million to Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi, and Florida to help with those state's response costs and to help promote their tourism industries. The company also has paid approximately \$51 million in compensation to people and companies affected by the spill. (BP, "BP announces first payment on barrier islands project for state of Louisiana," June 7, 2010)

Other compensation examples from the press releases include BP's grant of \$25 million to the states of Florida, Alabama, and Mississippi, BP's claims process, and BP's accelerated payments of commercial large loss claims. In addition, the press releases also mentioned how much BP has paid in oil spill damages (BP, "Update on Gulf of Mexico oil spill response – 5 May," May 5, 2010). BP only used compensation when reducing the

offensiveness. Other strategies of reducing the offensiveness like bolstering, minimization, transcendence, and differentiation were not used.

It is possible that the other forms of reducing the offensiveness were not used because they could further hinder BP's reputation. For example, the public would not have looked favorably upon BP had it stated that the crisis was not serious through minimization or used differentiation to stress that the oil spill was not as bad as similar crises. This could imply that BP consciously chose to use compensation as a way to correct its tarnished reputation.

*Denial.* The image restoration strategy used the least was denial. Denial appeared in three of the 72 press releases. After analyzing the various press releases it seems that strong scientific evidence deterred BP from denying its involvement. In other words, the scientific evidence showed that BP was a definite player in the crisis.

In one press release BP denied that the organization was "grossly negligent" and engaged in "willful misconduct" as claimed by Anadarko Petroleum Corporation (BP, "BP emphasizes that disagreement with other parties will not diminish its promise to clean up the spill and pay legitimate claims," June 18, 2010). Another example of denial occurred when BP denied allegations that its Atlantis platform in the Gulf of Mexico operated with "incomplete and inaccurate engineering documents" (BP, "BP Atlantis," May 17, 2010).

#### *The Image Restoration Strategies Used Throughout the Crisis Phases*

The following section discusses the image restoration strategies used by BP with regards to the three crisis phases. The results are divided into three sections: *image restoration strategies used in the first crisis phase*, *image restoration strategies used in the second crisis phase*, and *image restoration strategies used in the third crisis phase*.

*Image restoration strategies used in the first crisis phase.* When analyzing the BP press releases I noticed that certain image restoration strategies appeared in each of the three crisis phases. For example, BP often used denial, mortification, and corrective action in the first crisis phase. It is possible that BP used denial in order to minimize the organization's responsibility for the oil spill. In addition, mortification and corrective action might have been used to rebuild the organization's reputation in the public's eye.

*Image restoration strategies used in the second crisis phase.* The majority of the press releases issued during the second crisis phase used reducing the offensiveness and corrective action. It is possible that reducing the offensiveness was used to show the public that BP is trying to make amends for the oil spill crisis. One way BP tried to make amends was by offering compensation. Furthermore, corrective action showed that BP was transparent throughout each phase of the crisis and provided the public with information about how the oil spill was being stopped.

*Image restoration strategies used in the third crisis phase.* The image restoration strategy used the most in the third crisis phase was corrective action. This implies that BP thought it was best to show the public that the organization was taking responsibility for the oil spill. This could be why other strategies, such as denial, were not used.

#### *Multiple Image Restoration Strategies by BP*

The following section discusses the multiple image restoration strategies used by BP. The results are divided into the *strategies used in the press releases* and *strategies used in the BP commercials*. Then, *the order in which the image restoration strategies occur* is discussed.

*Strategies used in the press releases.* After analyzing the BP press releases, I discovered that BP often used two image restoration strategies in one press release. The following image restoration strategies were used in tandem: reducing the offensiveness and mortification, reducing the offensiveness and corrective action, and denial and corrective action. The following is an example where reducing the offensiveness and mortification are used. I have italicized the uses of reducing the offensiveness and mortification:

BP said today it will be sending a second advance payment during June to individuals and businesses along the Gulf Coast to *compensate* for the loss of income or net profit due to the cleanup of the Deepwater Horizon Incident in the Gulf of Mexico. “We deeply *regret* the impact the oil spill has had on individuals and businesses, and understand the need for quick and reasonable compensation,” said Doug Suttles. (BP, “BP to pay a second month of loss of income claims,” June 4, 2010).

The following is an example where denial and corrective action are used. I have italicized the uses of denial and corrective action:

BP *denies* these allegations and will not allow the allegations to diminish its commitment to the Gulf Coast region. “These allegations will neither distract the company’s focus on stopping the leak nor alter our commitment to restore the Gulf Coast,” said BP’s chief executive officer Tony Hayward. “Other parties besides BP may be responsible for costs and liabilities arising from the oil spill, and we expect those parties to live up to their obligations. But how the costs and liabilities are eventually allocated between various parties will not affect *our unwavering pledge to step forward in the first instance to clean up the spill and pay all legitimate claims* in an efficient and fair manner.” (BP, “BP emphasizes that disagreement with other

parties will not diminish its promise to clean up the spill and pay legitimate claims,”  
June 18, 2010)

*Strategies used in the BP commercials.* Of the five commercials analyzed, only one used multiple image restoration strategies. In this commercial, “A Message from Tony Hayward,” corrective action and mortification were used. The commercial begins with corrective action and Hayward speaks of what all BP is doing to correct the oil spill. Finally, the commercial ends with an apology from Hayward that he is “deeply sorry” and that BP “will make it right” (BP, “A message from Tony Hayward,” June 3, 2010).

*The order in which image restoration strategies occur.* It is important to note the order in which the image restoration strategies occur. The image restoration strategies with a negative connotation, such as reducing the offensiveness and denial, were always seen at the beginning of the press release. On the other hand, the image restoration strategies with a positive connotation, such as corrective action and mortification, were used at the end of the document. This implies that BP chose to end each document on a strong note with the public. The order of image restoration strategies could be a possible area for future research and will be discussed throughout the study.

#### *A Transparency Sub-category*

A potential new sub-category arose when analyzing the documents. In the majority of the press releases and commercials, BP was transparent in providing the public with necessary information. For example, a press release quoted Tony Hayward that BP “is focused on doing everything in its power to stop the flow of oil, remove it from the surface, and protect the shoreline” (BP, “Hayward comments on President Obama’s statement,” May 14, 2010). In addition, one press release shows BP pledging full support and cooperation

with the U.S. government investigations. Lastly, several press releases show BP's commitment to work hand-in-hand with the federal, state, and local governments to resolve what happened in the Gulf of Mexico. For example, "BP today announced its support for and cooperation with U.S. government investigations arising from the sinking of the Transocean drilling rig Deepwater Horizon in Mississippi Canyon Block 252 in the Gulf of Mexico" (BP, "BP pledges full support for Deepwater Horizon probes," April 28, 2010).

As established in the literature review, it is essential for an organization to be transparent when responding to a crisis. People are more likely to forgive an organization that has kept the public informed and taken the necessary actions to fix its mishap. Therefore, transparency could be used as a sub-category under corrective action.

#### *Research Question 2: Framing the Crisis*

This research question asked, *how did the media frame the BP crisis?* For this research question I examined 55 newspaper articles from eight various newspapers. Overall, I discovered that one frame – an *economic consequence frame* – was used far more than others. In addition, the type of frame and portrayal of the organization was based on the newspaper's location, as discussed in the theme below labeled *framing based on location*. Furthermore, I found two new frames that can be used when framing crises: a *status frame* and a *management frame*. Lastly, *multiple frames* were used in some articles.

#### *Economic Consequence Frame*

The following section discusses the *economic consequence frame frequency* throughout the various newspaper articles. In addition, media framed economic consequences in two major ways: *economics of compensation versus economics of BP value*.

*The economic consequence frame frequency.* When analyzing my data through pile sorting I noticed that one pile had significantly more articles than any other pile. Thus, this frame was used most often. The economic consequence frame was used in ten different newspaper articles. The economic consequence frame was used more than the morality and human interest frame which only appeared in two articles for each frame.

*Economics of compensation versus economics of BP value.* The ten articles used the economic consequence frame in different ways. Six newspaper articles framed the crisis with regards to the post-crisis damage. More specifically, the articles discussed the amount of money BP has paid to the states affected by the oil spill, the total amount of damage BP is responsible for paying, and the payment of claims to the oil spill victims. In addition, these articles emphasized other monetary ways that BP is contributing to the oil spill cleanup. The following is an example of how *USA Today* framed the crisis around cleanup costs:

Obama said that BP is committed to ensuring that economic claims will be processed and paid out in a timely manner. According to a White House fact sheet, BP will contribute \$5 billion a year for four years into an escrow account. BP is providing assurance that their financial obligations will be met by settling aside \$20 billion in U.S. assets. (*USA Today*, "Obama announces \$20B for Gulf oil spill victims," June 16, 2010)

On the other hand, the remaining four articles used the economic consequence frame around BP's worth and how the spill affected the organization's monetary value. In other words, these articles emphasized BP's market value, shares, and dividends. More specifically, the newspaper articles mentioned the increases and decreases in BP's shares, how BP would suspend paying dividends for the rest of 2010, and that BP has lost



approximately \$100 billion in market value. The following example is from *The Wall Street Journal* that frames the crisis with regards to BP's shares:

Details of the additional funding were reported online Friday by The Wall Street Journal as BP's share prices fell to its lowest level in 14 years. The shares were off 6%, or \$1.72, at \$27.02 in 4 pm, trading on the New York Stock Exchange. (*The Wall Street Journal*, "BP amasses cash for oil spill costs," June 26, 2010)

#### *Framing Based on Location*

The following section describes how location might affect a newspaper's decision on how to portray an organization. *The Houston Chronicle*, a newspaper located in one of the major states affected by the oil spill, is used as an example as this newspaper favored *the human interest frame* and *the morality frame*. In addition, this section shows how *The New York Times* favored the economic consequence frame.

*Houston and the human interest frame.* Each article that was framed around human interest used sympathy and compassion to tell the story. One article told the story of Jim Gossen, a fisherman in Louisiana who lost his job and his way of life from the BP oil spill (*The Houston Chronicle*, "BP's disaster leaves fishermen's lives at standstill," June 14, 2010). Through the illustrations used to tell Gossen's story, BP is portrayed in a negative light. The following provides an example of BP's negative portrayal:

Since BP's Macondo well blew out on April 20, destroying the Deepwater Horizon drilling rig and killing 11 workers, other early victims have been fish and fisherman. Jim Gossen, for one, can barely stand to think about it. (*The Houston Chronicle*, "BP's disaster leaves fishermen's lives at standstill," June 14, 2010)

*Houston and the morality frame.* The articles framed around morality used social perspectives and moral messages to frame the BP crisis. The articles highlighted protestors' demands to shut down BP over the oil spill, and how people expressed their anger by defacing BP signs with brown paint (*The Houston Chronicle*, "Protestors demand BP be shut down over oil spill," May 24, 2010; *The Wall Street Journal*, "New Yorkers express anger at BP, with brown paint," June 9, 2010). Imagery and description were used in the articles which portrayed BP negatively. The following is an example of the description used:

"BP, what do you say? How many fish did you kill today? BP, what do you say? How many millions did you make today?" the protestors shouted. Some of the protestors were almost entirely nude save for bits of tape and strategically placed signs. It was to represent the "naked truth" of BP's involvement in the spill. Others were dressed as fish or birds and then doused in fake oil by a man wearing a BP logo and glasses in the shape of dollar signs. (*The Houston Chronicle*, "Protestors demand BP be shut down over oil spill," May 24, 2010)

*The New York Times and the economic consequence frame.* In comparison to *The Houston Chronicle*, *The New York Times* used very different frames, such as the economic consequence frame. These articles spoke of the costs and expenses that BP incurred after the oil spill. The following is an example where the economic consequence frame was used:

"Shares in BP made up on Thursday part of their recent losses as investors welcomed a deal struck with President Obama to set up a compensation fund for the victims of the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. The shares gained as much as 9.7 percent in early London trading. They had fallen 45 percent since an oil rig exploded in April." (*The New York Times*, "BP shares rise after deal on cleanup costs," June 17, 2010).

