The 'crisis' frame in Australian newspaper reports in 2005

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ABSTRACT: This paper examines how the 'crisis' frame was used to report actual events such as areas of government mismanagement of health, water supply, and energy in Australian newspaper headlines and lead paragraphs in 2005. The crisis frame was also linked to predicted crises such as shortages of skilled workers and infrastructure. A search of the Factiva database of Australian newspapers located 3,145 articles that contained the word 'crisis' in the headline and/or lead paragraph. The crisis label was more frequently applied to government than to corporate and business areas of responsibility. The paper includes discussion of the benefits of the press as an early warning system for crisis, while urging caution because of the ability of the press to use frames selectively to create particular constructions of news events.

In the early years of the twenty-first century 'crisis' is a commonly used term in the media. Many events, from September 11, 2001 to Hurricane Katrina to the Asian Tsunami to Global Warming, have precipitated its use. Even though some scepticism was engendered by the much-predicted 'Y2K Computer Crisis' that did not eventuate, the September 11, 2001 bombing of the World Trade Center in New York and the 'War on Terror' reinforced the need for a high level of crisis awareness and response. Much has been written about crisis in relation to business and an industry has developed around crisis and

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risk assessment, and crisis prevention and management in business and public relations.

Pearson & Clair (1988) define an organisational crisis as 'a low-probability, high-impact event that threatens the viability of the organisation and is characterised by ambiguity of cause, effect, and means of resolution, as well as by a belief that decisions must be made swiftly' (p. 2). Campbell (1999, p. 11) defines crisis similarly as 'an adverse incident, or series of events, that has the potential to seriously damage an organisation's employees, operations, business and reputation'. Campbell's and Pearson & Clair's definitions can be applied to government entities, as well as to corporations and businesses.

In the business sphere, Coleman (2004, p. 3) quotes both Mitroff, Puchant, and Shrivastava (1989) and the Institute for Crisis Management (ICM) (2005) as defining a crisis as 'any problem or disruption which triggers negative stakeholder reactions and results in extensive public scrutiny'. From this definition, Coleman reported that Mitroff et al. estimated that large American companies faced such events on average ten times a year and ICM found them occurring at a steady rate in the business sector of 7,000 per year in the 1990s. Similarly, Hensgen, Desouza, and Kraft named some of the forms taken by organisational crises as 'hostile take-overs, product tampering, copyright infringement, security breaches, malicious rumours, national disaster, workplace bombing, or destruction, terrorist attacks, sexual harassments, and counterfeiting' (2003, p. 68).

Some tracking of the prevalence of crisis reports and of the kinds of events that precipitate them can be found. In the United States, the Institute for Crisis Management publishes on its website an *Annual Crisis Report* tracking sixteen broad crisis categories: Catastrophes, Environmental Crises, Class Action Lawsuits, Consumerism Actions, Defects and Recalls, Discrimination, Executive Dismissal, Financial Damage, Hostile Takeovers, Labour Disputes, Mismanagement, Sexual Harassment, Whistleblowing, White-Collar Crime, Workplace Violence, and Casualty Accidents. According to the Institute, in 2004 the two major origins of business crises were (Mis-) Management 53% and Action by Employees 28% (Institute for Crisis Management, 2005). Many of these events occur in government entities but we found no similar listings of crises in the public sector.

In Australia, Coleman (2004) reported a ten-year study into the pattern and consequences of crises experienced by corporate Australia. In searches of on-line databases of newspaper publishers Fairfax and News Limited, Coleman found reports of 55 crises between 1992 and 2001 in relation to corporate entities in the following areas: product defect or contamination, operational failure, financial crises (including trading losses and unwanted takeovers), organisational crises (including labour disputes and whistle blowing), regulatory and legal crises (including action by government authorities), and threat and extortion (including blockades).

Hensgen et al. (2003) emphasise that successful crisis management depends upon early recognition of signals of impending crisis that lead to modifications in behaviour to change the situation and go on to state that to omit crisis preparedness could be 'construed as criminal' (p. 68). In the aftermath of future catastrophic crises, corporations and governments might indeed be so judged if a crisis is something that they could reasonably be expected to be aware of and did not plan to avoid. When something is described as a crisis, it is an unwise politician, public official, or captain of industry or commerce who considers that it is wise to do nothing. In a now risk-averse society, where every well-managed organisation has a crisis management plan, a crisis label or prediction draws attention to the need for action.

