ENTERTAINING CRISIS: WHAT 21ST CENTURY CORPORATIONS CAN LEARN FROM THE RHETORIC OF CRISIS IN FILM AND COMPUTER GAMES

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This dissertation has been submitted in partial fulfillment of requirements for an advanced degree at the University of Arizona and is deposited in the University Library to be made available to borrowers under rules of the Library.

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ABSTRACT

This project aims to discover if there is useful overlap between the recommended rhetorical responses to crises as defined by organizational communication specialists and the rhetorical responses frequently portrayed in various forms of mass media entertainment. Specifically, it investigates the potential effectiveness of these mass mediated crisis portrayals and identifies whether the rhetoric of crisis depicted in them could help inform and educate organizational responders to better communicate internally in crisis scenarios. This research may provide a better understanding of how rhetoric in real and fictive contexts works to shape real-world responses to crises.

CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION: CRISIS AND THE DISCOURSE OF CRISIS COMMUNICATION

When someone mentions the word "crisis," most people conjure images of the terrorist events of 9/11, the disaster wrought by the recent earthquake in Japan, the political upheavals in Egypt and Libya, or the British Petroleum (BP) oil spill in the Gulf. When someone says "crisis communication," public addresses and apologies come to mind. But crises and crisis communication are not always public displays by the government or company entities involved. While there is thoughtful and extensive research devoted to organizational rhetorical strategy related to the discussion of public crises, there is a dearth of research on internal crisis communication and the rhetorical strategies deployed to make sense of a crisis among those on the front lines. Internal crisis communication involves what gets said among those individuals and teams—known as responders—within the agencies, organizations, and companies that are either catalyzed or professionally obligated to respond to the event. Additionally, the available training for organizational crisis response is often not sufficient enough to guarantee that organizational responders will be able to make effective decisions in crisis response situations. This dearth of material is quite curious given the fact that, for decades, mass media—both in the journalistic and entertainment arenas—have been consumed with depictions of crisis. It is precisely this cultural obsession with crisis that led me to wonder if mass media depictions of crisis and crisis response—especially those dramatized in

popular films and computer games[1]—could potentially improve crisis-oriented organizational response and recovery training. Perhaps mass media—specifically popular film and computer games—offer representations of crises and crisis response that could improve organizational response and recovery training.

This project aims to discover if there is useful overlap between the recommended rhetorical responses to crises as defined by organizational communication specialists and the rhetorical responses frequently portrayed in various forms of mass media entertainment. Specifically, it investigates the potential effectiveness of these mass mediated crisis portrayals and identifies whether the rhetoric of crisis depicted in them could help inform and educate organizational responders to better communicate internally in crisis scenarios. This research may provide a better understanding of how rhetoric in real and fictive contexts works to shape real-world responses to crises. By examining existing research on crisis communication, the roles of members within organizations in which particular crises are centered, and mass media representations of crises, I propose to answer the following questions:

(1) How do entertainment media, specifically popular films and computer games, function rhetorically vis-à-vis the depiction of crisis?

(2) Is the depiction of crisis in entertainment media usefully instructive for real-world organizational training scenarios?

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[1] In this project, the term *computer game* will include games played on both multipurpose computers (e.g., desktop and laptop computers); mobile computing devices (e.g., smart phones, net books); and gaming consoles such as the Xbox 360 or PlayStation 3.

(3) Can internal organizational response and recovery teams benefit from the depictions of crises in entertainment media?

Project Terminology

For the purposes of this project, I analyze the depiction of crises and crisis communication in popular films and computer games as potential sources for learning about responding to crises. I review these media in terms of whether they have rhetorical and instructional value for organizational response and recovery teams. Thus, certain traditional variables of crisis communication are central to my study of crisis even though some of the artifacts of my project will be non-traditional in nature. Before beginning the analysis, it is important to provide definitions for the terms I will be using in this project, specifically "crisis," "crisis communication," "organizational communication," "crisis rhetoric" or "crisis response," and "mass media."

Differentiation of Issues, Incidents, Accidents, Disasters, and Crises

"Crisis" comes from the Greek word *krisis*. *Krisis* is based on the word *krinein* which means "to judge or decide" (*Communication and Organizational Crisis* 7) and was a medical term used to describe the turning point taken by a disease. For Greek physicians, the turning point, or crisis, was typically preceded by a suspenseful period of time. A current example of this is the diagnosis that radiation and chemotherapy are not working for a cancer patient and that the cancer has spread considerably rather than dissipated or shrunk. The patient has had a period of suspenseful time—treatment—and the diagnosis illustrates how the disease has taken a turning point. Sally J. Ray, professor of communication, has researched the origins of the word and found that *krisis* also came

to be referenced in Greek tragedies as a moment of truth (Ray 96), aligning the definition to the medical term for a disease's turning point.

Currently, popular definitions of "crisis" proliferate in the English language, and "crisis" is perhaps most often invoked in discourse connected to natural disasters and acts of terrorism. Consequently, it can be difficult to identify just what constitutes a crisis, let alone what distinguishes crisis rhetoric from other rhetorical forms that respond to a pressing exigence. The definition of crisis and the associated examples provided in this project are focused on those events an organization is likely to experience and do not include crises that may have personal or community impacts.

While early medical practitioners explained crisis as pathology, Chinese definitions for crisis include both danger and opportunity (Ray 96). Charles F. Hermann, professor of political science, labels crises as "devices of change—change that may be associated with extreme behavior" ("Some Consequences of Crisis" 63), and rightfully so. When humans experience a crisis, there is always a level of change inherent in the response or resolution to the situation; this level of change can sometimes be viewed as an opportunity because the resolution may afford the chance to improve a situation or process permanently in order to avoid similar, future crisis events.

Because popular media depictions range in their focus on issues, incidents, accidents, and disasters, their depictions contribute to how viewers understand crisis. Based on how each of these events can contribute to a crisis situation, it is important to understand the definitional range of "crisis" and how each definition carries with it a set of rhetorical and real-world consequences. The four events—issues, incidents, accidents,

and disasters—are named in a way to denote their potential severity and impact. Further, these events have their own special characteristics as well as those that they share. Referring to Table 1, I have visually displayed characteristics of each event in relation to those events that may impact an organization in a general sense. The table lists the four events, depicts their potential level of impact, provides an organizational example, and identifies the type of response needed by an organization. The table has been designed to help differentiate the events and provide the impact and threat level to guide organizations when deploying responders.

Term	Planned	Avoidable/ Expected	Natural/ Human-made	Impact to Normal Business	Example	Response Required
Issue	No	Yes/Yes	Maybe/Maybe	Low - Low	Temporary power outage briefly disrupts manufacturing/production activities	Isolated. Only select members of a response and recovery team would need to be deployed to mitigate the issue.
Incident	No	Yes/Yes	Maybe/Maybe	Low - Med	Machine malfunction halts manufacturing until repairs can be made	Isolated. Only select members of a response and recovery team would need to be deployed to mitigate the incident.
Accident	No	Yes/Yes	Maybe/Maybe	Med - Hi	Sensitive organizational data is exposed, sharing company secrets and designs	More involved response. Different teams would need to be deployed to mitigate the organizational areas impacted by the accident.
Disaster	No	No/Yes	Yes/No	Med - Hi	Hurricane and associated flooding	Full team response. All teams would need to be deployed to mitigate the disaster.

Table 1: Event Types and Impacts

In the table above, the example of a temporary power outage is provided for the term issue. No organization plans for a power outage to occur; however, they are avoidable if a backup generator is in place and they are expected as past events have shown. An issue is typically avoidable and has small-scale and limited impact, further illustrated by the type and level of response required.