It is important to note the location of the given newspapers. The media frames that evoke feelings of empathy to crisis victims were used by *The Houston Chronicle*, a newspaper located in a community that was directly affected by the oil spill. On the other hand, *The New York Times* used the economic consequence frame to show how the U.S. and oil industry would be affected by the spill. This implies that the location of a newspaper might affect what frames they choose to portray a crisis.

#### *Status Frame and Management Frame*

The following section provides readers with two potential new frames, a *status frame* and a *management frame*. The characteristics of the frames are provided along with various examples. These frames are interesting because they have not been discussed in previous research and case studies.

*A status frame.* One frame across a majority of the newspaper articles was BP's progression in containing the leaking oil. More specifically, these articles gave the day-by-day, step-by-step actions that BP has made. Reasons for taking certain actions, previous attempts of procedures, and plans for the future were news items reported that comprised this frame. Therefore, a *status frame* was developed. The following is an example of what the status frame looks like:

A seventy-five tonne containment device lowered over the rogue BP oil well offers the best hope yet of finally capturing all the oil spewing from the well-head into the Gulf of Mexico. For the first time in 84 days, the fountain of black crude that cameras have filmed since soon after the Deepwater Horizon rig blew up appeared briefly to have been stopped altogether last night. (*The London Times*, "BP installs bigger cap on oil spill," July 13, 2010)

This frame gives journalist the opportunity to write an article that is solely factual. This frame will be beneficial to the public because it provides them with up to date information. It is possible that the status frame has not been discussed in previous literature and similar studies because news stories always take sides because of framing. In other words, even stories that are solely factual take a side one way or another. This could be an area for future research.

*A management frame.* Another frame that occurred throughout the analyzed documents was BP's organizational decisions. The documents spoke of BP's maintenance history, oil spill warning signs, and BP's restriction of media coverage. Thus, a *management frame* was developed. In addition, the management frame included articles about BP's future drilling plans, the team BP amassed to help its image, and the hiring and firing of BP employees. The following is an excerpt from an article employing a management frame:

BP's internal investigation of the Gulf Coast oil spill points to a series of equipment failures, mistakes and missed warning signs that led to the blowout and fire on the Deepwater Horizon drilling rig, according to lawmakers briefed by the company. BP's investigation, while incomplete, highlights a series of abnormal indicators that should have been "warning signs" of trouble, according to a memo summarizing BP's report. (*The Washington Post*, "BP's investigation finds unheeded 'warning signs'," May 26, 2010)

### *Multiple Frames*

The following section emphasizes multiple frames that were used in the newspaper articles. In addition, this section mentions how various newspapers favored one frame over another when using multiple frames. Examples are provided.

As evident from Research Question 1, it is possible for a single document to have multiple themes. This was the case for Research Question 2, with 19 of the 55 analyzed newspaper articles using multiple frames within one newspaper article. The most commonly combined frames were the economic consequence frame and the management frame. In fact, seven of the 19 articles used these two frames.

*The economic consequence frame and the management frame.* While the seven articles framed the crisis using the economic and management frame, some newspapers favored one frame more than the other. *The Miami Herald*, *The Houston Chronicle*, and *USA Today* used the management frame more than the economic consequence frame. In other words, the article focused more on the management within BP and less on the economic consequences and damage. The economic consequence frame was only mentioned in two to three paragraphs.

An article from *The Miami Herald* titled “Is BP rejecting skimmers to save money on Gulf oil cleanup?” spends the majority of the article discussing decisions made within the organization to save money on cleanup costs, such as “amortizing the cost of the cleanup over the next 15 years, rather than dealing with the issue now by removing the oil from the water with the proper equipment” (*The Miami Herald*, “Is BP rejecting skimmers to save money on Gulf oil cleanup?,” July 2, 2010).

On the other hand, *The London Times*, *The New York Times*, and *The Times Picayune* focused more on the economic consequence frame and less on the management frame. These articles portrayed the crisis from a financial standpoint paying more attention to oil spill cleanup costs and less attention to BP’s management of the crisis.

An article from *The London Times* focuses on the economic consequences of the oil spill highlighting that “the cost of cleaning up the spill alone has already been put at \$1 billion and compensation claims after the disaster have exceeded \$2 billion” (*The London Times*, “First the clean-up, then the quagmire for BP struggling to control spill,” April 29, 2010).

This finding suggests that newspapers choose various frames in order to emphasize certain aspects of a crisis. This implies that frames are chosen based on what the newspaper thinks is the most important. For example, the emphasis of the management frame implies that *The Miami Herald*, *The Houston Chronicle*, and *USA Today* were more concerned with the organizational decisions made in the post-crisis stage. On the other hand, the emphasis of the economic consequence frame suggests that *The London Times*, *The New York Times*, and *The Times Picayune* thought the financial losses from the crisis was the most important aspect.

*Research Question 3: Using the Situational Crisis Communication Theory*

This research question asked, *according to the situational crisis communication theory, how did the media assess BP’s response strategies?* The units of analysis for this Research Question are the newspaper articles and BP press releases. According to Coombs (2010), the first step to assessing the match between appropriate response strategy and employed/actual response strategy is to determine the *crisis type*, *crisis history*, and *prior reputation* of the organization under discussion. Next, SCCT suggests an assessment of what response strategy BP should have chosen, the strategy BP actually chooses, and the media’s assessment of the strategy are also included. Therefore, this section will address *appropriate*

*response strategy, employed/actual response strategy, and media assessment of the response strategy.*

### *Crisis Type*

The first step of SCCT is to decipher what type of crisis occurred. Coombs offers three crisis types/frames for categorizing crises: victim, accidental, and preventable. Based on the literature review, the BP crisis was a preventable one. More specifically, this crisis was an organizational misdeed where management actions put stakeholders at risk and/or violate the law (Coombs, 2010).

Preventable crises have strong crisis responsibility. According to a BP press release, “multiple companies and work teams” (BP, “BP releases report on causes of Gulf of Mexico tragedy,” 2010) contributed to the crisis. Furthermore, human judgments, mechanical failures, engineer designs, and team interfaces were other factors that contributed to the oil spill (BP, “BP releases report on causes of Gulf of Mexico tragedy,” 2010). This evidence concludes that the oil spill was a preventable crisis.

In fact, a report that assessed the causes of the BP oil spill revealed that the event could have been prevented with better communication (Bagley, 2010). BP employees failed to ask a knowledgeable company engineer about unexpected drilling results. BP, Transocean, and Halliburton were not communicating with each other, according to the report. BP failed to communicate decisions regarding cementing issues to Transocean and Halliburton (Futures Mag, 2010).

Poor decisions by management were listed as the “real cause” for the oil spill (Marusiak, 2011). For example, BP knew there were issues with Halliburton and its work before the oil spill (ISS, 2011). In addition, BP’s well site leaders accepted a flawed theory

for unusual test results instead of figuring out the real reason for the results (ISS, 2011).

Lastly, the report suggested that a reorganization at BP left workers confused about who was in charge during key points of the process (ISS, 2011).

### *Crisis History*

The second step of SCCT is to review the intensifying factors. These two factors are crisis history and organizational prior reputation. Over the past several years BP has experienced other crises excluding the Gulf of Mexico disaster. BP experienced its first crisis on March 23, 2005, with an explosion at BP's refinery in Texas City, Texas. The refinery and the back-up unit overflowed with gasoline and sent a geyser of gasoline into the air killing 15 people and injuring 170 people (Schorn, 2009).

Reports found that the explosion could have been prevented. An investigation revealed several problems with the BP refinery including faulty equipment and safety measures that did not work (Schorn, 2009). Moreover, the refinery had a history of not complying with regulations (Lozano, 2011).

BP experienced another crisis in March 2006 when an oil leak sent nearly 5,000 barrels of crude oil out across the snow on Alaska's North Slope (Schwartz, 2006). BP was warned by specialists about potential problems in Alaska, but BP failed to listen (Schwartz, 2006). Furthermore, BP employees stated that poor management was the problem since the organization often overlooked routine maintenance and safety in an attempt to keep costs down (Schwartz, 2006).

The oil leak resulted in BP paying a \$25 million civil penalty plus interest to settle the federal investigation (Pelofsky & Vicini, 2011). In addition, BP was hit with lawsuits attacking the organization and its environmental records (Schwartz, 2006).



*Prior Reputation*

The second intensifying factor used to assess the reputational threat of a crisis is the organization's prior reputation. The crises BP experienced have taken a toll on the organization's reputation. According to Griffin (2008), the company "had been transformed from one with an enviable reputation to one that was regularly pilloried by the media" (p. 87).

BP regained a positive reputation after the refinery crisis in 2005. Scholars following the event concluded that after the refinery explosion, BP chose the most appropriate spokesperson and rehearsed what would be said to the media (Griffin, 2008). It was also concluded that the media portrayed the organization in a just way and the coverage was fairly benign (Griffin, 2008).

However, BP's reputation was not seen positively after the refinery's report was released showing that BP had previous explosions, disregarded safety procedures, and was too late in taking corrective action (Griffin, 2008).

BP's reputation continued to be tarnished in 2006 after the Alaska oil leak. Its reputation was put into question when an investigation showed that with better management the oil leak could have been prevented.

Following the Alaska oil leak, BP received more negative publicity with allegations that the organization illegally manipulated propane prices in 2004. BP denied any wrongdoing, but a former employee admitted to taking part in a "conspiracy and agreed to cooperate with criminal prosecutors" (Associated Press, 2006).

*Appropriate Response Strategy*

The next step of SCCT is to choose an appropriate response strategy based on the current situational crisis. The four response strategies are to deny, diminish, rebuild, and bolster. The crisis manager must take into account the crisis type, the organization's crisis history, and prior reputation when choosing an appropriate response strategy. This information will help the crisis manager pick a response strategy that best suits the organization and that will help the organization's reputation.

SCCT proposes that as the reputational threat increases, crisis managers must use more accommodative strategies. According to Coombs (2010), accommodation refers to "the degree to which the response centers on the victim and takes responsibility for the crisis" (p. 112). Rebuild strategies are the most accommodative followed by diminish strategies. Deny strategies are the least accommodative. With regards to the BP oil spill, the rebuild strategy is the most appropriate.

Taking into consideration BP's crisis history and prior negative reputation, BP should use the rebuild response strategy. The rebuild strategy will help to repair BP's tarnished reputation. Rebuild strategies represent direct efforts to improve the organization's reputation (Coombs, 2010). There are two parts to the rebuild strategy: compensation and apology. Compensation occurs when the crisis manager offers money or gifts to victims. An apology occurs when a crisis manager indicates that the organization takes full responsibility for the crisis and asks stakeholders for forgiveness (Coombs, 2010).

The rebuild strategies will show the public that BP is taking the necessary actions to fix its mistakes, which could ultimately help its reputation. In addition, making an apology will show the public that BP is truly remorseful. The rebuild strategies will allow BP to be

transparent which is an essential part of public relations. By being transparent, the organization can begin to reconstruct its reputation.

As mentioned earlier, BP suffered no damage from its previous two crises. Therefore, the organization could opt to use the denial strategy and the diminish strategy. The denial strategy attempts to remove any connection between BP and the oil spill crisis while the diminishing strategy reduces BP's attributions of organizational control.

BP's financial measures, such as stock price and profit, had not been significantly affected until the oil spill occurred. Using the denial and diminishing strategies could help improve these financial indicators by showing the public that BP was not involved in the crisis.

However, these strategies are not appropriate. As previously mentioned, BP was a direct player in the oil spill. Denying charges and minimizing BP's role in the crisis would make the organization look hypocritical and further damage its reputation.

#### *Employed/Actual Response Strategy*

The following section discusses the response strategies BP actually used when responding to the oil spill. The primary strategies used by BP were *the denial strategy*, *the diminish strategy*, and *the rebuild strategy*. The two components of the rebuild strategy, *compensation and apology*, are discussed. In addition, *other forms of compensation* are mentioned. Then, *multiple response strategies* are discussed. Lastly, the discrepancy between *the chosen response strategy versus the employed response strategy* is mentioned.