In view of the emphasis on the importance of risk evaluation and crisis awareness in both government and business sectors, it would be expected that the press would be alert in reporting crises in both sectors and that they would be equally as vigilant in presenting warning about impending crises in fields of government as well as business.

A 'crisis' for this study is defined as 'an event or issue or warning or prediction of an event or issue that has the potential to or is causing significant disruption to the organisation's operations such that immediate action is required'.

This paper examines how the Australian press used the word 'crisis' in headlines and lead paragraphs during 2005. It tracks what events the press labelled as crises, and what events the press predicted might soon become crises.

Agenda-setting and framing
The concepts of agenda setting and framing are useful in examining

the role of newspapers in creating a focus for change. The press has an acknowledged role in reporting news, in reporting what happens, but the role of the press as described in agenda setting (McCombs & Shaw, 1993) and framing (Scheufele, 2000; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007) goes beyond that to a role as a manipulator of attention. It is through headlines and lead paragraphs that the press captures our attention, and through the process of framing that it links events and situations with other concepts and connections. Attaching the word 'crisis' to an event adds to its news value, creates attention, and can be a call to action. Investigating situations that the media predicts will be crises in the future may cement the role of the press in influencing future action, and it may in some sense demonstrate the benefits of a press that has become an early warning system of the inadequate systems of governance and management and control over preventable crises to which it draws attention.

The agenda-setting function of the media has the effect of persuading the public that the issues regarded by newspapers as most important should also be high on its agenda and require preventive/corrective action by an appropriate agency. This paper examines the issues that the media have established as a present crisis or as being at the point when politicians, the public, and business leaders ought to be paying attention. As McCombs and Shaw comment, 'The attributes of an issue emphasized in the news coverage can... directly influence the direction of public opinion' (1993, p. 63). This idea is summarised in McCombs's commonly quoted 'The media may not only tell us what to think about, they may also may tell us how and what to think about it, and perhaps even what to do about it' (McCombs, 1997, quoted in Griffin, 2006, p. 403).

Relating these views to the current research means that putting issues in headlines or first paragraphs of newspapers would make them salient. So the issues placed frequently in headlines would stand out more and be more accessible in individuals' memories. Attaching the label 'crisis' to an event would increase its perceived importance.

Scheufele (2000) contends that agenda-setting works by drawing attention to issues, but that framing is a different process in which journalists are key: 'there are various ways of looking at, and depicting events in news media that depend on the framework employed by the journalists' (p. 301). Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007) suggest that, at a macrolevel, framing is the art of establishing ideas that people already have and linking new ideas to them 'to present information in a way

that resonates with existing underlying schemas among their audience' (p. 12). The very word 'crisis' is an ideal framing word because it implies that whatever is tied to it becomes something that should be acted upon. Blame ensues if the warning about a crisis is not heeded. Using the crisis frame is a way in which the press influences public opinion and influences politicians and business managers to act.

In describing the connection between mass media and reality, Scherer, Arnold, and Schluetz (2005) quote Kepplinger's (1990) identification of three perspectives on the role of the media: Realism, Expressionism, and Constructivisism. Realism is a perspective that sees the media's task as reporting objective reality and led to studies explaining any apparent bias in terms of the political orientation of the newsroom. An Expressionist perspective also assumes an objective reality, but sees the media's role not so much as presenting facts but as interpreting and giving social meaning to what is reported. From the Constructivist perspective, reality is out of our reach and what we call reality is a product of social construction in which the media is a powerful force. Newspapers represent what their reporters and subeditors construct as meaning. Also from a Constructionist viewpoint, Scheufele (2000, p. 302) quotes Edelman (1993): 'the social world is ... a kaleidoscope of potential realities, any of which can be readily evoked by altering the way in which observations are framed and categorized (p. 232)', highlighting that the media's framing of particular aspects of those potential realities influences the meanings available to its audience.

Newspapers can be viewed from all of these perspectives, but in selecting some events over others for publication it is recognised that they *do* construct and present a particular view of what is important in the world.