Incidents occur as unplanned but avoidable events that affect a part of the whole. An incident is generally unexpected, self-contained, and has limited impact. The cause of an incident can be natural or man-made and, depending on the cause, the damage incurred can be serious and extreme. Because the incident only affects a part of the whole, damage is typically isolated. The example used above is halted production due to a machine malfunction. Again, the incident is not a planned occurrence but can be easily mitigated if the machinery is checked regularly; undergoes periodic, scheduled maintenance to keep all parts in operating order; and parts are on hand for repairs. The incident can be natural (normal wear and tear of parts) or man-made (misuse by the operator) and the impact varies on the amount of time it takes to resolve the incident. Because incidents are typically isolated events, without widespread impact to an organization, the type and level of response necessary can be considered minimal.

Accidents are also unplanned and avoidable events. Accidents can be viewed as a step up from an incident; they can be either natural or man-made and the damage incurred can be serious and extreme with far-reaching impact and consequences. An accident creates a physical disruption, is systemic, and does not affect basic assumptions or meanings. The example used above is the unintentional leak of company-sensitive

data. This could occur based on human or machine error. An employee may have inadvertently failed to properly encrypt the data, exposing it to a hacker or may have sent it to the wrong recipient, or the security infrastructure could have experienced issues based on power outages or corruption of backup data. Depending on the cause of the accident, one or more issues or incidents can help to create the accident, making it both avoidable (necessary precautions in place) and expected, requiring a greater level of response than an issue or incident.

A separate category includes disasters and, to a certain extent, crises. Disasters occur as unplanned, unavoidable events in nature. Based on the severity of the natural event the damage incurred is usually serious and extreme with far-reaching impact and negative consequences. The example used above demonstrates how a natural disaster—a hurricane—can incur damages from heavy winds and associated flooding. Humans have come to expect these events and can plan accordingly, up to a certain point. When additional events are added to disasters—such as issues, incidents, and accidents—the situation can take on the characteristics of a crisis. Crises occur as unplanned but avoidable events and the damage incurred is also usually serious and extreme with far-reaching impact and negative consequences. Crises involve significant organizational transformation and human action or involvement and require a large-scale response to mitigate the adverse impact and effect to the organization.

Another way to understand the level of impact an event has and when it can be considered a crisis is shown in Table 2.

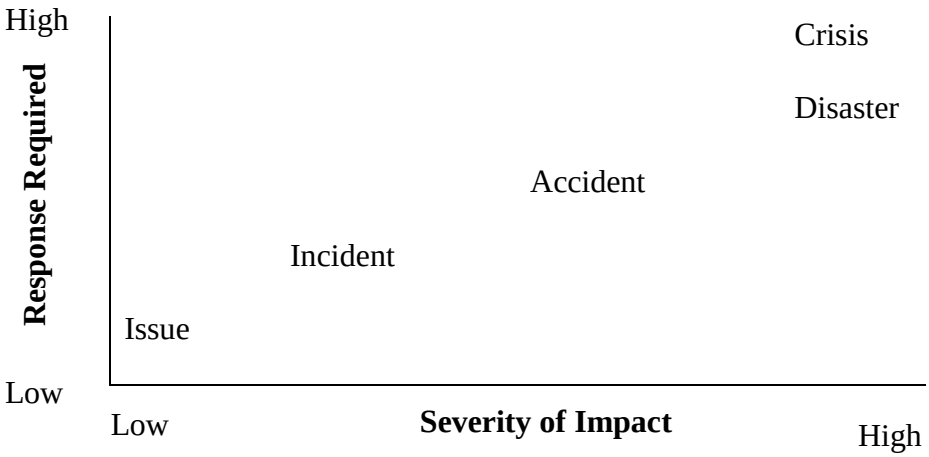

Table 2: Event Response and Impact

Another way to classify these events is by planned vs. unplanned. All of the events in Table 1 are listed as unplanned. Few people set out to plan or create something bad; however, the level of avoidability creates a new category worth noting. Take disasters as the first example. Humans, at this point in time, do not have control over weather. Humans can predict natural disasters based on expensive and advanced equipment, but cannot interfere and stop the event from taking place. But issues, incidents, accidents, and crises are avoidable if attention is paid to the warning signs that are always visible leading up to an event. Or, if there are no visible symptoms, humans can rely on past experience that if "A" happened the last time the conditions were at this level, then it is highly likely "A" will occur again if the situation is not changed.

Another unique category is based on level of impact. Accidents, disasters, and crises have the potential for medium to high impact, while issues and incidents have a potential for low impact (please refer to Table 2). This rating does not attempt to categorize the event by damages, as an incident could actually be more deadly than any of the others. What it does do is separate incidents from the other events as having a

wide-spread effect. And yet another way to classify the events is to discuss the potential for planning. All of the events in Table 1 can be planned for, allowing an organization to practice responses and be in a potentially more successful position if the event were to occur.

According to several different crisis communication scholars, every crisis event has at least three stages: pre-crisis, crisis, and post-crisis. As defined by communications researcher Robert L. Heath and communications strategist Dan P. Millar, the pre-crisis stage is the period of time leading up to the event where activity and function are normal. This stage is the perfect time for an organization to be planning for a situation and monitoring conditions in case it is within the organization's power to mitigate or avoid the crisis. The next stage occurs during the crisis event. This stage is marked by an event that has disrupted the "normal" flow and lasts as long as it takes to put a solution in place. The third and final stage is post-crisis. This is what happens once the crisis event has been resolved and a new, normal way of operating is started. Organizations are unlikely to return to pre-crisis normal. Instead, the event precipitates change and a new normal is created. Each of these stages is clearly delineated by events and specific things that must be communicated. Thus, events can be further categorized by their stages.

In addition to the types of events possible and the stages that each event experiences, there are three elements, according to Hermann: threat, time, and surprise. He argues that every crisis experiences each of these. Threat is defined by what is going to happen or what is happening, depending on the stage. Time refers to the lack thereof; the feeling that time is running out or that not enough time was provided to resolve the

event in a successful manner. And surprise refers to the argument that the event was unexpected or occurred at an unexpected time; however, let us remember that, according to Table 1 above, all events are expected but only disasters are unavoidable.

Many scholars and professional consultants agree that some of the major components of crises involve high levels of uncertainty, small or diminishing amounts of time available for decision-making or response, and high levels of disruption. But oftentimes, crises are confused with issues, incidents, accidents, and disasters due to the similarity in their definitions. Matthew W. Seeger (professor of communication), Timothy L. Sellnow (professor of risk and crisis communication), and Robert R. Ulmer's (professor of speech communication) definition expands the idea of a crisis affecting the whole system, not a limited or self-contained part of the system, and that crises threaten the system's basic assumptions while incidents and accidents do not (8). According to Hermann, "a situation is said to be a crisis if, and only if, it (1) threatens one or more important goals of a state, that is, the group of authoritative policy makers who constitute the state, (2) allows only a short time for decision before the situation is significantly transformed, and (3) occurs as a surprise to the policy makers" ("Threat, Time, and Surprise" 187). Hermann's definition can encapsulate multiple events if one were to look at how the threat of the situation, the short amount of time available to respond and act, and the surprising nature of the event constitute multiple situations. Yet, Hermann places a focus on the impact a crisis can have to the goals of a state, or governing body/entity, and claims that crises occur as surprises, a point I have disputed in this chapter. Kathleen Fearn-Banks, who counsels companies and organizations on crisis prevention, crisis

communications, and developing crisis communications plans, defines "crisis" similarly to Hermann:

> A *crisis* is a major occurrence with a potentially negative outcome affecting the organization, company, or industry, as well as its publics, products, services, or good name. A crisis interrupts normal business transactions and can sometimes threaten the existence of an organization. A crisis can be a strike, terrorism, fire, a boycott, product tampering, product failure, or numerous other events. (8)

Her definition differs from Hermann's in that she describes organizations as the impacted system rather than Hermann's more nebulous "state."