*The denial strategy.* BP used the denial strategy when responding to the public. The denial strategy encompasses the denial image restoration strategy used in Research Question

1. This strategy can be found in three of the BP press releases. The following is an example where the denial strategy is used:

BP today denied allegations that its Atlantis platform in the Gulf of Mexico operated with incomplete and inaccurate engineering documents. Responding to claims that flawed or missing documents posed a threat to safe operation of the platform, recently made in various news programs and print media, BP said it had thoroughly investigated these claims when they were first made by a former contract worker in 2009 and found them to be without substance. (BP, "BP Atlantis," May 17, 2010)

*The diminish strategy.* Another strategy BP used when responding to the public is the diminish strategy. The diminish strategy includes the reducing of the offensiveness image restoration strategy that was used in Research Question 1. This strategy can be found in several press releases. The following excerpt is an example of the diminish strategy:

BP today announced that it has established a \$360 million escrow account to fund immediately the construction of six sections of Louisiana barrier islands approved by the U.S. government. BP has been directed to pay for the construction by the federal government. Since the environmental implications of the projects are not fully understood, BP assumes no liability for unexpected or unintended consequences of these projects. (BP, "BP establishes \$360 million escrow account to immediately fund approved Louisiana barrier islands construction," June 3, 2010)

*The rebuild strategy.* According to the analyzed press releases, BP used the rebuild strategy when responding to the public. This strategy was used most often as it can be found in a majority of the press releases. The following quote from Tony Hayward illustrates the rebuild strategy:

“I reiterated my commitment to the White House today that BP will do anything and everything we can to stop the leak, attack the spill off shore, and protect the shorelines of the Gulf Coast. We appreciate the tireless efforts of the many federal, state, and local responders and the volunteers, men and women who have worked tirelessly since the date of the accident to mitigate the damage. (BP, “Hayward applauds President’s statement,” May 2, 2010).

*The compensation component.* The compensation component was used in 13 press releases. This component of the rebuild strategy was more evident than the apology component. This finding is important because it showed that BP placed more emphasis on providing compensation than on apologizing for the oil spill.

In these press releases, BP mentions its commitment to compensate the victims in a timely manner. BP also pledged that it will “pay legitimate claims for loss and damage caused by the spill” (BP, “BP to appoint independent mediator to ensure timely, fair claims process,” May 26, 2010).

*The apology component.* An apology was made in four press releases. The apology was made by Doug Suttles, chief operating officer of BP Exploration and Production, and Tony Hayward, group chief executive officer. Sympathy and condolences were offered to the families, friends, and colleagues of those who lost loved ones. According to Suttles, the organization “deeply regrets the impact the oil spill has had on individuals and businesses, and understands the need for quick and reasonable compensation” (BP, “Chairman and CEO give assurance that BP will meet its obligations in Gulf of Mexico,” June 4, 2010). Each apology ended with examples of the corrective action BP will be taking, such as working with Transocean and the authorities so “lessons can be learnt to prevent something like this

from happening anywhere again” (BP, “BP offers sympathy to the families of those lost in the US oil fire rig,” April 24, 2010).

*Other forms of compensation.* There were approximately eight press releases that highlighted other forms of compensation. Examples include an escrow account to fund construction of the Louisiana barrier islands, donated net revenue to protect and rehabilitate wildlife in the Gulf States, and a tourism grant to Florida, Alabama, and Mississippi (BP, “BP announces first payment on barrier islands projects for state of Louisiana,” June 7, 2010). It is evident from these press releases that BP is trying to go above and beyond what is expected of the organization. These actions could change the public’s perspective of BP. Thus, BP will have the opportunity to rebuild its tarnished reputation.

*Multiple response strategies.* The results from this Research Question highlight the consistent finding from Research Question 1 that multiple strategies are often used within a single press release. As previously mentioned in Research Question 1, it is important to note the order of the strategies. The strategies with a negative connotation, such as the denial strategy and the diminish strategy, were used at the beginning of the press release. The strategies with a positive connotation, such as the rebuild strategy, were used at the end of the press release. This finding is consistent with Research Question 1 that BP chose to end each press release on a positive note with the public. The following is an example where the denial strategy and the rebuild strategy are used. I have italicized the uses of each strategy:

BP strongly *denies* these allegations and will not allow the allegations to diminish its commitment to the Gulf Coast region. “These allegations will neither distract the company’s focus on stopping the leak nor alter our commitment to restore the Gulf coast,” said BP’s chief executive officer Tony Hayward. “Other parties besides BP

may be responsible for costs and liabilities arising from the oil spill, and we expect those parties to live up to their obligations. But how the costs and liabilities are eventually allocated between various parties will not affect *our unwavering pledge to step forward in the first instance to clean up the spill and pay all legitimate claims in an efficient and fair manner.*” (BP, “BP emphasizes that disagreement with other parties will not diminish its promise to clean up the spill and pay legitimate claims,” June 18, 2010).

*Chosen response strategy versus employed response strategy.* The results from this Research Question found a discrepancy between the crisis response strategy that should have been used and the crisis response strategies that were actually used. After assessing the oil spill crisis through SCCT, it was evident that the most appropriate strategy was the rebuild strategy. The rebuild strategy was used in addition to the deny strategy and the diminish strategy. This implies that BP assessed the SCCT factors differently than I did. For example, BP might have evaluated its prior reputation as positive while I viewed it as negative. This finding implies that SCCT really is situational and different perceptions can influence the process of choosing a response strategy.

#### *Media Assessment of BP's Response Strategy*

The following section discusses how the media assessed BP's rebuild response strategy. The *tone of reportage* is important in evaluating appropriate response strategies according to various crisis situations. Next, the section describes how the media portrayed BP with regards to *compensation*. Then, the portrayal of the organization through the *apology* component is discussed. In addition, the *management frame and negatively*

*portrayed articles* is discussed. Lastly, the use of *matching crisis type with response strategy* is discussed.

*Tone of reportage.* The same documents that were analyzed in Research Question 2 were used to see how the media assessed BP's response strategy. Each document was categorized based on how the media portrayed BP. The categories include positive, negative, and neutral. Overall, the media portrayed BP negatively and neutrally. There were three articles that framed BP positively, 24 articles that framed BP negatively, and 28 articles that framed BP neutrally. The following sections discuss how the newspaper articles included compensation and apology, the two components of the rebuild strategy.

*Compensation.* There were ten articles that related to the compensation component of the rebuild strategy. Out of the ten articles, two articles framed BP positively, five articles framed BP neutrally, and three articles framed BP negatively.

The positively framed articles came from *USA Today* and *The New York Times*. The articles included quotes of people speaking encouragingly of BP. For example, in an article from *USA Today*, President Obama said, "Today was a good start. This should provide some assurance to small business owners that BP is going to meet its responsibilities" (*USA Today*, "Obama announces \$20B for Gulf oil spill victims," June 16, 2010). The articles positively framed BP by suggesting that the organization was being proactive in its actions. In other words, the articles discussed, in detail, BP's plans for stopping the leak. Back up plans were also included.

The neutrally framed articles came from *USA Today*, *The New York Times*, and *The Wall Street Journal*. These articles contained mostly facts about how much compensation was being offered such as "a \$100 million fund to compensate unemployed oil rig workers



who lost their job because of the closing of deep water rigs” (*USA Today*, “BP agrees to set up \$20B escrow fund to cover oil spill damage,” June, 6, 2010). Furthermore, the author did not voice his/her opinion or position on the crisis. Minimal quotes were found in these articles.

The articles that negatively framed BP came from *The Houston Chronicle* and *The Times Picayune*. The articles focused on BP’s faults in handling the oil spill citing the organization’s “willful misconduct” (*The Houston Chronicle*, “BP’s oil spill tally surpasses \$3 billion,” July 5, 2010). An article by *The Times Picayune* mentioned that BP should “live up to their responsibilities and shoulder the costs of the spill” (*The Times Picayune*, “BP cuts \$25 million check to Louisiana for Gulf of Mexico oil spill,” May 5, 2010). The issue of compensation was mentioned in two to three sentences, while the rest of the articles focused on the organization’s flaws.

*Apology.* With regards to apology, the second component of the rebuild strategy, none of the 55 newspaper articles analyzed showed BP offering an apology. However, BP issued apologies in four press releases. It is very significant that BP issued an apology in approximately four press releases, yet no newspaper articles reported this. This finding implies that not every aspect of a press release will appear in a media document. In addition, evidence from Research Question 2 and 3 showed that the newspapers located in a city that was affected by the oil spill always portrayed BP negatively. It is essential that BP continues to be transparent when providing newspapers with post-crisis information. Being transparent will help the organization to be portrayed in the best way possible.

*The management frame and negatively portrayed articles.* Another interesting finding deals with the management frame and a negative portrayal of BP. Eight out of nine articles

that used the management frame portrayed BP in a negative light. This implies that the newspapers believe that organizational misdeeds were the cause of the crisis and chose to frame the story in such a way. These articles mentioned BP's lack of communication, equipment failures, and missed warning signs. The following is an example of the management frame with a negative portrayal:

One of the most disturbing aspects of British Petroleum's handling of the Deepwater Horizon explosion and subsequent continuing oil spill is the company's ham-handed attempts to restrict media coverage. BP officials seem to be more adept at cutting off information flows than oil leaks. (*The Houston Chronicle*, "Covering the spill: Media must have unrestricted ability to cover the oil spill's coastal damage," June 2, 2010)

*Matching crisis type with response strategy.* As mentioned in the literature review, SCCT proposes that an organization will match up the crisis type with the crisis response strategy. BP followed this assumption by using the rebuild and deny strategies to address a preventable crisis. However, these results disconfirm a case study finding (Fussell Sisco et al, 2010) that matching up the crisis type with the crisis response strategy will lead to a more positive perception of organizational reputation. Out of the 55 newspaper articles, three articles portrayed BP positively, 24 articles portrayed BP negatively, and 28 articles portrayed BP neutrally. This suggests that despite BP's best efforts, the rebuild strategy did not work to convince the media to write positively about BP. The absence of positively framed articles suggests that BP lacks a positive perception of organizational reputation.

Overall, it seems that BP chose the correct response strategy based on its crisis history and prior reputation. The rebuild strategy showed the public that BP may be truly apologetic for the oil spill crisis and may be committed to taking the necessary actions to

correct the mistake. Thus, BP can begin to foster a positive reputation from the public's perspective.

Even though BP picked the most appropriate strategy based on the situation, the media still chose not to write positively about BP. The majority of the newspaper articles portrayed BP negatively or neutrally. This means that BP needs to work on communicating with the media in order to be portrayed in a more positive way.

## Chapter V

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

#### *Discussion Summary*

As mentioned in the introduction, this study investigated (a) the image restoration strategies used by BP when responding to the oil spill crisis, (b) how the media framed the crisis using already established media frames, and (c) how the media assessed the strategies used by BP through SCCT.

Overall, this study used a qualitative content analysis of 72 BP press releases, five BP commercials, and 55 newspaper articles to fulfill three general purposes. One purpose of this study was to show what image restoration strategies BP used to respond to the oil spill crisis. The second purpose of this study was to show how crises are framed in the media. As mentioned in the literature review, there is a lack of studies that frame crises from a public relations perspective. The majority of framing studies deal with crisis communication and perception management with the media rather than how the crisis was actually framed. The final purpose of this study was to find an appropriate image restoration strategy through SCCT.

Moreover, there were several interesting findings and implications that resulted from this study. Those findings include details regarding how media location influences an organization's portrayal, the introduction of new media frames, and the order in which image restoration strategies are presented. This section includes a discussion of those findings followed by theoretical and practical implications, limitations of the study, and potential areas for future research.

#### *Image Restoration Theory*

As previously mentioned, this study shed some light on the understanding of the image restoration theory. This study could contribute to the overall building of image restoration theory. This section will address implications in the following areas: *the use of multiple image restoration strategies* and *corrective action as an effective strategy*.

#### *The Use of Multiple Image Restoration Strategies*

The following section focuses on the theoretical importance of the use of multiple image restoration strategies. A previous case study that examined multiple image restoration strategies is mentioned. Lastly, examples are provided that illustrate *BP's use of multiple image restoration strategies*.

In 1997, Benoit and Czerwinski examined the image restoration strategies USAir used when responding to negative charges about the safety of its plane's management policies. USAir employed multiple image restoration strategies in one advertisement. However, the authors concluded that the image restoration strategies were not executed effectively.