From a Habermas-inspired sociopolitical theory perspective, the use of the label 'crisis' about an event or situation has the potential to allow followers, voters, or supporters to withdraw support and loyalty from key decision-makers and replace it with questioning of the current social structure in institutions (Pearson & Clair, 1998), so, potentially, the labelling of an event as a crisis by the press could have destabilising business and/or political effects.

2005 in Australia
In a year in which 52 people were killed in attacks on London's Underground and bus network, suicide bombers' explosions killed 22

people in Bali, immigrants rioted in Paris, bird flu claimed Indonesia's first victim, and earthquakes and hurricanes wrought havoc in Asia and the Americas, Australia experienced its usual share of natural disasters in the form of bushfires, floods, and drought. In Sydney and Melbourne, 16 men suspected of planning a terrorist act on a nuclear reactor in Sydney were arrested. Fuel prices soared. Thousands of people marched in the streets over the Australian Government's new industrial relations laws and to raise awareness about indigenous issues. The wrongful detention of Cornelia Rau and the wrongful deportation of Vivian Solon highlighted deficiencies in Immigration Department procedures, prompting an apology from the Prime Minister (ABC News Online, 2005). Prisoners in Tasmania negotiated the end of a 41-hour siege and released hostages in exchange for 15 pizzas, a major company director was convicted of fraud and corruption, the federal government was criticised for its handling of immigration and pension issues, a report into Queensland's public hospitals recommended that overseas doctor Jayant Patel, appointed because of a doctor shortage, be charged with manslaughter over the deaths of patients he treated. At the end of the year on Sydney's Cronulla Beach, people of Middle Eastern appearance became targets of violence in gang riots. In turn, ethnic gangs retaliated with attacks on whites (theage.com.au, 2005).

Interestingly, in the media summaries from which this description of 2005 news was compiled, only one issue, 'a major company director was convicted of fraud', relates directly to business. All others were either environmental or social and political happenings and mostly linked to government areas of responsibility.

Research Questions

On the basis of the research and opinion cited above, a set of research questions was developed to guide the project reported on below.

1. What kinds of current events did the press label most frequently as 'crises' in Australia in 2005?

2. To which situations did the press draw attention by labelling them as potential or predicted crises?

3. What proportion of events, situations, and topics framed as 'crisis' were linked with government as compared with those linked with business?

4. Of the actual events or predicted events, what proportion were seen to be Australia-wide problems and what proportion were associated with particular states?

Method

In this research, the headline and the first paragraph of retrieved articles constitute the unit of analysis for mentions of crisis. These were chosen because, in the 'inverted pyramid' style usually employed by newspaper writers and editors, the most significant part of the article comes in the first few lines and the headline itself is designed to draw attention and to identify 'an aspect of the story that is interesting to the consumer' (Andrew, 2007, p. 28).

The Factiva newspaper database set of major Australian and New Zealand newspapers was searched from January 1, 2005 to December 31, 2005 for the term 'crisis' in the headline and lead paragraph. The set was chosen because it provided a way to access a representative range of major newspapers simultaneously. This set included *Australian Financial Review, Business Review Weekly, Canberra Times, Daily Telegraph* (Sydney), *Dominion Post* (New Zealand), *Dow Jones Australia and New Zealand Report Newswire, Hobart Mercury, National Business Review* (New Zealand), *New Zealand Herald, Sunday Mail* (South Australia), *Sunday Mail* (Queensland), *Sunday Age* (Melbourne), *The Advertiser* (Adelaide), *The Age* (Melbourne), *The Australian, The Sydney Morning Herald, The Courier-Mail* (Brisbane), *The Australian, The Australian Magazine,* and *The West Australian.*

A search for the word 'crisis' in the headline and lead paragraph captured a set of 3,145 articles. Examining first a small sample of articles, we found it possible to classify most of them from the headlines and first paragraphs. Reading the whole article did not improve classification.

We used a sample of the first 100 articles to decide the rules by which we would choose the articles to be included in the study. We included only those articles that fitted the definition of crisis given above. This included both actual and predicted events. We did not restrict our search to corporate events, as we had observed from reading samples of the retrievals that governments were also associated with the use of the term 'crisis' and so in our definition we used the term 'organisation' to include both government and business.