Ray further delineates the idea of disasters and crises in that "A crisis tends to be triggered by organizational errors, oversights, or deficiencies" (13-14) and "occur as a consequence of the organization's imperfection and vulnerability to the environment" (14). Karl E. Weick, professor of psychology and organizational behavior and psychology, claims that human action is a part of every crisis: "crises engage human action, human action can amplify small deviations into major crises" (308) whereas disasters will not always include human action (for example, tornadoes and hurricanes can create the disaster, but inept human action or the inability to cope with the damage can create a crisis). What is important to note here is that issues, incidents, accidents, disasters, and crises can all impact an organization, but disasters tend to only be referenced when the event impacts an entire community.

To illustrate this point, consider how a crisis can begin within an organization and eventually spread into a larger community, thus creating a disaster. The nuclear core meltdown disaster at Three Mile Island is an excellent example of this kind of development: a problem within the organization (a crisis) eventually breached the facility's perimeter and had a direct impact on the public. Ray's definition helps to make this statement easier to understand in that crises are avoidable, but "events leading up to a crisis accumulate because internal and/or external factors were overlooked or misinterpreted as a result of false assumptions, poor communication, cultural lag, and misplaced optimism" (14). In the case of the Three Mile Island disaster, employees overlooked warning signs that could have potentially helped to prevent the incident(s) from escalating from crisis to disaster.

Because crises impact organizations and involve human action, I argue that they should not be considered surprising or unexpected. A close look at organizational communication and crisis response reveals that organizations almost always are able to anticipate crises (e.g., shooting scenarios, electrical power loss, and industrial espionage) based on environmental, cultural, infrastructural, and historical data. When human action is involved, as it always is within organizations, a multitude of situations can and *should* be anticipated and planned for. Such plans are (ideally at least) the basis of an organization's crisis response plan.

Responding with Rhetoric

Heath and Millar offer a rhetorical definition of crisis that "features the communication processes and efforts to co-define meanings that assist persons who are

affected—or think they are affected—to prepare for, accommodate to, and recover from the disruptive events" (6). I argue that crisis communication is its own discourse and the conventions used by the members of that community (individuals and groups affected by a crisis) exemplify the rhetorical devices that belong to it (the devices will be discussed in more depth in chapter 2). According to Heath and Millar, "What the event means—how it is to be interpreted—becomes a central rhetorical theme" (6). This topic is a rich source for information that could further inform the field of rhetoric due to the specific nature of how rhetorical devices are deployed in internal organizational crisis communication. The field of rhetoric has focused primarily on the public aspect of crisis communication: how organizations communicate with the public during a disaster. Rhetorical research has not been focused on the internal communication of those affected by the crisis event.

Heath and Millar argue that

> A rhetorical approach to crisis explicitly acknowledges that the responsibility for the crisis, its magnitude, and its duration are contestable. It stresses the message development and presentation part of the crisis response. It underscores the role that information, framing, and interpretation play in the organization's preparation for a crisis, response to it, and postcrisis comments and actions. It features discourse, one or more statements made over time. (5)

Their argument helps to inform my definition of crisis communication in this project, but it falls short in addressing the communication that occurs within the organization that should allow for an explanation of the event, directed action, and notification that the

event has been resolved. I argue that any response to a crisis event is rhetorical by nature. Given that argument, it is necessary to first explore how rhetoric is defined and discuss rhetoric's relationship to crisis.

In Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, he claims that rhetorical study is "concerned with the modes of persuasion" and that "Persuasion is clearly a sort of demonstration, since we are most fully persuaded when we consider a thing to have been demonstrated" (5). Aristotle further argues that the usefulness of rhetoric is in rhetoric's "power of observing the means of persuasion on almost any subject presented to us" (5). According to Aristotle, persuasion is based on 1) the speaker's personal character, 2) the ability for the speaker to stir an audience's emotions, and 3) the speaker's ability to prove a truth through persuasive argument (7). When relating this definition to the study of internal organizational crisis response, one can map the three attributes of Aristotle's persuasion as 1) a speaker with whom the audience has respect or recognizes as a leader, 2) the speaker's ability to calm fears and provide instructions for reaching "normal," and 3) the speaker's ability to provide satisfactory answers to the audience's concerns in relation to the events so that they work together toward a common goal.

According to Lloyd F. Bitzer, professor of communication, "rhetoric is a mode of altering reality, not by the direct application of energy to objects, but by the creation of discourse which changes reality through the mediation of thought and action" (4). This type of mediation occurs through rhetorical discourse and always requires an audience. He argues that rhetorical discourse (either written or spoken) earns the characterization of "rhetorical" because it is the response to a situation, such as a crisis, and that the situation

generates such a response (3). Bitzer further argues that rhetoric is situational because the situation "dictates" the necessary verbal and nonverbal response (5). Additionally, Bitzer states that

> (1) rhetorical discourse comes into existence as a response to a situation, in the same sense that an answer comes into existence in response to a question, or a solution in response to a problem; (2) a speech is given *rhetorical* significance by the situation, just as a unit of discourse is given significance *as* answer or *as* solution by the question or problem; (3) a rhetorical situation must exist as a necessary condition of rhetorical discourse, just as a question must exist as a necessary condition of an answer; (4) many questions go unanswered and many problems remain unsolved; similarly, many rhetorical situations mature and decay without giving birth to rhetorical utterance; (5) a situation is rhetorical insofar as it needs and invites discourse capable of participating with situation and thereby altering its reality; (6) discourse is rhetorical insofar as it functions (or seeks to function) as a fitting response to a situation which needs and invites it. (7) Finally, the situation controls the rhetorical response in the same sense that the question controls the answer and the problem controls the solution. (5-6)

Bitzer's definition of the rhetorical situation is appropriate when describing crises because crisis events are situational. The presence of the crisis situation invites a

response, both verbal and physical. Physical responses can range from emotions such as happiness, fear, or stress to performing an actual action or movement.

Rhetorical discourse indicates the presence of a rhetorical situation, as defined by Bitzer:

> a complex of persons, events, objects, and relations presenting an actual or potential exigence which can be completely of partially removed if discourse, introduced into the situation, can so constrain human decision or action as to bring about the significant modification of the exigence. (6)

Rhetorical situations include people (such as responders), events (such as crises), and relations (such as organizational relationships and identification) and such situations "have the power to constrain decision and action needed to modify the exigence" (Bitzer 8). For Bitzer, the situation calls a discourse into existence that is aimed at providing the group a way to effectively communicate about and during the situation. Based on individual experiences with these situations, one learns to use rhetoric in a variety of ways, specifically through the use of language.