*BP's use of multiple image restoration strategies*. The results from this study show that BP's use of multiple image restoration strategies was effective. Commercials where BP used corrective and mortification portrayed the organization in a positive way. One commercial portrayed BP as being truly remorseful and willing to help restore wildlife in the Gulf States (BP, Gulf of Mexico Response: Wildlife, 2010).

Also, as mentioned in the Results section, BP used reducing the offensiveness and corrective action together in a press release. The press release would begin with reducing the offensiveness and end with denial. Thus, there is an implication that the order of strategies plays a role in effectiveness. In order to investigate this potential phenomenon more

information is needed about which image restoration strategies are often paired together. In addition, information on whether or not the public changed their view about an organization would be essential. This could be a potential area for future research. This future research could help to expand image restoration theory. Various sets of multiple image restoration strategies could be developed based on its effectiveness. Therefore, an organization would have a variety of options when deciding how to repair its image in the post-crisis stage.

*Corrective Action as an Effective Strategy*

The following section focuses on the effectiveness of corrective action. A case study by Blaney, Benoit, and Brazeal (2002) is mentioned along with the author's conclusions about corrective action. In addition, BP's use of corrective action is discussed. Lastly, best practices for corrective action are mentioned.

In 2002, a study of Firestone's image restoration strategy campaign was completed by Blaney, Benoit, and Brazeal. The authors faulted the campaign's use of corrective action. According to Blaney et al. (2002), corrective action was an appropriate strategy, but was believed to have come too late. Furthermore, authors suggested that corrective action works best when the actions taken actually correct improper procedures (Benoit & Czerwinski, 1997). The results from this study confirm these statements.

BP issued its first press release two days after the oil spill occurred. The organization used corrective action in this press release emphasizing its commitment to "co-operate with the Department of Homeland Security and the Environmental Protection Agency in facilitating access by the US government and the public to sampling/monitoring data on the Deepwater Horizon spill response" (BP, "BP reiterates oil spill response transparency," April 21, 2010).

Furthermore, the results from this study confirm that corrective action works best when the actions taken actually correct improper procedures. The majority of BP's press releases addressed the issue at hand – how to contain the leaking oil. BP cited the various procedures that were being taken to seal the leak such as “the riser insertion tube tool (RITT) containment system” (BP, “Update on Gulf of Mexico oil spill response – 18 May,” May 18, 2010). Thus, the use of corrective action among BP was effective.

### *Framing Theory*

This study also produces relevant findings with regards to framing theory. The results of this study suggest a need for more studies that frame various crises. In addition, the results confirmed the five already established media frames, and offer two new frames for potential research in the future. More specifically, implications will be drawn into three areas within this section: *the need for framing studies*, *already established media frames*, and *new media frames*.

### *The Need for Framing Studies*

The following section mentions the minimal studies available that frame various crises. In addition, an implication for framing studies is discussed. Lastly, various ways that the current study could benefit practitioners and researchers are emphasized.

As mentioned in the literature review, there is a lack of studies that frame various crises. The majority of framing studies I found dealt with crisis communication and perception management with the media rather than how the crisis was actually framed. Therefore, there is an even bigger need for the current study. This study confirms the importance of studies that frame crises. The results from this study show what media frame is used the most, what frames are often paired together, the relationship of strategies used by

organizations, frames employed by the media, and how the media frame is contingent on a variety of factors, including media location.

This study could serve as a building block upon which other practitioners and researchers can begin to observe how crises are framed in the media. Studies of this nature will prove to be valuable in the future when an organization is faced with a crisis.

Organizations will be able to look at studies to see how certain media frame a crisis. Then, the organization can decide if the media's frame aligns with how the organization wants the crisis to be framed. In other words, an organization may not reach out to important media if the media refuses to make a report using a positive tone. An organization might decide that it is more important to be portrayed positively than to have coverage in well known media.

#### *Types of Crisis Frames*

The following section focuses on the frames used by the media after a crisis occurs. In addition, this section confirms that previously mentioned media frames were often used to frame the oil spill. Lastly, the different ways a media frame can be portrayed is discussed.

Several content analyses of crises have been conducted by various researchers (An & Gower, 2009; Hong, 2007; Iyengar, 1999) to examine the frames employed by the media after a crisis occurs. An and Gower (2009) discussed several types of frames consistently used in the U.S. news coverage: human interest, conflict, economic consequence, morality, attribution of responsibility, and level of responsibility.

The results confirm that most of the previously mentioned media frames are consistently used in U.S. news coverage sampled in this study. These media frames appeared in the 55 newspaper articles that discussed BP and the oil spill. In addition, the results elaborate the use of media frames by showing that a single article can use multiple frames.



Moreover, the results showed that a particular media frame can be portrayed in a variety of ways. As mentioned in the results section, the economic consequence frame was used in different ways depending on the newspaper. Six newspaper articles used the economic consequence frame to show the monetary amount of damage BP was responsible for paying. On the other hand, four newspaper articles used the economic consequence frame to highlight BP's worth in the post-crisis stage.

#### *Situational Crisis Communication Theory*

This study offered insight into SCCT. The results from this study could increase crisis managers' awareness about how to use SCCT when a crisis occurs. The following section will discuss *crisis responsibility, the role of crisis history and prior reputation, and conclusions from previous case studies.*

*Crisis responsibility.* SCCT states that responsibility of the crisis poses a threat to an organization's reputation. The results from this study confirm Coombs' assessment that the reputational threat to an organization "increases as stakeholders' attributions of crisis responsibility to the organization intensifies" (Coombs, 2007, p. 166). BP's reputation steadily decreased as more information was discovered on the organization's involvement in the oil spill. The results from the study confirm that BP's reputation was decreasing as 24 newspaper articles portrayed the organization poorly.

*The role of crisis history and prior reputation.* Crisis history and prior reputation are two factors used to assess the reputational threat of a crisis. With regards to crisis history, organizations that have experienced crises will have more reputational threat than an organization's first-time crisis. Furthermore, a history of crises will make stakeholders treat the current crisis as more severe. The results from Research Question 1 showed that BP often

used corrective action when responding to the public. The severity of the crisis and stakeholder's knowledge of BP's crisis history could be the reason corrective action was used so frequently.

Prior reputation also plays a role in assessing the reputational threat of a crisis. An unfavorable prior reputation suggests that the organization has a history of treating stakeholders poorly. The evidence from Research Question 3 shows that BP has not had a favorable reputation, and that the organization continues to make poor decisions with regards to management and safety.

*Conclusions from previous case studies.* As mentioned in the literature review, Fussell Sisco et. al (2010) concluded that matching the crisis type with the crisis response strategy leads to a more positive perception of firm reputation. However, the results from this study disconfirm the previous conclusion. Despite BP's ability to correctly match up the crisis type and the crisis response strategy, the media still had a negative perception of firm reputation. Only three newspaper articles portrayed BP positively. This implies that BP chose the correct strategy, but failed to execute it properly to the media.

This finding suggests that organizations may not be able to repair their image with certain stakeholders, such as the media. The type of business that the organization is in could make some reporters refuse to report a story positively. For example, the oil and gas industry is one that is prone to crises. It is possible that reporters have seen so many crises in this field that they have lost faith in the industry and choose (consciously or unconsciously) to frame these crises negatively.

Furthermore, crisis communicators must understand that they will not be able to convince everyone, especially in the post-crisis stage. People have opinions on various topics

and it is unlikely that a crisis manager will be able to convince all members of the public. However, members of the public who are affected by the crisis or members of the public who are invested in the organization should be convinced. These members can include employees, stakeholders, and stake seekers.

Another consideration is that SCCT is not a fully developed theory. It is possible that sometime in the future SCCT will be more developed. However, in the meantime, crisis communicators should be realistic and use caution when employing it as a guiding model for crisis communication in the post-crisis stage.

#### *Theoretical Implications*

In addition to practical implications, this study found theoretical implications. These implications will be beneficial to public relations educators and researchers. This study revealed the need for a *transparency sub-category within corrective action* and a *status frame* and a *management frame*. These two items are discussed in the section below.

*Transparency sub-category within corrective action.* This study highlights the need for transparency with regards to the image restoration strategies. More specifically, the results from this study introduce a transparency strategy that would fall under corrective action. The literature review shows that transparency is mentioned in Benoit's eight suggestions for effective image repair. The first suggestion is to use persuasive rhetoric effectively. The results from this study confirmed Benoit's suggestion. In fact, results of Research Question 1 – in particular, a strategy of transparency found in several BP documents – suggest that transparency is largely a new essential element of post-crisis communication.

According to Benoit, transparency can be accomplished by providing adequate support for claims, avoiding arguments that might backfire, and choosing an appropriate spokesperson (Benoit, 1997, p. 183). BP provided adequate support for claims by informing the public of its reasoning for choosing certain decisions and procedures. For example, BP launched state-specified response websites in order to “engage in close communication with residents, businesses, and elected officials of the affected states” (BP, “BP announces launch of state-specified response web sites,” May, 25, 2010).

BP avoided arguments that could backfire by sticking to the facts and not deviating from the crisis at hand. For example, several press releases discussed BP’s “top kill” procedure. These press releases highlight the progression such as “the successful placement of a containment cap on top of the Deepwater Horizon’s failed blow-out preventer” (BP, “LMRP containment operation deployed,” June 4, 2010). However, BP needs to use caution when releasing technical data to the public. All readers of technical status information do not automatically understand technical information. Therefore, the information needs to be worded in a way that all members of the public, educated or uneducated, can understand.

Lastly, BP followed the advice of various public relations practitioners and researchers and chose a member of the dominant coalition to be BP’s spokesperson. Tony Hayward, BP’s Group Chief Executive, was chosen as the face of the organization.

Furthermore, BP was quick to remove Tony Hayward as the spokesperson after he committed a series of public relations gaffes. This implies that the organization did not agree with the comments that were made and did not want to further tarnish the organization’s reputation.

In addition, Research Question 1 mentions the transparency sub-category under the corrective action image restoration strategy. BP made itself transparent in its communication by being open and honest. Furthermore, BP stated its commitment to cooperate with other organizations during the internal investigation. Now, transparency is required in the post-crisis communication stage. All organizations, especially big organizations like BP, have a lot to prove in this stage of the crisis. Being transparent will show that the organization values the public and that the organization is willing to fix its mistakes. In addition, organizational transparency will justify stockholders' decisions for obtaining organizational stock.

This implication requires the image restoration theory to be reexamined to see if there is a deeper need for transparency. The transparency strategy will be used when the organization is forthcoming and honest in providing information to the public.

*Status frame and management frame.* The results also suggest an implication for two potential new media frames. The two new media frames are a status frame and a management frame. The status frame provides the public with information about what the organization is doing to correct the crisis and prevent the crisis from reoccurring. This frame confirms Benoit's suggestion that organizations should report plans to correct and/or prevent reoccurrence of the problem. The results from this study confirmed this suggestion by citing that in 52 of the 72 press releases, BP reported its plans to correct the oil spill and prevent a reoccurrence. The "Update on the Gulf of Mexico Oil Spill" press releases highlights BP's use of corrective action. In addition, the management frame frames an article from a management standpoint providing information about organizational decisions, hiring and firing among employees, and maintenance issues.

Therefore, these two frames require a reassessment of the framing theory and the five established media frames. Reassessing the framing theory can provide more insight into the potential use of the frames and in what ways the new frames will be most effective.

### *Practical Implications*

The goal of this study was to provide public relations practitioners with knowledge about the appropriate image restoration strategy to use, and how the media often frames crises. One important implication from the study is *organizational portrayal through mortification*. In addition, this study reveals *the influence of location on framing*. Lastly, this study showed that BP received *negative media coverage despite using the correct SCCT strategy*. The three items are addressed in the section below.

*Organizational portrayal through mortification.* As mentioned in the results section, BP was portrayed positively or neutrally when mortification was evident in the BP commercial. This implication will show public relations practitioners the importance of using mortification as an image restoration strategy. In the future, public relations practitioners will be able to continue to use mortification as an image restoration strategy in order to be portrayed in a more positive way, and to help the organization rebuild its reputation. In addition, this implication is beneficial to researchers. Researchers can find ways to maximize the effectiveness of mortification. This could be done through what verbiage to use when making an apology, the best media for expressing mortification, and what member of the organization the apology should come from.