We found that, although the Factiva database of 21 Australian and New Zealand newspapers included three New Zealand sources and one that covered both Australia and New Zealand, there were very few references to the word 'crisis' in the New Zealand papers. Therefore, in coding, we restricted analysis to stories in the Australian press. As the Australian press provides accounts of world news and consequently crisis events and predictions of crisis from countries other than Australia, we included stories about events in other parts of the world only if the story referred in some way to Australia. In coding, we discarded those articles that we were not able to categorise from the headline or first paragraph, or because they were unclear or diffuse, or were a repetition of the same story on an issue within 24 hours without a new angle being taken.

Table 1: Crisis coding categories

Category #	Label	Definition
1	Catastrophes	Total loss of production
2	Class Action Lawsuits	People taking legal action as a group
3	Cost of Litigation & Insurance	
4	Consumer Actions	Complaints, boycotts
5	Defects and Recalls	Voluntary or enforced
6	Discrimination (Racial)	
7	Discrimination (Sexual)	
8	Discrimination (Other)	Age , etc.
9	Energy	Interruption to supply
10	Environmental Issues	Disputes over the environment
11	Environmental Disasters	Cyclones, floods
12	Executive Dismissal	'Golden handshake', executive sacking, jailing
13	Extortion & Criminal Acts against Business	
14	Financial Damage	Sharemarket effects on prices, bankruptcy, restructuring
15	Health	Food poisoning, flu epidemic
16	Hostile Takeovers	Takeovers, layoffs
17	Labour Disputes	Disputes, strikes, lockouts
18	Law & Order	Criminal activity that significantly disrupts business, riots
19	Mismanagement (Company)	
20	Mismanagement (Government)	

21	Mismanagement Government (Energy)	
22	Mismanagement Government (Health)	
23	Mismanagement Government (Infra-structure)	
24	Mismanagement Government (Water)	
25	Population	Insufficient preparation for population changes, birthrate, superannuation and pension crises
26	Regulations: Compliance Failure	Not reporting accidents, organisations breaking the law
27	Sexual Harassment	
28	Skills	Skills shortage, real or predicted
29	Trade Disputes	
30	Water	Shortages
31	Whistleblowing	Crisis warning by personnel
32	White Collar Crime	Crisis caused by illegal activity of workers or management
33	Workplace Violence	Disrupting business
34	Workplace Bullying	Reputation and morale
35	Workplace Accidents	Casualty accidents that disrupt business
36	Crisis Recovery & Management (Success)	
37	Crisis Recovery & Management (Failure)	
38	Terrorism against Governments	Preparing for and responding to

Based on crisis categories described by the Institute for Crisis Management (2005) and Coleman (2004) and the results of our coding of the initial sample of Australian data, we formulated a list of 38 crisis coding categories (Table 1). Using this list of categories, each author separately coded the first hundred of the 3,145 articles into one of the 38 categories and afterwards compared the coding with the other author. After discussion, we clarified our descriptions of each category.

We engaged two communication higher degree students and provided them with the set of rules (Appendix 1) and coding sheets, which contained the label of the category and the definition. The coders listed separately items that were either uncategorisable because they were diffuse or unclear, repeats, or did not fit our definition of crisis.

They then placed the remaining items in either the actual crisis event column or the prediction of crisis column. After they had coded their first hundred items, we compared notes with them and discussed and refined our descriptions of the categories. The coders independently then coded all 3,145 items from the beginning, stopping each 100 items to compare their codings and, upon reaching agreement, to adjust their coding sheets. Because of the lengthy training, they were able to reach agreement on over 90% of the items and, after consultation, on 100% of the items.

Restrictions on coding noted above and coders' removal of uncategorisable items and repeats reduced the final sample after coding from 3,145 to 1,159.

Results

The coders classified 1,159 of the mentions of the word 'crisis' into 820 actual crisis event reports and 339 that predicted crisis. Actual crisis events were found in 30 of the 38 categories, as shown in Table 2, and prediction of crisis events was found in 26 of the 38 categories, as shown in Table 3. Results showed that the word 'crisis' was linked most frequently with areas that were considered to be related to government. In particular, the word 'crisis' was linked with government mismanagement of those areas.