However, Richard Vatz, professor of mass communication and communication studies, disagrees with Bitzer's definition. Instead, he argues that "situations are rhetorical" and that "the rhetoric controls the situational response" (159). Vatz argues that one can learn about facts through others communicating them and that the communication involves the choice of what to communicate, how that information is translated into meaning, and how the event derives meaning through "linguistic depiction" (156-157). According to Vatz, a situation's meaning is created by the rhetor

through his or her selection of what to communicate and, he argues, "No situation can have a nature independent of the perception of its interpreter or independent of the rhetoric with which [the rhetor] chooses to characterize it" (154). However, Bitzer's definition of the rhetorical situation and rhetorical discourse lend support to Vatz's argument because Bitzer's rhetor perceives the situation as inviting discourse. The clear difference between the two arguments is that Bitzer's situation invites a response whereas Vatz's rhetor dictates the response to a given situation. Looking at these two viewpoints, I concur that a crisis situation invites the response, per Bitzer, and that what can be known of the situation is based on what is selected to be communicated to the audience about the given situation, per Vatz. J. Robert Cox, professor of rhetorical studies, characterizes situational response as the ability to interpret and define the situation through interaction with one's environment (199). According to Cox, "the meaning a situation holds for actors is their basis for interpreting choices as rational, reasonable, or justified" (205). Thus, both Bitzer and Vatz have a valid argument in that both the crisis and the crisis response are mutually constitutive and that what is communicated is done so based on the environment, the situation, and the choices made by the speaker(s).

For Walter R. Fisher, professor of communication, there are specific motives or kinds of rhetorical situations: "affirmation, concerned with giving birth to an image; reaffirmation, concerned with revitalizing an image; purification, concerned with correcting an image; and subversion, concerned with undermining an image" ("A Motive View of Communication" 132). Fisher's use of image refers to the truth created by the speaker. Through the use of rhetoric, the speaker creates an understanding of the crisis

event: the image. When one views crises as rhetorical situations, Fisher's motives overlay the discourse of crisis response almost perfectly. There is an event (Fisher's image) and it either needs to be defined (or affirmed), supported (or reaffirmed), corrected (purified), or disputed (subverted). Fisher asserts that rhetoric, specifically rhetorical communication, is "as much grounded in motives as in situation" ("A Motive View of Communication" 132). This provides rhetoric the opportunity to describe a situation in a particular way in order to obtain a certain interpretation (Aristotle's persuasion). Within the discourse of crisis, the opportunity to describe the situation brings with it the possibility that an audience may be persuaded to understand the unfolding events in a particular way and to convince them to act in a specific manner.

According to Kenneth Burke, literary theorist and philosopher, there are two main aspects of rhetoric: "its use of *identification* and its nature as *addressed*" (*A Rhetoric of Motives* 45). These aspects lead to his theory of dramatism, which incorporates the ideas that language constitutes action and that humans create and impart their messages in the same way that a play is presented to an audience. A summation of Burke's "second assumption of dramatism" folds in his aspects of identification and address:

> Through rhetoric, we size up situations and name their structure and outstanding ingredients. How we describe a situation indicates how we are perceiving it, the choices we see available to us, and the action we are likely to take in that situation. Our language, then, provides a clue to our motive or why we do what we do. (Foss, "Pentadic Criticism" 456)

Burke links situation and motive as key components of rhetorical discourse when he claims that rhetorical language is "inducement to action (or attitude, attitude being an incipient act)" (*A Rhetoric of Motives* 42). For Burke, one of the basic functions of rhetoric is the use of words to induce action and claims that rhetoric is:

> *rooted in an essential function of language itself, a function that is wholly realistic, and is continually born anew; the use of language as a symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to symbols*. (*A Rhetoric of Motives* 43)

In contrast, Fisher argues that rhetorical discourse is "advisory; it says how one should think, feel, and act in a given case where certainty cannot be achieved" ("A Motive View of Communication" 131). I argue that rhetorical discourse is the means by which organizations are able to identify and explain the crisis, explicate its causes and potential effects, and ask the participants (responders) to act in a certain way. This use of rhetoric helps to create a shared social reality, discussed next.

Organizations have been characterized as discourse communities with shared ideologies that are created through a specific type of rhetoric (or organizational communication). George Cheney, professor of communication, states that "persuasion is inherent in the process of *organizing*" (144). Such persuasion, or organizational rhetoric, is what allows the members of the organizational discourse community to create a shared reality, understand one another, explain difficult concepts, and garner support or motivate the members to action. Hence, organizational discourse is what allows members to identify with one another, communicate effectively, and organize. Burke further

substantiates this claim of organizational identification in his discussion of rhetoric as more than a single address when he states that one should think of rhetoric as "a general *body of identifications* that owe their convincingness much more to trivial repetition and dull daily reënforcement than to exceptional rhetorical skill" (*A Rhetoric of Motives* 26). This is important to understand because the organizational rhetoric used on a daily basis is what responders will fall back on when communicating internally during crisis situations (this is discussed in more detail in chapter 2). The most common rhetorical devices used by organizational members will provide the basis for communicating to resolve crisis situations.

Crisis rhetoric involves a shared social reality. Such a shared reality can be created through aforementioned identifications and through shared imagery communicated through a "social matrix of discourse" (R. Brown 86). In considering this, Burke notes, one must also allow that "different kinds of image can perform the same function" (*A Rhetoric of Motives* 11). As Fisher has stated, "one's definition, which is an expression of image, governs all one's actions in respect to the conflict" ("A Motive View of Communication" 131). This definition is created through specific rhetorical organizational discourse.

According to Ray, organizations will respond to crisis situations in one of three ways. They will "(1) deny a crisis exists and refuse to cooperate with media and government agencies; (2) provide partial, inaccurate, or delayed information; or (3) establish and maintain open and accurate communication channels with external constituents" (Ray 20). Her definition of crisis response only fits when researching or

studying public responses to crises. Yet, her framework opens the door to a discussion of what is actually similar between internal and external organizational crisis response. Both responses are discourses that rely on narrative and storytelling as a way to construct realities, provide a consistent understanding of the event, and unify direction and purpose. Narrative is a legitimating device that produces, maintains, and reproduces power structures and can be used to persuade, enact interest, exercise power, and create a relationship among the speaker, the speech, the audience, and the occasion/situation. Not only does narrative provide organizing power, it operates as a unifier. It is a shared experience and understanding that create a sense of unity. Without a shared social reality, narrative can operate to create conflict when it becomes unclear which of multiple narratives is the correct, or socially sanctioned, one.

Arguably, narrative operates like a story, and indeed both internal and external organizational crisis response routinely involve storytelling techniques. Without a central narrative that all members or audiences can accept, understand, and identify with, there is no buy-in or acceptance. Ray claims that "Thinking in terms of narrative provides practitioners with a consistent and organized way of viewing crisis planning, management, and communication" (22). Once narrative successfully creates a sense of unity, language becomes important in imparting meaning. Additionally, communicating shared experiences helps individuals to identify with others based on what Burke has labeled "terministic screens," a specific way of interpreting the environment and interactions. This is an exceptionally important aspect of internal organizational crisis response. That being said, responding to a crisis also involves situational awareness and

action, like maintaining focus, avoiding blame, and being resilient to rapidly changing situations. This is made easier through the use of specific rhetorical devices associated with internal organizational crisis response: the importance of explaining, describing, and statusing.

Part of crisis response also involves organizational planning. Seeger, Sellnow, and Ulmer describe crisis planning as "projecting the condition of a crisis and identifying the resources, structures, and strategies necessary to resolve the crisis with as little disruption, cost, and harm as possible" (163). According to Lawrence Barton, an expert in crisis management and management communications, organizations need to publicly address three key questions in every crisis: what happened, how did it happen, and what are you going to do to ensure that it never happens again (70). The Center for Crisis Management director and associate director state that there are in fact four questions to publicly address: "*What* is the crisis? *When* did it begin? *Why* has it occurred? (What are its *multiple causes*?) *Who* is affected?" (Mitroff and Pearson 5-6). All of these questions must be addressed in internal organizational crisis response in order for the response and responders to be successful in mitigating and resolving the situation. The situational awareness is important for the responders to understand what has happened in order to begin working on how to resolve the situation's negative consequences and impact.