*The influence of location on framing.* Another implication of this study is that there are factors that influence framing. More specifically, this study reveals an implication that location plays a role in the media framing of articles. This implication will be beneficial to

practitioners. Practitioners will be cognizant that newspapers located where a crisis occurred are less likely to portray the organization in a positive way. Practitioners can decide what information and verbiage they want to use that might help increase the organization's portrayal. In addition, this implication can help researchers to discover if other factors influence framing. Furthermore, researchers can begin to figure out how to overcome the location obstacle and be portrayed positively by the media.

*Negative media coverage despite using the correct SCCT strategy.* This study revealed that BP received negative media coverage despite using the correct SCCT strategy. One reason for negative media coverage is the fact that people often need to place blame after a crisis occurs. According to Tyler (2005), it is human nature to blame an organization after an unfortunate event, such as an organizational crisis.

However, most corporations, such as BP, continue to prosper after a crisis. It is possible that organizational acts of corporate social responsibility (CSR) keep an organization in business. For example, BP has agreed to be the official oil and gas partner for the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympics games ("BP and London 2012," n.d.). This means that BP, and other organizations, should do CSR in order to be viewed more favorably in the event of a crisis.

#### *Limitations of Study*

It is essential for every study to recognize potential limitations to the study that might have affected both the results and the implications. Therefore, this section will address limitations of this study associated with *content analysis procedures, the limited size of sample texts, and the media's perception of crisis response strategies.*

*Content analysis procedures.* There is a possibility that personal bias might have had an impact of the analysis of the sample texts. I was the only researcher to determine the procedures of selection, categorization of data, and analysis of data. Steps were taken to ensure accurate data such as an in-depth coding scheme and analyzing the texts multiple times. However, personal bias might have influenced some decisions and, thus, the content analysis procedures could not ensure a completely accurate interpretation of the data. One factor that might have influenced my personal bias is the possibility of getting a job at BP. Personally, it was important for me to see that BP wanted to change its damaged reputation and that BP was taking the necessary management steps. Seeing these two things would help to confirm my thoughts that the organization does care about its organization-public relationship and that BP does not have poor internal management. I overcame this bias by realizing that every organization has internal management aspects to work on. In addition, I overcame this bias by thoroughly analyzing each document.

*Limited size of sample texts.* As mentioned in the Methods section, there were approximately 271 newspaper articles that were released from April 20, 2010, to July 15, 2010, that focus on the BP oil spill. However, this study only investigated 55 newspaper articles. It is possible that the sample of 55 newspaper articles was not large enough to represent how the media framed the crisis.

Furthermore, only focusing on press releases, commercials, and newspaper articles might not have fully encompassed all the available media sources. This limitation implies that future research could be done to look at a variety of media documents with the goal of seeing how the media framed each article.



*The media's perception of crisis response strategies.* As mentioned in the Introduction, this study only examined the media's perception of the crisis response strategies used by BP. Only focusing on the media's perceptions might not have fully encompassed all other available perceptions. Future research could be done to assess researcher's and stakeholder's perceptions of the crisis response strategies.

#### *Future Research*

It is evident from this study that there are additional areas of research that may have theoretical and/or practical implications regarding image restoration strategies and SCCT. Therefore, this section discusses *the order of image restoration strategies* and *matching up crisis type with crisis response strategy*.

*The order of image restoration strategies.* One implication from this study is that public relations could benefit from future research regarding the order in which multiple image restoration strategies occur. This study offered limited examples of the image restoration strategies order. A study that solely focused the order in which image restoration strategies occur would generate more representative results.

In 1999, Benoit and Czerwinski asserted that multiple image restoration strategies can work together. Thus, future research may find what combination of strategies is most effective in the public's eyes and what combinations, if any, should be avoided.

*Matching up crisis type with crisis response strategy.* Another implication from this study is that public relations could benefit from future research that shows if matching up the crisis type with the crisis response strategy actually generates a positive firm reputation. This study only offered one example of matching up the crisis type with the crisis response strategy. A study that focused only on this subject would generate more descriptive results.

Furthermore, future research may find other helpful tips such as when to use the match up process and how to ensure positive firm reputation.

## REFERENCES

- An, S., & Gower, K. K. (2009). How do the news media frame crises? A content analysis of crisis news coverage. *Public Relations Review*, 35, 107-112.
- Andsager, J. L., & Powers, A. (2009). Framing women's health with a sense-making approach: Magazine coverage of breast cancer and implants. *Health Communication*, 13(2), 163-185.
- Associated Press. (2006). BP unit accused of price manipulation. Retrieved January 5, 2012 from [http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/13608828/ns/business-oil\\_and\\_energy/t/bp-unit-accused-price-manipulation/#.Tw9DIW9rMms](http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/13608828/ns/business-oil_and_energy/t/bp-unit-accused-price-manipulation/#.Tw9DIW9rMms).
- BP. (2010). A message from Tony Hayward. Retrieved January 7, 2012 from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KKcrDaiGE2s>.
- BP. (2010). BP Atlantis. Retrieved January 7, 2012 from <http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&contentId=7062224>.
- BP (2010). BP and London 2012. Retrieved March 12, 2012 from <http://www.bp.com/sectiongenericarticle.do?categoryId=9028859&contentId=7052637>.
- BP. (2010). BP announces first payment on barrier islands project for state of Louisiana. Retrieved January 6, 2012 from <http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&contentId=7062727>
- BP. (2010). BP announces launch of state-specific website. Retrieved January 6, 2012 from <http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&contentId=7062443>.

BP. (n.d). BP at a glance. Retrieved August 30, 2011 from

<http://www.bp.com/sectiongenericarticle.do?categoryId=3&contentId=2006926>.

BP. (2010). BP emphasizes that disagreement with other parties will not diminish its promise to clean up the spill and pay legitimate claims. Retrieved January 6, 2012 from

<http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&contentId=7062995>.

BP. (2010). BP establishes \$360 million escrow account to immediately fund approved Louisiana barrier islands construction. Retrieved January 6, 2012 from

<http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&contentId=7062638>.

BP. (2010). BP offers sympathy to the families of those lost in the US oil rig fire. Retrieved January 6, 2012 from

<http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&contentId=7061514>.

BP. (2010). BP pledges full support for Deepwater Horizon probes. Retrieved January 6, 2012 from

<http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&contentId=7061626>.

BP. (n.d.). BP releases report on causes of Gulf of Mexico tragedy. Retrieved January 4, 2012 from

<http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&contentId=7064893>.

BP. (2010). BP reiterates oil spill response transparency. Retrieved January 6, 2012 from

<http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&contentId=7062348>.

BP. (2010). BP to appoint independent mediator to ensure timely, fair claims process.

Retrieved January 8, 2012 from

<http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&contentId=7062448>.

BP. (2010). BP to pay a second month of loss of income claims. Retrieved January 6, 2012

from

<http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&contentId=7062660>.

BP. (2010). Chairman and CEO give assurance that BP will meet its obligations in Gulf of

Mexico. Retrieved January 9, 2012 from

<http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&contentId=7062651>.

BP. (n.d.). Compensating the people and communities affected. Retrieved August 30, 2011

from

<http://www.bp.com/sectiongenericarticle800.do?categoryId=9036584&contentId=7067605>.

BP. (n.d.). Deepwater Horizon accident. Retrieved August 30, 2011 from

<http://www.bp.com/sectiongenericarticle800.do?categoryId=9036575&contentId=7067541>.

BP. (2010). Gulf of Mexico response: Communities. Retrieved January 6, 2012 from

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6YJ7Rugl3eI>.

BP. (2010). Gulf of Mexico response: Wildlife. Retrieved January 8, 2012 from

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EbwV4dwvpbM>.

- BP. (2010). Hayward applauds President's statement. Retrieved January 9, 2012 from <http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&contentId=7061751>.
- BP. (2010). Hayward comments on President Obama's statement – 14 May. Retrieved January 6, 2012 from <http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&contentId=7062134>.
- BP. (2010). LMRP containment operation deployed. Retrieved January 8, 2012 from <http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&contentId=7062653>.
- BP. (n.d.). Late century. Retrieved August 30, 2011 from <http://www.bp.com/sectiongenericarticle.do?categoryId=9014444&contentId=702752>  
5.
- BP. (n.d.). Offshore and onshore clean-up. Retrieved August 30, 2011 from <http://www.bp.com/sectiongenericarticle800.do?categoryId=9036585&contentId=7067606>  
7606.
- BP. (n.d.). Response timeline. Retrieved September 8, 2011 from <http://www.bp.com/iframe.do?categoryId=9036588&contentId=7067573&nicam=vanity&redirect=www.bp.com/responsetimeline>.
- BP. (2010). Update on Gulf of Mexico oil spill – 5 May. Retrieved January 6, 2012 from <http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&contentId=7061856>.
- BP. (2010). Update on Gulf of Mexico oil spill – 18 May. Retrieved January 6, 2012 from <http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&contentId=7062184>.

BP. (2010). Update on Gulf of Mexico oil spill – 29 May. Retrieved January 6, 2012 from <http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&contentId=7062487>

Bagley, W. (2011). Gulf oil spill could have been prevented by BP workers who weren't consulted: Report. Retrieved January 4, 2012 from [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/02/17/oil-spill-could-have-been\\_n\\_824647.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/02/17/oil-spill-could-have-been_n_824647.html).

Benoit, W. L. (1997). Image repair discourse and crisis communication. *Public Relations Review*, 23, 177-186.

Benoit, W. L., & Czerwinski, A. (1997). A critical analysis of USAir's image repair discourse. *Business Quarterly Communication*, 60(3), 38-57.

Benoit, W. L., & Zhang, J. (2004). Message strategies of Saudi Arabia's image restoration campaign after 9/11. *Public Relations Review*, 30, 161-167.

Bernard, H. R. (2002). *Research methods in anthropology*. Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press.

Blaney, J. R., Benoit, W. L., & Brazeal, L. M., (2002). Blowout!: Firestone's image restoration campaign. *Public Relations Review*, 28, 379-392.

Brady, J. (2010). BP attempts to repair image after oil disaster. Retrieved August 29, 2011 from <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=126608718>.

CNNMoney. (2010). Global 500. Retrieved July 28, 2011 from [http://money.cnn.com/magazines/fortune/global500/2010/full\\_list/](http://money.cnn.com/magazines/fortune/global500/2010/full_list/).

Camia, Catalina. (2010, June 16). Obama announces \$20 billion for Gulf oil spill victims.

*USA Today*. Retrieved from

<http://content.usatoday.com/communities/theoval/post/2010/06/obama-bp-compensation-fund-1#.T0PAbfEgeik>.

Chazan, G., & Cimilluca, D. (2010, June 26). BP amasses cash for oil-spill costs. *The Wall*

*Street Journal*. Retrieved from <http://www.stuarthsmith.com/bp-amasses-cash-for-oil-spill-costs>.

Claeys, A., Cauberghe, V., & Vyncke, P. (2010). Restoring reputations in times of crisis: An experimental study of the situational crisis communication theory and the moderating effects of locus control. *Public Relations Review*, 36(3), 256-262.

Clanton, B., & Hatcher, M. (2010). As oil rig sinks, hope of finding 11 fades. Retrieved on July 28, 2011 from <http://www.chron.com/business/energy/article/As-oil-rig-sinks-hope-of-finding-11-fades-1717217.php>.

Coombs, W. T. (2007). Protecting organization reputations during a crisis: The development and application of situational crisis communication theory. *Corporate Reputation Review*, 10(3), 163-176.

Coombs, W. T. (2010). Conceptualizing crisis communication. In R. L. Heath & H. D. O'Hair (Eds.), *Handbook of risk and crisis communication* (pp. 99-118). New York, NY: Routledge.