Discussion

1. What kinds of current events did the press label most frequently as 'crises' in Australia in 2005?

Table 2: Actual crisis events by percentage

Category #	Crisis	Number of mentions	%
22	Mismanagement Government (Health)	168	20.5
20	Mismanagement Government	118	14.4
28	Skills	102	12.4
14	Financial Damage	82	10.0
23	Mismanagement Government (Infra-Structure)	78	9.5
30	Water	36	4.4

24	Mismanagement Government (Water)	36	4.4
35	Workplace Accidents	35	4.3
21	Mismanagement Government (Energy)	29	3.5
15	Health	21	2.6
17	Labour Disputes	20	2.4
19	Mismanagement Company	15	1.8
9	Energy	11	1.3
10	Environmental Issues	11	1.3
18	Law & Order	9	1.1
3	Cost of Litigation & Insurance	8	1.0
38	Terrorism against Governments	7	0.9
32	White Collar Crime	7	0.9
5	Defects and Recalls	5	0.6
36	Crisis Recovery & Management (Success)	3	0.4
11	Environmental Disasters	3	0.4
12	Executive	3	0.4
25	Population	2	0.2
31	Whistleblowing	2	0.2
13	Extortion	2	0.2
26	Regulations: Compliance Failure	2	0.2
34	Workplace Bullying	2	0.2
4	Consumerism Actions	1	0.1
29	Trade Disputes	1	0.1
7	Discrimination Sexual	1	0.1
16	Hostile Takeovers	0	0.0
1	Catastrophes	0	0.0
2	Class Action Lawsuits	0	0.0
6	Discrimination Racial	0	0.0
8	Discrimination Other	0	0.0
27	Sexual Harassment	0	0.0
33	Workplace Violence	0	0.0
37	Crisis Recovery And Management (Failure)	0	0.0
		820	

The 'crisis' frame in Australian newspaper reports in 2005

As shown in Table 2, Government Mismanagement, in particular government mismanagement of health, infrastructure, water supply, and energy was considered to be at crisis levels in Australia in 2005 and accounted for 41.3% of mentions of crises. Government Mismanagement of Health accounted for 20.5% of cases, general Government Mismanagement accounted for a further 14.4% of cases, Government Mismanagement of Infrastructure accounted for 9.5%, Government Mismanagement of Water accounted for 4.4% and Government Mismanagement of Energy accounted for 3.5% of cases. In contrast, Labour Disputes at 2.4% and Law and Order at 1.1%, and mentions of crisis in relation to preparing for or responding to Terrorism at 0.9% accounted for only a few mentions of crisis.

Although corporate crises were not a large percentage of cases when compared to crises in government areas of responsibility, the press made some use of the term 'crisis' in association with business crises. By summing Financial Damage (82 Cases), Workplace Accidents (35 Cases), Labour Disputes (20 Cases), Company Mismanagement (15 Cases), Costs of Litigation and Insurance (8 Cases), White Collar Crime (7 Cases), Defects and Recalls (5 Cases), Executive Sacking or Jailing and 'Golden Handshakes' (3 Cases), Whistle-Blowing (2 Cases), Extortion (2 Cases), Compliance Failure (in relation to regulations) (2 Cases), Workplace Bullying (2 Cases), Consumer Action (1 Case), and Sexual Discrimination (1 case), the total of 185 cases that related to the corporate area in a single year comprised 22% of total crises.

2. To which situations did the press draw attention by labelling them as potential crises?

Table 3: Crisis predictions

Category #	Crisis	Number of mentions	%
28	Skills	61	17.99
14	Financial Damage	46	13.57
23	Mismanagement Government (Infra Structure)	40	11.80
15	Health	30	8.85
22	Mismanagement Government (Health)	30	8.85
9	Energy	19	5.60
25	Population	17	5.01