Curt Bechler, a communication professional, focuses on preplanning as an important aspect of crisis response and strategy. Bechler argues that preplanning can create a certain measure of certainty for the responders and that such preparation "provides the decision maker with a framework from which to see the crisis, and thus

lessens the response uncertainties" (65). Such planning typically involves written plans and procedures that operate as "normative models for education and training activities" (Mendonça et al. 524-525) and are based on the aforementioned questions that should be addressed in organizational crisis response.

Because effective communication must always be audience focused, plans help organizations identify the multiple audiences that need to be communicated to during an event. According to Barton, effective crisis response must have clearly articulated goals for each audience involved (66). Seeger, Sellnow, and Ulmer point out that while crisis response is necessary during a crisis event, "almost all organizational crises have at their base some form of communication breakdown" (35). It is this fact that makes this project valuable to organization heads and their members.

As stated previously, most organizations have some sort of documented plan or procedure for crisis response. These plans identify the responders, resources, and potential mitigations or solutions. Most plans involve fundamental steps to address in order to respond internally to an organizational crisis. Gerald Meyers, former Chairman of American Motors, and John Holusha, Detroit Bureau Chief for *The New York Times*, list these steps as follows: take charge of the situation, understand the circumstances, clearly define the problem, prioritize or rank the options, move decisively, eliminate the cause or causes, and prevent the recurrence of the event (257). The use of story and narrative are the primary means by which the organization is able to create widespread understanding of the event and what needs to be done among responders.

Much of the currently available organizational training for responders is based on antiquated scenarios or scenarios that match the organization's existing plans. These scenarios rarely involve training on internal communication; typically they are focused on the actions that must be considered and executed instead of how responders or team members should communicate with one another. As mentioned earlier, this project aims to discover if there is useful overlap between the recommended rhetorical responses to crises and the rhetorical responses frequently portrayed in various forms of mass media entertainment. Before I can begin to address that, I need to clarify what I mean by mass media entertainment.

Entertainment and Mass Media

Typically, mass media is considered to be local, national, or global news broadcasting, which includes all forms of media output from the newspaper to television or cable broadcasting to Internet-based mediums. Elizabeth M. Perse, professor of mass communication, describes three major functions of mass media. The first function she outlines is surveillance. According to Perse, mass media functions as a "sentry or watch dog" and this is accomplished in most complex societies through "news reports" (54-55). She claims that "The mass media collect, summarize, and report the information that various groups need to conduct their own work" (Perse 54-55). The second function of the mass media is to correlate information or "clarify and explain the relevance of information" (Perse 55). Perse states, "If through surveillance the mass media tell us what is happening, through correlation the mass media relay what it means to us" (55). The third function of mass media is to entertain. Perse argues that the entertainment function

of mass media for amusement and relaxation is functional: “Individually, people need to rest and regroup. For society, entertainment provides shared experiences. . .and a source for social cohesion” (56).

Much research has been focused on the impact of mass media and its ability to persuade and influence. But other academic research has focused on the ability of different forms of media to educate as well as entertain. Media offer a way to provide a focus on pattern recognition, active learning, critical learning, and assuming new identities. Pattern recognition promotes learning by allowing an individual to reason based on patterns of actual experiences. Because learning can be viewed as social and experientially based, recognizable, familiar experiences form patterns of thinking and reasoning from which an individual can later draw to aid in decision making and critical thinking. Pattern recognition is closely linked to active learning: learning through experiencing the world in new ways. Active learning involves forming new affiliations (or membership in new communities and groups as in online computer games) and helps to prepare one for future learning based on these experiences in new contexts. Critical learning builds off of the presence of active learning but as social linguist and games researcher James Paul Gee notes, it incorporates the “ability to reflect on, critique, and manipulate” knowledge gained from experiences (*What Video Games Have to Teach Us* 32).

Films and computer games are not a new idea for offering training on crisis response. Videos are used during training to depict how other organizations have encountered crises and executed their plans. However, those films are designed

specifically as training media and are not a focus in this project. Additionally, gaming scenarios have been developed to help aid responders in practicing specific actions and interactions (e.g., responding to multi-story building fires or coordinating tactical military missions). This project is focused on films and games that were originally designed as entertainment media. The content of a computer game and the format and organization of a popular film are largely responsible for allowing an individual to apply the aforementioned learning principles (discussed in later chapters). These forums provide the location in which an individual can situate meaning through experiences or play.

A large number of popular films and computer games deal with the subject of crisis: battle or war, dramatic retellings of natural disasters, and fictional renderings of terrorism. Analyzing the portrayals of crises and crisis communication in popular films and computer games can offer a framework for understanding how knowledge is created, how meaning is made through language use, and how these rhetorical acts function to invoke emotion and action in the audience. Specific rhetorical devices are employed in internal organizational crisis communication. I argue that these same devices are portrayed in popular forms of entertainment, specifically films and computer games. This dissertation analyzes those depictions and explores how entertainment media, specifically popular films and computer games, may function rhetorically as instructional. Such an analysis could teach both responders and non-responders a great deal about communicating during crises.

Part of what makes the films and computer games selected for this project meaningful to this analysis is the ability for the audience or players to identify with the

dramatizations of crises and crisis response offered in the respective media. The media have been crafted in such a way that the audience can relate to some idea in the plot or action. While these forms of media may have fantastical storylines or characters, there is always an element that the viewer or player can relate to, making the events depicted within somehow possible in reality. As Burke states in *Language as Symbolic Action: Essays on Life, Literature and Method*, context is experiential and personal, as is knowledge. The human ability to identify with certain situations, experiences, and words is due in large part to the social aspect of learning and knowledge. Burke states that neural processes are unconscious and humans find that the effort to understand the meaning of a sentence or statement becomes spontaneous or habitual (*Language as Symbolic Action* 67). This then makes the facts humans take as knowledge to be experiential. One sometimes has to experience something to know it as true and it becomes a reflection of the terminology individuals use to define and describe it. Thus, audiences and players somehow relate to the plot or action in the film or computer game, making it successful financially for the designer/creator and potentially successful as a learning tool. I will discuss this phenomenon in more detail in chapter 2.

Project Methodology and Research Artifacts

The research informing this project is based on the rhetorical analysis of a range of media representing crises, specifically films and computer games designed to entertain. I will focus on the way these two forms of entertainment media represent communication in crisis situations and what the potential impact of those representations would have on internal organizational response and recovery teams. I will be using the

definitions and guidelines for rhetorical criticism and narrative criticism as provided by Aristotle and Burke to conduct the rhetorical analyses. My analysis of mass media will be informed by media effects research conducted primarily by Perse, Dan Nadaner, David Bordwell, Murray Smith ,and John Sanders on film and Gee, Janet Murray, Ian Bogost, Espen Aarseth, Mark J.P. Wolf, Chris Crawford, and Kristian Kiili on computer games. Specifically, I will be examining the social effects of the selected artifacts for the ways they depict crises and how the characters within each interact with one another. In particular, I will be looking at the ways in which the narrative, or action, works with the use of language, or dialogue, in order to motivate or persuade additional action.

In order to inform and guide my analysis of the films and computer games, I will review existing theories and studies on the impact of both as educational tools and as representations of socially constructed meaning. As I review the films and computer games, I will look at a larger framework of how these media use crisis rhetoric. As part of the larger framework, I will approach each film and computer game looking for how it might be capable of adding to a discussion of the use of entertainment media as education tools. My goal in this project is not to defend the entertainment media but rather to show how they depict crisis communication and how those depictions might be used to educate intern organizational response and recovery teams. It is important to note that not all films or computer games would fit this analysis, but this project should provide initial questions other scholars could build on to further investigate the effects of entertainment media and how it could be used to educate.