- Coombs, W. T., & Holladay, S. J. (2002). Helping crisis managers protect reputational assets: Initial tests of the situational crisis communication theory. *Management Communication Quarterly, 16*(2), 165-185.
- De Vries, M. S. (2004). Framing crises: Response patterns to explosions in firework factories. *Administration & Society, 36*(5), 594-614.
- Ellis, B. (2010). White House sends BP a \$69 million bill. Retrieved August 2, 2011 from [http://money.cnn.com/2010/06/03/news/companies/bp\\_obama\\_administration\\_bill/index.htm](http://money.cnn.com/2010/06/03/news/companies/bp_obama_administration_bill/index.htm).
- Entman, R. M. (2007). Framing bias: Media in the distribution of power. *Journal of Communication, 57*, 163-173.
- Feldman, C. (2010, June 14). BP disaster leaves fishermen's lives at standstill. *The Houston Chronicle*. Retrieved from <http://www.chron.com/business/energy/article/BP-disaster-leaves-fishermen-s-lives-at-standstill-1715624.php>.
- Fortunato, J. A. (2008). Restoring a reputation: The Duke University lacrosse scandal. *Public Relations Review, 34*, 116-123.
- Fussell Sisco, H., Collins, E. L., & Zoch, L. M. (2010). Through the looking glass: A decade of Red Cross crisis response and situational crisis communication theory. *Public Relations Review, 36*(1), 21-27.
- Futures Mag. (2011). BP, Halliburton, Transocean blamed for oil spill. Retrieved January 4, 2012 from <http://www.futuresmag.com/News/2011/9/Pages/BP-Halliburton-Transocean-blamed-for-oil-spill.aspx>.

- Greenpeace International Staff. (2006). What happened in Chernobyl? Retrieved on August 3, 2011 from <http://www.greenpeace.org/international/en/campaigns/nuclear/nomorechernobyls/what-happened-in-chernobyl/>.
- Griffin, A. (2008). *New strategies to reputation management: Gaining control of issues, crises, and corporate social responsibility*. Philadelphia, PA. Sage Publications.
- Hagan, L. M. (2010). For reputation's sake: Managing crisis communication. In E. L. Toth (Ed.), *The future of excellence in public relations and communication management: Challenges for the next generation* (pp. 413-440). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Hall, M. (2010). Apologetic BP pledges \$20B compensation fund. Retrieved August 3, 2011 from [http://www.usatoday.com/news/washington/2010-06-16-obama-bp-oil\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/washington/2010-06-16-obama-bp-oil_N.htm).
- Hong, S. (2010, May 24). Protestors demand BP be shut down over oil spill. *The Houston Chronicle*. Retrieved from <http://www.chron.com/business/energy/article/Protesters-demand-BP-be-shut-down-over-oil-spill-1707860.php>.
- Hong, T. (2007). Information control in a time of crisis: The framing of SARS in China-based newspaper and internet sources. *Cyber Psychology and Behavior*, 10(5), 696-699.
- Houston Chronicle. (2010, June 2). Covering the spill: Media must have unrestricted ability to cover the oil spill's coastal damage. *The Houston Chronicle*. Retrieved from

- <http://www.chron.com/opinion/editorials/article/Covering-the-spill-Media-must-have-unrestricted-1609573.php>.
- Ihlen, O. (2010). The cursed sisters: Public relations and rhetoric. In R. L. Heath (Ed.), *The sage handbook of public relations* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., pp. 59-70). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Industrial Safety and Security Source. (2011). BP oil spill: A “preventable disaster.” Retrieved January 5, 2012 from <http://www.isssource.com/bp-oil-spill-a-%E2%80%98preventable-disaster/>.
- Iyengar, S. (1991). *Is anyone responsible? How television frames political issues*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Khan, A. (2010). Oil dispersants effects remain a mystery. Retrieved August 3, 2011 from <http://articles.latimes.com/2010/sep/04/science/la-sci-dispersants-20100905>.
- Kunzelman, M. (2010). Judge lifts offshore drilling ban as overbearing. Retrieved August 3, 2011 from [http://www.aurorasentinel.com/news/article\\_ea1ff57a-0de8-5e0e-8fc3-0997777f4cee.html](http://www.aurorasentinel.com/news/article_ea1ff57a-0de8-5e0e-8fc3-0997777f4cee.html).
- Lee, A. (2010, July 2). Is BP rejecting skimmers to save money on Gulf oil cleanup? *The Miami Herald*. Retrieved from <http://www.miamiherald.com/2010/07/02/1712593/why-so-few-skimmers-at-the-oil.html>.
- Lindlof, T. R., & Taylor, B. C. (2011). *Qualitative communication research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Lozano, J. A. (2011). BP Texas City refinery explosion: Company to pay state \$50 million over air pollution violations. Retrieved January 5, 2012 from [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/11/03/bp-texas-city-refinery-explosion\\_n\\_1074086.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/11/03/bp-texas-city-refinery-explosion_n_1074086.html).

Marusiak, M. (2011). Report concludes that BP oil spill was “entirely preventable”. Retrieved January 5, 2012 from <http://taintedgreen.com/government-policies/report-concludes-that-bp-oil-spill-was-entirely-preventable/000951/mm-17>.

Moore, R. (1999). The language of an ecological disaster. *The American Biology Teacher*, 61(6), 402-406.

Mufson, S. (2010, May 26). BP’s investigation finds unheeded “warning signs”. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from <http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1P2-22078534.html>.

Nolan, B. (2010, May 5). BP cuts \$25 million check to Louisiana for Gulf of Mexico oil spill. *The Times Picayune*. Retrieved from [http://www.nola.com/news/gulf-oil-spill/index.ssf/2010/05/bp\\_cuts\\_25\\_million\\_check\\_to\\_lo.html](http://www.nola.com/news/gulf-oil-spill/index.ssf/2010/05/bp_cuts_25_million_check_to_lo.html).

Pagnamenta, R. (2010, April 30). First the cleanup, then the quagmire for BP struggling to control spill. *The London Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.allvoices.com/news/5702937/s/53740961-first-the-clean-up-then-the-quagmire-for-bp-struggling-to-control-spill>.

- Palenchar, M. J. (2010). Conceptualizing crisis communication. In R. L. Heath & H. D. O'Hair (Eds.), *Handbook of risk and crisis communication* (pp. 31-52). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Patel, P. (2010, July 5). BP's oil spill tally surpasses \$3 billion. *The Houston Chronicle*. Retrieved from <http://www.chron.com/business/energy/article/BP-s-oil-spill-tally-surpasses-3-billion-1712101.php>.
- Pauly, J. J., & Hutchinson, L. L. (2005). Moral fables of public relations practice: The Tylenol and Exxon Valdez cases. *Journal of Mass Media Effects*, 20(4), 231-249.
- Pelofsky, J., & Vicini, J. (2011). BP Alaska oil spill penalty to cost company \$25 million. Retrieved January 5, 2012 from [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/05/03/bp-alaska-oil-spill-2006-penalty-fine\\_n\\_857039.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/05/03/bp-alaska-oil-spill-2006-penalty-fine_n_857039.html).
- Perfect Apology. (n.d.). BP oil spill apology. Retrieved October 21, 2011 from <http://www.perfectapology.com/BP-oil-spill-apology.html>.
- Pfahl, M. E., & Bates, B. R. (2008). This is not a race, this is a farce: Formula One and the Indianapolis Motor Speedway tire crisis. *Public Relations Review*, 34, 135-144.
- Potter, T. L. (2008). *Sex trafficking: Explanations and solutions suggested* (Unpublished master's thesis). Clemson University, Clemson, SC.
- Rascoe, A. (2010). BP made risky decisions before spill-panel document. Retrieved August 3, 2011 from <http://www.reuters.com/article/2010/11/24/us-oil-spill-bp-idUSTRE6AN4VX20101124>.

Robertson, C., & Lipton, E. (2010). BP is criticized over oil spill, U.S. missed chances to act.

Retrieved November 2, 2011 from

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/01/us/01gulf.html?pagewanted=all>.

Scheufele, D. A. (1999). Framing as a theory of media effects. *Journal of Communication*,

49(1), 103-122.

Scheufele, D. A., & Tewksbury, D. (2007). Framing agenda setting, and priming: The

evolution of three media effects models. *Journal of Communication*, 57, 9-20.

Schneiderman, R. M. (2010, June 9). New Yorkers express anger at BP...with brown paint.

*The Wall Street Journal*. Retrieved from

<http://blogs.wsj.com/metropolis/2010/06/09/with-brown-paint-new-yorkers-vent-their-anger-at-bp/>.

Schorn, D. (2009). The explosion at Texas City. Retrieved January 5, 2012 from

<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2006/10/26/60minutes/main2126509.shtml>.

Schwartz, N. (2006). Can BP bounce back? Retrieved January 5, 2012 from

[http://money.cnn.com/magazines/fortune/fortune\\_archive/2006/10/16/8388595/index.htm](http://money.cnn.com/magazines/fortune/fortune_archive/2006/10/16/8388595/index.htm).

Sellnow, T. L., & Cowden, K. (2002). Issues advertising as crisis communication: Northwest

Airlines' use of image restoration strategies during the 1998 pilots' strike. *Journal of Business Communication*, 39, 193-219.

Semetko, H. A., & Valkenburg, P. M. (2000). Framing European politics: A content analysis

of press and television releases. *Journal of Communication*, 50(2), 93-109.

- Sen, F., & Egelhoff, W. G. (2002). Six years and counting: Learning from crisis management at Bhopal. *Public Relations Review*, 17(1), 69-83.
- Shenton, A. K. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for Information*, 22, 63-75.
- Shrivastava, P. (1994). Technological and organizational roots of industrial crises: Lessons from Exxon Valdez and Bhopal. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 45, 237-253.
- Shrivastava, P. (1994). The evolution of research on technological crises in the U.S. *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management*, 2(1), 10-20.
- Silverstein, B. (2010). BP's oil spill: Another kind of disaster. Retrieved August 29, 2011 from <http://www.revenews.com/online-marketing/bp%E2%80%99s-oil-spill-another-kind-of-disaster/>.
- Stanglin, D. (2010, June 16). BP agrees to set up \$20B escrow fund to cover oil spill damage. *USA Today*. Retrieved from <http://content.usatoday.com/communities/ondeadline/post/2010/06/bp-agrees-to-set-up-20b-escrow-fund-to-cover-oil-spill-damages/1#.TOPIKvEgeik>.
- Twycross, A., & Shields, L. (2008). Research update: Content analysis. *Pediatric Nursing*, 20(6), 38.
- Tyler, L. (2005). Towards a postmodern understanding of crisis communication. *Public Relations Review*, 31, 566-571.

Ulmer, R. R., Sellnow, T. L. & Seeger, M. W. (2010). Post-crisis communication and renewal: Understanding the potential for positive outcomes in crisis communication. In R. L. Heath & H. D. O'Hair (Eds.), *Handbook of risk and crisis communication* (pp. 302-322). New York, NY: Routledge.

Weber, W., Erickson, S., & Stone, M. (2011). Corporate reputation management: Citibank's use of image restoration strategies during the U.S. banking crisis. *Journal of Organizational Culture, Communications and Conflict*, 15, 35-55.

Werdigier, J. (2010, June 17). BP shares rise after deal on fund. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/18/business/global/18bp.html>.

Whittell, G. (2010, July 13). BP installs bigger cap on oil spill. *The London Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.reuters.com/article/2010/07/13/oil-spill-cap-idUSN1217965320100713>.

Zhang, Y., & Wildemuth, B. M. (2009). Qualitative analysis of content. In B. Wildemuth (Ed.), *Applications of social research methods to questions in information and library* (pp. 308-319). Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited.