20	Mismanagement Government	15	4.42
10	Environmental Issues	12	3.54
30	Water	12	3.54
17	Labour Disputes	8	2.36
24	Mismanagement Government (Water)	7	2.06
3	Costs of Litigation & Insurance	6	1.77
21	Mismanagement Government (Energy)	6	1.77
18	Law & Order	5	1.47
36	Crisis Recovery & Management (Success)	4	1.18
38	Terrorism against Governments	4	1.18
4	Consumerism Actions	3	0.88
19	Mismanagement Company	3	0.88
31	Whistleblowing	3	0.88
11	Environmental Disasters	2	0.59
29	Trade Disputes	2	0.59
13	Extortion	1	0.29
16	Hostile Takeovers	1	0.29
26	Regulations: Compliance Failure	1	0.29
32	White Collar Crime	1	0.29
1	Catastrophes	0	0.00
2	Class Action Lawsuits	0	0.00
5	Defects And Recalls	0	0.00
6	Discrimination (Racial)	0	0.00
7	Discrimination (Sexual)	0	0.00
8	Discrimination (Other)	0	0.00
27	Sexual Harassment	0	0.00
33	Workplace Violence	0	0.00
34	Workplace Bullying	0	0.00
35	Workplace Accidents	0	0.00
37	Crisis Recovery & Management (Failure)	0	0.00
12	Executive	0	0.00
		339	0

The 'crisis' frame in Australian newspaper reports in 2005

Table 3 lists prediction of crises in order of magnitude of occurrence and shows that the most predicted crisis was that of a shortage of skilled workers (18% of cases), followed by predictions of financial damage as a result of share market effects on prices, bankruptcy, or restructuring (13.6 %), and disease issues such as food poisoning or avian influenza (8.9 %). There were also predictions of government mismanagement of infrastructure (11%) and of health (8.9 %), water (2%), and energy (1.8 %) as approaching crisis levels. Concerns were raised in the press about energy issues, including potential disruptions to energy supply, along with concerns about population in terms of a declining birthrate and an aging population and problems resulting from these issues. Interestingly, there was an awareness of terrorism against governments, but because we restricted our analysis to reports of what had happened in Australia, there were few reports about actual terrorism that were considered to be a crisis issue during 2005.

3. What proportion of events, situations, and topics framed as 'crisis' were linked with government as compared with those linked with business?

Australian newspapers reported high levels of actual crises as due to government action or inaction and described solutions to most crises as the responsibility of government. For example, 42% of mentions of crisis could be categorised as 'government mismanagement', but only 1.8% of the events described by newspapers as crises could be categorised as directly due to 'private company mismanagement', although share market effects on prices, bankruptcy, and restructuring were associated with crises concerned with financial damage a further 10% of the time, and some of the other crisis events such as defects and recalls, whistleblowing, failure to comply with regulations, and workplace bullying may have been due to mismanagement, although it was not so called.

4. Of the actual or predicted events, what proportion were seen to be Australia-wide problems and what proportion were associated with particular states?

We did a further analysis of the issues involved in the crisis events (Table 2) and the prediction and awareness of crisis categories (Table 3), and in each case noted whether the issue was regarded as Australia-wide or relating to a specific state.

Australia-wide events or situations that were already at crisis level and were labelled so by the press comprised 235 out of 758, or a little less than one-third, where it was possible to identify whether the crisis was Australia-wide or related to a particular state. States were linked with crisis events in the following order: New South Wales (149 or 20%), Queensland (113 or 15%), South Australia (72 or 10%), Western Australia (68 or 9%), Victoria (52 or 7%), Tasmania (53 or 7%), Australian Capital Territory (16 or 2%).

Perhaps due to the extensive media attention given to the case of immigrant doctor Jayant Patel being likely to be charged with a number of cases of manslaughter in Queensland, issues related to health, hospitals, and shortage of medical staff and doctors, and ambulances were highest in relation to Queensland, and perhaps because of the drought, water was associated at the same level Australia-wide and in the states of New South Wales and Queensland.

Half the crisis issues predicted were Australia-wide (149 cases out of a total of 293). In the following, each state is listed with the number of mentions and percentages of the total of potential crisis situations in brackets: South Australia (30 or 10%), Queensland (26 or 9%), Western Australia (24 or 8%), New South Wales (23 or 8%), Tasmania (22 or 7%), Victoria (19 or 6%), and Australian Capital Territory (5 or 2%).

Conclusion

Government mismanagement of health was the most frequently reported crisis event in Australia in 2005, followed by government mismanagement generally. Predictions of crises highlighting the areas of shortages of skilled workers and financial damage as a result of share market effects on prices, bankruptcy, or restructuring also occurred so that, while predictions of crisis centre on government responsibility in management, some mentions of potential crisis from the private sector do occur.