All of the selected computer games are part of existing computer game series. *Splinter Cell: Conviction* (Ubisoft Montreal, 2010), a third-person shooter game, is focused on the lead character's quest to find his daughter's murderer while protecting Washington, DC from a serious threat. In *Gears of War 2* (Epic Games, Inc., 2008) the scenario is a third-person shooter game set in the future on planet Sera. A swarm of Locusts and a giant worm-like creature are threatening life on the planet; the worm-like creature is eating through the planet's core, causing cities to collapse underground and the vapor released to cause a condition in humans called Rustlung. The third example is the game *Call of Duty 6: Modern Warfare 2* (Infinity Ward, 2009). This first-person shooter game combines acts of multi-national terrorism amid undercover missions and intelligence operations.

Popular films can also be based on unrealistic events or locations. I have selected films that, like the computer games I chose, offer a variety of situations and possible communication scenarios: widespread disease, space shuttle disaster, and environmental disaster. The 1980 film *Virus* (Haruki Kadokawa Films 1980) is based on a deadly, mutating virus. The virus' fatal effects can only be avoided at extremely cold temperatures. The survivors create a new community and identify a council of individuals to create new laws and a way of life. *Apollo 13* (Universal 1995) is a film depicting the events of the actual NASA moon-landing mission. In the film, the narrative unfolds to create a crisis of potentially large-scale disaster and loss of life. *2012* (Columbia Pictures 2009) is a doomsday movie that involves devastating environmental catastrophes (e.g., solar storms, earthquakes) that are leading to the end of the world. The film depicts

people caught in catastrophic weather and environmental scenarios as they attempt to find salvation.

The ways in which these media are capable of raising situational awareness and teaching other critical skills needed in a crisis—such as critical thinking skills, the ability to make quick decisions, and communicate in group environments while coping with individual, emotional stress—should be studied for potential application in similar situations. Using films and computer games based on both realistic and unrealistic situations can potentially have the same impact: education of the viewer or player. Identifying is believed to be a part of human nature and these media forms request identification from participants. Additionally, these media ask participants to suspend an established reality and truth in order to be more accepting of new experiences, thereby also opening them to learning new things based on applying what they already know to new situations. This project will analyze the media and their representations of crisis and crisis communication to explore how the media could be useful educational tools.

This chapter was designed to provide an introduction to the overall project and the current state, to some of the key terms, and to the methodology and artifacts. In chapter 2, I provide a more detailed treatment of internal organizational crisis communication and the rhetorical devices related to it and introduce current learning and rhetorical theories and critique how they relate to this project. Chapter 3 is focused on the analysis of how crises are represented in popular film, providing an overview of each film's plot and reviewing each film's use of specific rhetorical devices. In chapter 4 I focus on the analysis of how computer games represent crises and provide an overview of each

game's plot and use of specific rhetorical devices. Chapter 5, my conclusion, provides an assessment of the educational potential of these media, specifically for organizational response and recovery teams, provides a sample organizational training scenario with instructions for implementing an entertainment media-based learning approach, and discusses additional avenues for inquiry based on this analysis.

CHAPTER 2 – RESPONDING RHETORICALLY: AN ORGANIZATION IN CRISIS

In my first chapter, I argued that crisis communication involves a response to a rhetorical situation: the crisis event. "Organizational crisis communication" is the way in which an organization's members respond rhetorically to a crisis event. As I discussed earlier, crises, as rhetorical situations, demand a discourse that defines, supports, corrects, and/or disputes crisis events. This crisis-oriented rhetorical discourse constitutes the means by which organizations define crises, explain their causes and potential effects, and ask stakeholders to respond. This chapter will provide a more detailed treatment of what I argue is a rhetoric of internal organizational crisis communication, discuss how organizations respond to crises using certain forms of language, and outline the educational potential that popular media representations may hold for real-world crisis response training. I will begin by first providing an overview of the specific rhetorical strategies inherent in internal organizational crisis communication. Next, I will provide a brief review of the scholarly literature focused on learning theory and rhetorical theory and discuss how that research has informed this project. I will then address the use of media in educational settings and compare it to current organizational training methods.

Defining an Organization

To begin the discussion, it is helpful to understand what constitutes an organization and how the organization's members interact with one another. This understanding provides the basis for how language operates within the organization and will lead to the discussion of how organizations use language in their responses to crises.

Sociologists Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann have defined organizations as "institutions" that "control human conduct by setting up predefined patterns of conduct" (55). Membership in these organizations is reliant on one's ability to create and maintain specific social interactions with other members through the creation of a discourse community. Edgar H. Schein, known for his research in organizational culture and credited with creating the term "corporate culture," claims that, "The strength and stability of culture derives from the fact that it is group based—that the individual will hold on to certain basic assumptions in order to ratify his or her membership in the group" (63). The group defines the culture and the discourse to be used within the group, thereby creating an agreed-to discourse community. Deviations from the agreed-to discourse create discord in the community and are generally avoided.

Organizations rely on the existence of a culture. The culture is what is responsible for creating a reality of shared beliefs and a common set of goals. According to communication professors Eric M. Eisenberg and H. L. Goodall, Jr., cultures are human constructions of reality (117). Cultures can also be seen as social units with shared histories and meet the "human need for stability, consistency, and meaning" (Schein 11, 17). Cultures and organizations provide their members with structures, rules, and norms to govern how they organize, communicate, and act. Organizations rely on the structure created through interaction with other members and the idea of culture helps to guide human interaction within those groups.

Two of the most commonly used types of language employed in organizational settings are narrative and metaphor. In public relations scenarios where an organization

encounters a crisis, the organization will typically focus on how best to distance itself from its behaviors and form strong identifications with the public (Hearit 6). Internally, similar identifications will be made to sustain support and commitment, but this is done in a different way. Seeger, Sellnow, and Ulmer offer five key functions of organizational crisis communication as

> (1) show understanding of the matters to be resolved, (2) determine the characteristics of a successful alternative choice, (3) identify a pool of relevant alternative choices, (4) assess and evaluate the alternatives, and (5) assist in selecting the best alternative. (193)

I argue that all five functions are addressed by the use of narrative and metaphor. In a crisis situation, the organization's goal is to "control and manage the message, control and manage the communications, control and manage the crisis" (Fink 98). Through common language use—narrative and metaphor—the organization's goal can be accomplished. Below I offer a more detailed treatment of how organizations use narrative and metaphor in everyday communication and how that language use can be connected back to internal organizational crisis communication.

Organizational Language

In chapter 1, I defined organizational rhetoric as allowing the members of the organizational community to create a shared reality, understand one another, explain difficult concepts, and garner support or motivate members to action through their communication practices. This understanding and support is determined by the group's language use since that is what allows the members to identify with one another,

communicate effectively, and organize. Social interaction and social relations are extremely important for the successful maintenance of an organizational culture; not only do they operate within the organization, but they are also inseparable from it (Mumby 116).

In his discussion of culture, Heath states that culture is what influences an individual's behaviors because it provides individuals with expectations; one relies on the culture's social reality to know what to do and to coordinate with others to achieve common goals (*Management of Corporate Communication* 5). The social reality Heath references is created by a shared vocabulary that allows the members of the group to communicate meaning and expectations effectively (*Management of Corporate Communication* 5). The organization's culture provides the context for how members will interpret, make sense of, and understand how their actions are connected to the overall interest of the group (Eisenberg and Goodall 115). The shared ideals are communicated to all members and the group helps to create redundancy in meaning (Seeger et al. 192). For the group to be effective, the individuals must create a "system of communication and a language that permits interpretation of what is going on" (Schein 111). Additionally, categories of meaning help to organize interpretations and perceptions and can filter any information that is not deemed important or aligned with the group's overall goals (Schein 111).