## APPENDIX

Commercials

<u>Date</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Website</u>
6.3.10	A Message from Tony Hayward	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KKcrDaiGE2s">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KKcrDaiGE2s</a>
7.1.10	Gulf of Mexico Response: Communities	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6YJ7Rugl3eI">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6YJ7Rugl3eI</a>
7.1.10	Gulf of Mexico Response: Claims	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P6WcfxW9x18&amp;feature=relmfu">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P6WcfxW9x18&amp;feature=relmfu</a>
7.30.10	Gulf of Mexico Response: Wildlife	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EbwV4dwvpbM&amp;feature=relmfu">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EbwV4dwvpbM&amp;feature=relmfu</a>
8.3.10	Gulf of Mexico Response: Cleanup	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fEy2P6U9nC8">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fEy2P6U9nC8</a>

Newspaper Articles

<u>Title</u>	<u>Author</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Newspaper</u>	<u>Website</u>
First the clean up, then the quagmire for BP struggling to control spill	Robin Pagnamenta	4.30.10	London Times	<a href="http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/news/world/americas/article2496615.ece">http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/news/world/americas/article2496615.ece</a>
Lawyers flock to Gulf coast for oil spill lawsuits	Associated Press	5.1.10	Times Picayune	<a href="http://www.nola.com/news/gulf-oil-spill/index.ssf/2010/05/lawyers_flock_to_gulf_coast_fo.html">http://www.nola.com/news/gulf-oil-spill/index.ssf/2010/05/lawyers_flock_to_gulf_coast_fo.html</a>
BP cuts \$25 million check to	Bruce Nolan	5.5.10	Times Picayune	<a href="http://www.nola.com/news/gulf-oil-spill/index.ssf/2010/05/bp_cuts_25_million_check_to_lo.html">http://www.nola.com/news/gulf-oil-spill/index.ssf/2010/05/bp_cuts_25_million_check_to_lo.html</a>

Louisiana for Gulf of Mexico oil spill				
For BP, a technological battle to contain leaks and an image fight, too	Clifford Krauss	5.7.10	The NY Times	<a href="http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/07/science/07container.html">http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/07/science/07container.html</a>
BP sprays more chemicals into main Gulf oil spill's leak	Associated Press	5.10.10	Times Picayune	<a href="http://www.nola.com/news/gulf-oil-spill/index.ssf/2010/05/bp_sprays_more_chemicals_into.html">http://www.nola.com/news/gulf-oil-spill/index.ssf/2010/05/bp_sprays_more_chemicals_into.html</a>
Oil executives pass the blame for spill: BP, Transocean, and Haliburton officials testify before Senate	Steven Mufson, David A. Farenthold	5.12.10	Washington Post	<a href="http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1P2-22010036.html">http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1P2-22010036.html</a>
BP wasn't prepared for leak, CEO says	Guy Chazan, Jim Carlton	5.14.10	WSJ	<a href="http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704635204575241994030460412.html">http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704635204575241994030460412.html</a>
BP opens Slidell claims center to help people affected by Gulf oil spill	Christine Harvey	5.17.10	Times Picayune	<a href="http://www.nola.com/news/gulf-oil-spill/index.ssf/2010/05/bp_opens_slidell_claims_center.html">http://www.nola.com/news/gulf-oil-spill/index.ssf/2010/05/bp_opens_slidell_claims_center.html</a>

Tar balls found in Florida Keys unrelated to BP spill, papers report	Times Picayune staff	5.19.10	Times Picayune	<a href="http://www.nola.com/news/gulf-oil-spill/index.ssf/2010/05/tar_balls_found_in_florida_key.html">http://www.nola.com/news/gulf-oil-spill/index.ssf/2010/05/tar_balls_found_in_florida_key.html</a>
Federal officials say oil is gushing faster than thought: BP says it's capturing 5,000 barrels a day	Steven Mufson, David A. Fahrenthold	5.21.10	Washington Post	<a href="http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1P2-22053335.html">http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1P2-22053335.html</a>
Protestors demand BP be shut down over oil spill	Sharon Hong	5.24.10	H Chron	<a href="http://www.chron.com/business/energy/article/Protesters-demand-BP-be-shut-down-over-oil-spill-1707860.php">http://www.chron.com/business/energy/article/Protesters-demand-BP-be-shut-down-over-oil-spill-1707860.php</a>
BP's investigation finds unheeded "warning signs"	Steven Mufson	5.26.10	Washington Post	<a href="http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1P2-22078534.html">http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1P2-22078534.html</a>
BP used cheap type of casing on oil well, Congress papers reveal	Robin Pagnamenta	5.27.10	London Times	<a href="http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/news/world/americas/article2529681.ece">http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/news/world/americas/article2529681.ece</a>
2 more days till BP knows if well plug try works	Ben Nuckols, Greg Bluestein	5.28.10	Miami Herald	<a href="http://www.miamiherald.com/2010/05/26/1649225/coast-guard-gives-bp-ok-to-try.html">http://www.miamiherald.com/2010/05/26/1649225/coast-guard-gives-bp-ok-to-try.html</a>

Deepwater Horizon's ill fated oil well could have been handled more carefully, hearings reveal	David Hammer	5.29.10	Times Picayune	<a href="http://www.nola.com/news/gulf-oil-spill/index.ssf/2010/05/hammer-hearings-cg.html">http://www.nola.com/news/gulf-oil-spill/index.ssf/2010/05/hammer-hearings-cg.html</a>
Medics get ready to treat workers from Gulf cleanup	Jennifer Latson	5.30.10	H Chron	<a href="http://www.chron.com/business/energy/article/Medics-get-ready-to-treat-workers-from-Gulf-1715413.php">http://www.chron.com/business/energy/article/Medics-get-ready-to-treat-workers-from-Gulf-1715413.php</a>
Covering the spill: Media must have unrestricted ability to cover the oil spill's coastal damage	No author	6.2.10	H Chron	<a href="http://www.chron.com/opinion/editorials/article/Covering-the-spill-Media-must-have-unrestricted-1609573.php">http://www.chron.com/opinion/editorials/article/Covering-the-spill-Media-must-have-unrestricted-1609573.php</a>
BP cuts pipes, plans to lower cap over Gulf spill	No author	6.3.10	Miami Herald	<a href="http://www.miamiherald.com/2010/06/03/1661716/bp-cuts-pipe-plans-to-lower-cap.html">http://www.miamiherald.com/2010/06/03/1661716/bp-cuts-pipe-plans-to-lower-cap.html</a>
Spill may prompt energy mergers	Rob Cox, Rolfe Winkler	6.3.10	New York Times	<a href="http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/03/business/03views.html">http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/03/business/03views.html</a>
BP's Tony Hayward hands responsibility for oil	Times Picayune staff	6.4.10	Times Picayune	<a href="http://www.nola.com/news/gulf-oil-spill/index.ssf/2010/06/bps_tony_hayward_hands_respons.html">http://www.nola.com/news/gulf-oil-spill/index.ssf/2010/06/bps_tony_hayward_hands_respons.html</a>

spill cleanup to America, British newspaper reports				
BP funneling some of leak to the surface	Clifford Krauss, Henry Fountain	6.5.10	New York Times	<a href="http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/05/us/05capture.html">http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/05/us/05capture.html</a>
BP chief says he won't quit over Gulf spill	No author	6.7.10	USA Today	<a href="http://www.usatoday.com/money/industries/energy/2010-06-06-bp-ceo_N.htm">http://www.usatoday.com/money/industries/energy/2010-06-06-bp-ceo_N.htm</a>
Oil spill cleanup faces "an enemy that changes"	Monica Hatcher	6.8.10	H Chron	<a href="http://www.chron.com/business/energy/article/Oil-spill-cleanup-faces-an-enemy-that-changes-1699051.php">http://www.chron.com/business/energy/article/Oil-spill-cleanup-faces-an-enemy-that-changes-1699051.php</a>
New Yorkers express anger at BP, with brown paint	RM Schneiderman	6.9.10	WSJ	<a href="http://blogs.wsj.com/metropolis/2010/06/09/with-brown-paint-new-yorkers-vent-their-anger-at-bp/">http://blogs.wsj.com/metropolis/2010/06/09/with-brown-paint-new-yorkers-vent-their-anger-at-bp/</a>
Obama meets with the first victims of Gulf Coast oil spill	David Jackson	6.10.10	USA Today	<a href="http://content.usatoday.com/communities/theoval/post/2010/06/obama-meets-with-the-first-victims-of-gulf-coast-oil-spill/1">http://content.usatoday.com/communities/theoval/post/2010/06/obama-meets-with-the-first-victims-of-gulf-coast-oil-spill/1</a>
BP directors to discuss suspension of dividends	Clifford Krauss	6.12.10	NY Times	<a href="http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/12/us/12spill.html">http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/12/us/12spill.html</a>
Florida skipped oil binge, but faces	Damien Cave	6.13.10	NY Times	<a href="http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/20/opinion/120florida.html">http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/20/opinion/120florida.html</a>

hangover				
BP's disaster leaves fishermen's lives at standstill	Claudia Feldmen	6.14.10	H Chron	<a href="http://www.chron.com/business/energy/article/BP-disaster-leaves-fishermen-s-lives-at-standstill-1715624.php">http://www.chron.com/business/energy/article/BP-disaster-leaves-fishermen-s-lives-at-standstill-1715624.php</a>
BP tests way to capture more crude	Jennifer Latson	6.15.10	H Chron	<a href="http://www.chron.com/business/energy/article/BP-tests-way-to-capture-more-crude-1705828.php">http://www.chron.com/business/energy/article/BP-tests-way-to-capture-more-crude-1705828.php</a>
BP agrees to set up \$20B escrow fund to cover oil spill damage	Douglas Stanglin	6.16.10	USA Today	<a href="http://content.usatoday.com/communities/ondeadline/post/2010/06/bp-agrees-to-set-up-20b-escrow-fund-to-cover-oil-spill-damages/1">http://content.usatoday.com/communities/ondeadline/post/2010/06/bp-agrees-to-set-up-20b-escrow-fund-to-cover-oil-spill-damages/1</a>
Obama announces \$20B for Gulf oil spill victims	Catalina Camia	6.16.10	USA Today	<a href="http://content.usatoday.com/communities/theoval/post/2010/06/obama-bp-compensation-fund-/1">http://content.usatoday.com/communities/theoval/post/2010/06/obama-bp-compensation-fund-/1</a>
BP's shareholders take it on the chin	Christine Hauser	6.17.10	NY Times	<a href="http://dealbook.nytimes.com/2010/06/17/bps-shareholders-take-it-on-the-chin/">http://dealbook.nytimes.com/2010/06/17/bps-shareholders-take-it-on-the-chin/</a>
BP shares rise in London after US deal on cleanup costs	Julia Werdigier	6.18.10	NY Times	<a href="http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/18/business/global/18bp.html">http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/18/business/global/18bp.html</a>
Even after spill, lobbyists for BP kept fundraising hopping: "Oil and gas" gathering	Carol D. Leonning	6.18.10	Washington Post	<a href="http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1P2-25217539.html">http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1P2-25217539.html</a>

with Texas politician preceded a hearing				
BP moves chief executive to lesser role in spill response	Clifford Krauss	6.19.10	NY Times	<a href="http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/19/us/19spill.html">http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/19/us/19spill.html</a>
Tricky balance for politicians from oil states	David Herszenhorn, Eric Lichtblau	6.19.10	NY Times	<a href="http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/19/us/politics/19donate.html">http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/19/us/politics/19donate.html</a>
BP fund chief aims to speed up Gulf payment claims	Jessica Durando	6.21.10	USA Today	<a href="http://content.usatoday.com/communities/greenhouse/post/2010/06/bp-claims-oil-spill/1">http://content.usatoday.com/communities/greenhouse/post/2010/06/bp-claims-oil-spill/1</a>
BP looks to pipe plan if relief well fails	Sharon Hong, Jeannie Kever	6.22.10	H Chron	<a href="http://www.chron.com/business/article/BP-looks-to-pipe-plan-if-relief-wells-fail-1603785.php">http://www.chron.com/business/article/BP-looks-to-pipe-plan-if-relief-wells-fail-1603785.php</a>
BP working to reinstall cap used to collect oil from Gulf of Mexico spill	Jaquetta White	6.23.10	Times Picayune	<a href="http://www.nola.com/news/gulf-oil-spill/index.ssf/2010/06/bp_working_to_reinstall_cap_us.html">http://www.nola.com/news/gulf-oil-spill/index.ssf/2010/06/bp_working_to_reinstall_cap_us.html</a>
BP is pursuing Alaska drilling some call risky	Ian Urbina	6.24.10	NY Times	<a href="http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/24/us/24rig.html?pagewanted=all">http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/24/us/24rig.html?pagewanted=all</a>
BP says gulf relief well	Jessica Durando	6.25.10	USA Today	<a href="http://content.usatoday.com/communities/greenhouse/post/2010/06/coast-">http://content.usatoday.com/communities/greenhouse/post/2010/06/coast-</a>