Earlier studies of corporate crises by the Institute for Crisis Management (2005) and Coleman (2004) had used the method of looking for reports of issues and then analysing them to discern whether or not they would warrant the label of 'corporate crisis'. The Institute for Crisis Management found that, in the United States, business crises are the result of Management (53%) and Employees (28%). Coleman had found 55 corporate crises when he examined the Australian situation between 1992 and 2001.

However, examining the Australian press's linking of the word 'crisis' with events during 2005 shows that the press labels business affairs as being in crisis less than government, instead linking the label 'crisis' with mismanagement in the Australian Government sector, making it appear to be at crisis levels higher than in the business sector. The business crisis literature led us to expect higher levels of business crisis and we had not expected that crisis would be linked so much with government.

We suggest that it may be that governments report more information more freely and openly than do private businesses, or that private businesses may be perceived to be more likely to sue newspapers over the damage that the label of 'crisis' attached to their businesses might cause. In addition, we want to explore the idea that, in Australia, it is culturally appropriate to blame the government or to link crisis responsibility with governments by conducting a similar study with newspapers from other English speaking countries to discover whether there are similar connections made between crisis and government.

The press in Australia use the 'crisis' frame frequently. We did not find the same levels of use of the term in New Zealand. In order to discover whether the crisis frame is applied in similar ways in other countries, we will continue our investigations with newspapers from other English speaking countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

This study provides, via press reports, a view of present crisis situations and predictions of potential crisis events for which governments are largely seen as responsible, if not in causing the problem, then in leaving any action until the situation has become a crisis.

This study shows that, in 2005, government mismanagement of health was the leading category of those events labelled as at crisis levels by the Australian press. Across the country, medical skills were in short supply. Press attention in the form of the 'crisis' label drew attention to the situation where insufficient medical staff had been trained and to the huge personal costs to individuals unable to gain access to timely and qualified health care. These were linked to government mismanagement of the level of medical training and recruitment.

The most predicted crisis was a nation-wide shortage of skilled workers and professionals. It was already judged a serious problem in that it was rated as a major crisis situation (12.4%), but was reported

as a predicted crisis even more (18%). We intend to continue our investigation of this topic with 2006 data to discern whether the press's role in predicting crisis is indeed confirmed by the number of actual crises that newspapers link with crisis in fields where they had predicted them in the earlier year.

The method of analysis used in this paper provides a way that national and regional governments and large and small businesses can compare the crisis-linked events and predicted crisis events in the press with the awareness that exists in their own organisations. In cases of predicted crises, systems of prevention can be set in place.

The press provides data that are simple and readily understood. While the method of monitoring press coverage does not provide elaboration of the complexities of crisis issues that need to be unpacked before solutions are proposed, the method provides an early warning system of crisis awareness for governments and corporations. However, the method does not control for media bias in, for example, an eagerness to use the 'crisis' label to capture attention about crisis in government areas of responsibility and less activity in linking the crisis frame with business. In a social constructionist view, there is no 'objective reality', but the newspapers are important in our constructions of the way the world works and what issues in it are important.

We consider that creating a record of the actual and predicted crises that are presented in the press is of value to both government and corporate sectors of the entire nation, providing that there is awareness of the media's role in agenda-setting, framing, and the construction of a reality that may differ from newspaper to newspaper and from editor to editor. Refinement of this system will allow comparison between years and provide more awareness of likely crisis events that will benefit crisis experts, public relations practitioners, and government and corporate planners who want to stay crisis aware.

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Rules for coding: Appendix 1

Rule 1. A crisis is defined as an event or issue or warning or prediction of an event or issue that has the potential to or is causing significant disruption to an organisation's operations.

Rule 2. After each hundred items, compare codings. If disagreeing on more than one in ten, consult with researchers to redefine codes and ensure that all previous codings follow the new definition by recoding earlier sets. Provide a list of numbers of items not coded because they are judged to be repeats or uncategorisable, because too little data is available in the headline and first paragraph, or because they do not fit the definition of a crisis given above.

Rule 3. A repeat is defined as the same story on an issue within 24 hours (unless a new angle is taken).

Rule 4. This study incorporates only Australian examples. For example, include an article on Fuel Crisis only if Australian issues are mentioned.