Within organizations, members learn the basic ethical standards and expectations through communication. The communication can be formal, such as mission statements, code of conduct statements, or formal training programs, but it has been noted that often

the information is "transmitted informally through processes of socialization, modeling, observation, and trial and error. . . . By observing which behaviors are rewarded, punished, praised, or critiqued, for example, members come to learn what is valued within an organization" (Seeger et al. 222). These informal communication methods allow for the social construction of reality through symbolic interaction, allowing for knowledge creation using a shared symbolic structure (Orr 263). As Burke noted, symbolic exchange makes use of our memory structures; while memories may not always be conscious they are recallable on demand, comprise most of what one knows as fact, and aid in making identifications and connections within these groups (*Language as Symbolic Action* 69).

Language is what makes the construction and existence of cultures, and thereby organizations, possible. Burke has described language as "a species of action, symbolic action—and its nature is such that it can be used as a tool" (*Language as Symbolic Action* 15). Defining language as a tool helps to reify the idea that it is used for a purpose. According to social theorist Richard Harvey Brown, "Language creates the conviction of reality and truth by framing our responses in terms of simple oppositions, models and antimodels that allow us to make sense of the world" (84). But such a reality only exists if the members can identify with the responses. Each member of the group must have a consensual understanding of what other members say so that cause and effect are understood and action can be effectively motivated and communicated. The nature of language is action, motive: there is something to be communicated or stated in a given situation. Within organizations, the use of narrative and metaphor are employed by

members as a way to create a common understanding or shared knowledge, to motivate audiences, and to request action.

Narrative in Organizations

Psychological identification helps to establish a shared set of goals, understanding, and support in group settings. Understanding one's own experiences and the experiences of others aids individuals in being able to "refer to them, categorize them, group them, and quantify them—and, by this means, reason about them" (Lakoff and Johnson 25). This categorization leads to the ability to negotiate meaning with other group members (Lakoff and Johnson 231). One way organizational communication relies on language use is through narrative, or storytelling, as a way to communicate the culture of the group and its associated behavioral expectations to its members. According to Joanne Martin, professor of organizational behavior, organizational stories are an effective way to generate commitment in a group environment (273) and have been defined as vehicles "for understanding, explaining, and comparing corporate cultures" (Hansen and Kahnweiler 1391). These stories are typically more likely to be remembered longer than other forms of communication, both written and verbal (Hansen and Kahnweiler 1393).

Fisher's research on the use of narratives in organizations has led to his conclusion that compelling stories "provide a rationale for decision and action. . . . they not only constrain behavior, they may also determine it" ("The Narrative Paradigm" 364). Stories, or narratives, are designed to order human experience and allow group members further opportunity for identification by presenting a specific view of the world and

creating particular arguments. The use of organizational narrative assumes that the many forms of human communication can be reduced to stories or "interpretations of aspects of the world occurring in time and shaped by history, culture, and character" (Fisher, *Human Communication as Narration* xii). Ordering human experience comes naturally to the narrative form since it inherently orders events.

The discussion of narrative structures in organizations is important to this project because it leads to an understanding of one of the ways organizational members learn how to order their actions. Organizational members use narratives as a means to communicate their shared reality within the culture, but they also use narratives to assign importance to specific actions and to motivate members to respond in a way that is acceptable to the group.

Within organizational communication, the use of narratives is ubiquitous. Because narratives operate as a valuable way to share perspectives, order events, and coordinate behavior through the communication of expectations, storytelling is considered a "culturally typical response to a crisis" (Heath, "Telling a Story" 168). Scholars of crisis communication have treated crises as interruptions of normal narratives and argue that the crisis event becomes an additional narrative. While crisis events are constructed similarly to a normal narrative with the inclusion of key narrative elements—a setting (the crisis); a cast of characters (the responders, the victims, the bystanders); and a plot (the resolution) (Hansen and Kahnweiler 1393)—I argue that the event itself is not a narrative. Instead, within a crisis event, there are several narratives employed dependent on the audience and the narrative's characters (generally these are responders or those

affected by the events). Additionally, narratives of crises can take different paths based on the decisions made, making narrative both a temporal and spatial experience. Depending on the event, the narrative can span any measurement of time and can include geographically disperse locations and responders. The unfolding narrative of the crisis can be reminiscent of watching a film, a film "in which a viewer has no direct control over the duration of the experience" (Wolf, "Narrative in the Video Game" 85). As a participant, Heath claims that responders can use narratives as a way to provide "meaning for understanding, interpreting, and critiquing the response in a manner that is coherent and systematic. It allows the critic and practitioner a framework by which to view the organization and its rationale as a part of society" (Heath, "Telling a Story" 187). Additionally, the narrative structure enables a sense of continuity for the organization through its natural progression of events and inclusion of different characters (Heath, *Management of Corporate Communication* 21).

As previously discussed, narrative is often a culturally defined and accepted way of obtaining knowledge. Narratives allow people to understand and account for events, actions, and control over actions. According to Heath and Millar, narrative is used to manage actions and rhetorical statements in crisis situations (11). In *Language as Symbolic Action*, Burke likens narrative to storytelling by focusing on the teller's temporal unfolding of events. Yet there are motivational concerns inherent in narrative. Burke defines such motivational concerns as strands that have a social order, a corresponding system of property relationships, and a corresponding system of controls such as laws and values (*Language as Symbolic Action* 442-443). Building on the

motivational strands of social order and control, it becomes possible to insert commands into narratives and address them to an audience to motivate action based on a sense of fear or duty (Burke, *Language as Symbolic Action* 443). Such motivation is centrally located in the crisis situations addressed by internal organizational crisis communication.

Burke's definition of narrative explains a lot of how narrative works in the discourse of crisis communication. In crisis communication, narrative is invoked to explain the situation and unfolding events in a way that the audience can relate to and understand. Generally, the narrative structure of crisis communication can be parsed by using Burke's dramatistic pentad.[2] The narrative structure is framed by a scene (location/place), defines the act (crisis), moves by persona (key agent or agents), and enacts a theme and plot (agency and purpose). The narrative allows the plot to transform events and acts into themes, create characters (persona as archetypal roles), locate the crisis, and provide a response. In so doing, one must keep in mind that narratives consist of sequences and the telling of those sequences can involve more than just a temporal presentation of events. For example, narratives of crises may require the narrator to explain why the event occurred and detail how the organization has or will restore order. Each narrative also must contain a form of "rhetorical integrity" based on "probability"

[2] When discussing motives, or attributing human thought to motives, Burke uses his dramatistic pentad, which is comprised of five key terms: act, scene, agent, agency, and purpose. Burke's pentad aims to answer what was done (the act), timing and location of the act (the scene), personal responsible for the act (the agent), how the act was performed (the agency), and why the act was performed (the purpose).

(the assessment or range of events) and "fidelity" (the weight of values, reasons) (Heath, "Telling a Story" 178).

Heath claims that crisis communication narratives are used as a series of movements. A speaker begins with a routine narrative (what the audience knows and accepts), moves to a crisis narrative, and returns to a routine narrative (Heath, "Telling a Story" 168). These movements frame the narrative in a way that is more readily understood by a diverse audience. While I agree with Heath's treatment of narratives as a series of movements, I do not agree that the crisis event is its own narrative. Instead, as in typical stories, the crisis becomes the problem, or key act, that the overall narrative addresses. This discussion on narrative will prove beneficial when I begin to analyze the narratives depicted in the media selected for this project and explore whether they could be useful as training devices for organizational responders.