on track for mid August				guard-oil-spill-1-2-3-4/1
BP amasses cash for oil spill costs	Guy Chazan, Dana Cimilluca	6.26.10	WSJ	<a href="http://www.stuarthsmith.com/bp-amasses-cash-for-oil-spill-costs">http://www.stuarthsmith.com/bp-amasses-cash-for-oil-spill-costs</a>
Spill now costs BP more than \$2.65B; denies CEO resigning	Michael Kunzelman, Vladimir Isachenkov	6.28.10	USA Today	<a href="http://www.usatoday.com/money/industries/energy/2010-06-28-bp-ceo-costs_N.htm">http://www.usatoday.com/money/industries/energy/2010-06-28-bp-ceo-costs_N.htm</a>
BP's choice of oil dispersant passes EPA test	Matthew Tresaugue	6.30.10	H Chron	<a href="http://www.chron.com/business/energy/article/BP-s-choice-of-oil-dispersant-passes-EPA-test-1718229.php">http://www.chron.com/business/energy/article/BP-s-choice-of-oil-dispersant-passes-EPA-test-1718229.php</a>
BP enlists Washington elite to help image	Mimi Hall	7.1.10	USA Today	<a href="http://www.usatoday.com/news/washington/2010-06-30-oil-advice_N.htm">http://www.usatoday.com/news/washington/2010-06-30-oil-advice_N.htm</a>
Is BP rejecting skimmers to save money on Gulf oil cleanup?	Anita Lee	7.2.10	Miami Herald	<a href="http://www.miamiherald.com/2010/07/02/1712593/why-so-few-skimmers-at-the-oil.html">http://www.miamiherald.com/2010/07/02/1712593/why-so-few-skimmers-at-the-oil.html</a>
BP's oil spill tally surpasses \$3 billion	Purva Patel	7.5.10	H Chron	<a href="http://www.chron.com/business/energy/article/BP-s-oil-spill-tally-surpasses-3-billion-1712101.php">http://www.chron.com/business/energy/article/BP-s-oil-spill-tally-surpasses-3-billion-1712101.php</a>
BP likely to postpone drilling in Alaskan field	Cassandra Sweet	7.7.10	WSJ	<a href="http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703636404575353521656512344.html">http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703636404575353521656512344.html</a>
BP: Gulf oil spill could be stopped	Jessica Durando	7.8.10	USA Today	<a href="http://content.usatoday.com/communities/greenhouse/post/2010/07/bp-gulf-oil-spill-1/1">http://content.usatoday.com/communities/greenhouse/post/2010/07/bp-gulf-oil-spill-1/1</a>



this month				
La. Officials says BP will cut payments to 40,000	Janet McConnaughey	7.10.10	H Chron	<a href="http://www.chron.com/business/energy/article/La-official-says-BP-will-cut-payments-to-40-000-1696345.php">http://www.chron.com/business/energy/article/La-official-says-BP-will-cut-payments-to-40-000-1696345.php</a>
BP is said to explore asset sale	Michael J. de la Merced	7.12.10	NY Times	<a href="http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/12/business/global/12bp.html">http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/12/business/global/12bp.html</a>
BP installs bigger cap on oil spill	Giles Whittell	7.13.10	London Times	<a href="http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/environment/article2641240.ece">http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/environment/article2641240.ece</a>
BP says oil has stopped gushing from top of well; cap test continues	Michael Winter	7.14.10	USA Today	<a href="http://content.usatoday.com/communities/ondeadline/post/2010/07/bp-get-ok-to-pressure-test-new-cap-to-stop-gulf-oil-spill/1">http://content.usatoday.com/communities/ondeadline/post/2010/07/bp-get-ok-to-pressure-test-new-cap-to-stop-gulf-oil-spill/1</a>
BP caps its leaking well, stopping the oil after 86 days	Campbell Robertson, Henry Fountain	7.15.10	NY Times	<a href="http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/16/us/16spill.html">http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/16/us/16spill.html</a>
Oil spill halts, for now, as BP tests out new cap	Susan Daker and Russell Gold	7.15.10	WSJ	<a href="http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704682604575368851204817616.html">http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704682604575368851204817616.html</a>

### **Press Releases**

<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Website</u>
BP Offers Full Support to Transocean After Drilling Fire Rig	4.21.10	<a href="http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7061458">http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7061458</a>
BP Initiates Response to Gulf of Mexico Oil Spill	4.22.10	<a href="http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7061490">http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7061490</a>

BP Offers Sympathy to the families of those lost in the US oil rig fire	4.24.10	<a href="http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7061514">http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7061514</a>
BP forges ahead with Gulf of Mexico oil spill response	4.25.10	<a href="http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7061518">http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7061518</a>
BP Gulf of Mexico spill response accelerating	4.26.10	<a href="http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7061537">http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7061537</a>
BP pledges full support for Deepwater Horizon probes	4.28.10	<a href="http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7061626">http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7061626</a>
BP MC252 Gulf of Mexico response continues to escalate on and below surface	4.29.10	<a href="http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7061663">http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7061663</a>
BP steps up shoreline protection plans on US Gulf Coast	4.30.10	<a href="http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7061565">http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7061565</a>
BP onshore preparations for Gulf Coast oil spill	4.30.10	<a href="http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7061712">http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7061712</a>
Hayward applauds President's statement	5.2.10	<a href="http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7061751">http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7061751</a>
Work begins to drill relief well to stop oil spill	5.4.10	<a href="http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7061778">http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7061778</a>
Update on Gulf of Mexico oil spill response - 5 May	5.5.10	<a href="http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7061856">http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7061856</a>
Update on Gulf of Mexico oil spill response - 6 May	5.6.10	<a href="http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7061866">http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7061866</a>
Update on Gulf of Mexico oil spill response - 7 May	5.7.10	<a href="http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7061907">http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7061907</a>
Update on Gulf of Mexico oil spill response - 10 May	5.10.10	<a href="http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7061942">http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7061942</a>
Update on Gulf of Mexico	5.13.10	<a href="http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012">http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012</a>

oil spill response - 13 May		968&contentId=7062086
Hayward comments on President Obama's statement - 14 May	5.14.10	<a href="http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062134">http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062134</a>
Update on Gulf of Mexico oil spill response - 17 May	5.17.10	<a href="http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062147">http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062147</a>
BP announces tourism grants to four Gulf States - 17 May	5.17.10	<a href="http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062187">http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062187</a>
Update on Gulf of Mexico oil spill response - 18 May	5.18.10	<a href="http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062184">http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062184</a>
Update on Gulf of Mexico oil spill response - 20 May	5.20.10	<a href="http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062184">http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062184</a>
BP launches live webcam of riser flow	5.21.10	<a href="http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062358">http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062358</a>
BP reiterates oil spill response transparency	5.21.10	<a href="http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062328">http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062328</a>
Update on Gulf of Mexico oil spill response - 24 May	5.24.10	<a href="http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062348">http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062348</a>
BP pledges \$500 million for independent research into impact of spill on marine environment	5.24.10	<a href="http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062283">http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062283</a>
BP briefs US government on initial perspectives of Deepwater Horizon investigation	5.25.10	<a href="http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062370">http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062370</a>
Update on Gulf of Mexico oil spill response - 25 May	5.25.10	<a href="http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062374">http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062374</a>
Update regarding ROV monitoring of "Top Kill" procedure	5.25.10	<a href="http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062375">http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062375</a>
BP announces launch of	5.25.10	<a href="http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062375">http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062375</a>

state-specific response web sites		968&contentId=7062407
Update on Gulf of Mexico oil spill response - 26 May	5.26.10	<a href="http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062443">http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062443</a>
BP to appoint independent mediator to ensure timely, fair claims process	5.26.10	<a href="http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062409">http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062409</a>
Update on Gulf of Mexico oil spill response - 27 May	5.27.10	<a href="http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062448">http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062448</a>
Update on Gulf of Mexico oil spill response - 28 May	5.28.10	<a href="http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062449">http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062449</a>
Update on Gulf of Mexico oil spill response - 29 May	5.29.10	<a href="http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062470">http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062470</a>
BP sets out enhancement to LMRP containment strategy to keep oil out of Gulf - 31 May	5.31.10	<a href="http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062487">http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062487</a>
Update on Gulf of Mexico oil spill response - 1 June	6.1.10	<a href="http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062524">http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062524</a>
BP agrees to fund construction of six sections of Louisiana barrier islands	6.2.10	<a href="http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062526">http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062526</a>
BP establishes \$360 million escrow account to immediately fund approved Louisiana barrier	6.3.10	<a href="http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062613">http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062613</a>
Chairman and CEO give assurance that BP will meet its obligations in Gulf of Mexico	6.4.10	<a href="http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062638">http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062638</a>
LMRP containment operation deployed	6.4.10	<a href="http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062653">http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062653</a>

BP to pay a second month of loss of income claims	6.4.10	<a href="http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062660">http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062660</a>
Update on Gulf of Mexico oil spill response - 7 June	6.7.10	<a href="http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062670">http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062670</a>
BP announces first payment on barrier islands project for state of Louisiana	6.7.10	<a href="http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062727">http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062727</a>
BP to donate net revenue from MC252 well leak to protect and rehabilitate wildlife in Gulf	6.8.10	<a href="http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062799">http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062799</a>
Update on Gulf of Mexico oil spill response - 10 June	6.10.10	<a href="http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062828">http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062828</a>
BP announces second block grant on \$25 million to the state of Florida	6.10.10	<a href="http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062867">http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062867</a>
BP announces second block grant on \$25 million to the state of Alabama	6.10.10	<a href="http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062868">http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062868</a>
BP announces second block grant of \$25 million to the state of Mississippi	6.10.10	<a href="http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062869">http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062869</a>
Update on Gulf of Mexico oil spill response - 14 June	6.14.10	<a href="http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062886">http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062886</a>
BP announces accelerated payments of commercial large loss claims	6.15.10	<a href="http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062934">http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062934</a>
Three Gulf research institutions to receive first round of \$500 million funding	6.15.10	<a href="http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062936">http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062936</a>
Additional oil and gas containment system begins operation	6.16.10	<a href="http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062965">http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062965</a>

BP establishes \$20 billion claims fund for Deepwater Horizon spill and outlines dividends	6.16.10	<a href="http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062966">http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062966</a>
BP emphasizes that disagreement with other parties will not diminish clean up of spill	6.18.10	<a href="http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062995">http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7062995</a>
BP claim payments exceed \$100 million	6.19.10	<a href="http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7063000">http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7063000</a>
Update on Gulf of Mexico oil spill response - 21 June	6.21.10	<a href="http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7063006">http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7063006</a>
BP to donate net revenue from MC252 well leak to protect and rehabilitate wildlife in Gulf	6.22.10	<a href="http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7063047">http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7063047</a>
BP announces new Gulf coast restoration organization	6.23.10	<a href="http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7063068">http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7063068</a>
Suspension of LMRP cap containment operations	6.23.10	<a href="http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7063083">http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7063083</a>
Update on LMRP cap containment operations	6.23.10	<a href="http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7063089">http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7063089</a>
Update on Gulf of Mexico oil spill response - 25 June	6.25.10	<a href="http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7063132">http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7063132</a>
Update on Gulf of Mexico oil spill - 28 June	6.28.10	<a href="http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7063171">http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7063171</a>
Update on Gulf of Mexico oil spill - 5 July	7.5.10	<a href="http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7063432">http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7063432</a>
Update on improvements to vessels of opportunity program	7.6.10	<a href="http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7063470">http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7063470</a>
National incident	7.10.10	<a href="http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7063470">http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7063470</a>

commander approves plan to replace MC252 well cap		968&contentId=7063603
Sealing cap installation update	7.11.10	<a href="http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7063607">http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7063607</a>
Update on Gulf of Mexico oil spill	7.12.10	<a href="http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7063618">http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7063618</a>
Capping stack installed on MC252 well	7.12.10	<a href="http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7063637">http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7063637</a>
Further analysis to be carried out before integrity test commences on MC252 well	7.13.10	<a href="http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7063689">http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7063689</a>
Well integrity test commences on MC252 well	7.15.10	<a href="http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7063770">http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&amp;contentId=7063770</a>