Metaphor in Organizations

As I mentioned earlier, a commonly agreed-to use of language is central to the discourse of organizational communication, and this is also true of internal organizational crisis communication. Narratives are only successful if the language used resonates with the community members. One extremely successful way to ensure group consensus and understanding is through the use of predefined and accepted metaphors. George Lakoff, professor of cognitive linguistics, and Mark Johnson, professor of cognitive linguistics and computer science, define metaphors as a way to create meaning and understanding in everyday language and thought (ix). They attribute understanding to the conceptual systems (symbols, signs, and words) humans use in defining realities and argue that

metaphors allow for understanding through an individual's experience of one thing in terms of another (Lakoff and Johnson 5). Their notion of human understanding is also based on human experiences since the same sentence can mean different things to different people.

According to Lakoff and Johnson, metaphors allow communities to share knowledge through inferring shared experience. Metaphors provide the links between everyday experiences and the ways in which a community understands a system or item not grounded in experience. Metaphors also help influence actions and experiences through organizing reality and experiences, making them another way a group can create the shared social reality I mentioned earlier.

While examples of language used to create discord exist, language is also key to creating and sustaining communities with shared goals. Language provides the data for the general principles of understanding. Andrew Ortony, professor of psychology, education, and computer science, argues that figurative uses of language, like metaphors, offer "great pedagogic value" due to their potential ability to "transfer learning and understanding from what is known to what is less well-known and to do so in a very vivid manner" (53). In other words, one must understand the language being used in order to understand the world one inhabits.

Burke's definition of metaphor is well-aligned with Lakoff and Johnson and Ortony. He defines metaphor as bringing together "classes of terms that might otherwise be kept in separate compartments of the mind . . . it enables us to experience strikingly new combinations, thereby letting us see things in a fresh light" (Burke, *Language as*

Symbolic Action 488). The idea that metaphors allow one to understand a new concept based on former understanding is not new. Aristotle noted that metaphors are devices that give an orator's style "clearness, charm and distinction as nothing else can" (122) and that they are the best use of language to "get hold of something fresh" (135).

Sonja K. Foss, professor of communication, offers a broader view of metaphor when discussing its use for critical purposes. Foss argues that metaphors are more than decorative language and that they offer a "starting point" for how "language relates to reality" ("Metaphoric Criticism" 358). She claims, "we have or know a reality only through the language by which we describe it" (Foss, "Metaphoric Criticism" 358). The language used to describe this reality comes from individual experiences and, as such, metaphors offer correlations to those experiences to help us define concepts in terms of similarities and differences (Lakoff and Johnson 105, 152). It is fair to say, then, that metaphors are important tools for comprehension of some more abstract concepts.

These definitions of metaphor allow more leniency in the discovery and generation of ideas due to one's ability to correlate experiences with concepts. In fact, it has been argued that not only can metaphor support an argument, it can structure the argument (Foss, "Metaphoric Criticism" 361). The power inherent in metaphors comes from their length of use in society and their cultural evolution through their use by recognized individuals of power (leaders in politics, religion, business, and the media) (Lakoff and Johnson 160-161). Such widespread and historic use of metaphors has aided leaders in communicating ideology and in restricting perceptions, thereby shaping and creating a social reality (Heath, *Management of Corporate Communication* 132).

While metaphors operate in our language to help shape and define reality, they also have organizing power. Like narratives, metaphors can be used to order reality. In so doing, metaphors can "prescribe how we are to act. Metaphors contain implicit assumptions, points of view, and evaluations. They organize attitudes toward whatever they describe and provide motives for acting in certain ways" (Foss, "Metaphoric Criticism" 360). Metaphors infer and can sanction certain actions, providing a motivating guide for what the audience is to do next. Research has shown that organizations use metaphors to create a level of enthusiasm and motivate specific behaviors from members (Heath, *Management of Corporate Communication* 64).

The use of metaphor is prevalent in crisis communication as a way of creating knowledge and guiding action across a diverse group of community members. Crises can be considered commonly shared experiences for the responders or the organization's members affected. Therefore, using a common language in these situations will "promote common interpretative frames, a common bond, and collective understandings" (Seeger et al. 18-19). Metaphors prevalent in everyday language usage and understanding provide a firm base for crisis communication. Language creates meaning and knowledge, thus metaphors work to do this in a way understood by a diverse set of participants experiencing the same crisis situation. The use of certain metaphors allows a speaker to quickly communicate and be widely understood.

Within the discourse of crisis, the opportunity to describe the situation can persuade the audience to understand the situation in a particular way and to convince them to act in a particular way. When used with the narrative structure, such metaphors

allow the speaker to attempt to motivate and persuade an audience. The use of narrative and metaphor in internal organizational crisis communication is central to how organizations create knowledge and understanding of a situation and how meaning is effectively conveyed among responders. This project explores how these specific rhetorical strategies are presented in entertainment media and investigates how those representations could inform internal organizational crisis communication training.

Responding to Crises

When a crisis occurs, the common narrative of the organization changes from routine to non-routine (Heath, "Telling a Story" 175). Members of the organization are expected to make good decisions rapidly while under extreme pressure, and usually with fewer available communication channels/vehicles. It is precisely due to these kinds of undesirable conditions that most organizations document in advance a crisis response plan. These plans identify the responders, resources, and potential avenues for mitigating or solving whatever crisis has emerged. Most plans list a set of key steps to address in order to respond internally to an organizational crisis. Some of these plans incorporate theories of command and control and explain the ways to collect, organize, and disseminate pertinent information and identify contributors and stakeholders (Builder et al.). These plans can also offer sample communication responses to many audiences, primarily external audiences. Organizations tend to focus on already-crafted responses for external audiences that are part of the plans and do not typically focus on teaching the responders how to communicate internally with one another.

I have personal experience with the lack of crisis response training in organizational settings.[3] In my example, the department holds annual exercises and quarterly revisions and reviews of several internal response plans. This focus on exercises and planning is not always the norm in organizations. While this specific department is committed to planning, the training for how to communicate internally is almost non-existent. Team members, or responders, are selected based on their technical subject matter expertise, not based on any skill set that would make them successful or exceptional responders (for example, ability to stay calm in high stress situations or the ability to multi-task on tight deadlines).

Consequently, the responders are vocal in regards to what they perceive to be gaps or shortcomings in the exercise simulations. In fact, the largest complaint of all responders in this organization is the lack of internal, cross-functional communication during an exercise. Team plans outline how the responders should interact with their team members in regards to responsibilities and duties and detail how information should flow up the chain of command; however, they offer no guidance for how information should be communicated across teams within the department and even with other departments of

[3] I was employed as a Communications Team Lead for the disaster response and recovery team in an information technology department of a Fortune 500 company, which due to privacy restrictions cannot be named. I became aware of this lack of training after participating in several exercises. To remedy the situation, I began researching effective communication skills and existing studies related to organizational rhetoric in times of crisis. The research led to this project as a way to increase the flow of effective communication within and across internal subteams using new media training approaches.

the company. Effective cross-team communication is imperative for success in dealing with a crisis event because of the interdependency of teams and responsibilities.

Because organizational members use a specific set of rhetorical strategies (narrative and metaphor) when communicating within the organization, it is important for organizations to better train the organizational members in how to respond to crisis events using those same familiar strategies. Training on how to respond internally would alleviate some of the concerns raised regarding cross-team communication. As chapters 3 and 4 will illustrate, entertainment media are structured as narratives and include specific examples, both good and bad, of how metaphor is used in the crisis situations the media depict. The use of entertainment media as a vehicle for this training is well-positioned to provide impactful examples due to the media's use of spectacle to invoke identification and emotion in audiences.

Learning in Organizations

Human learning is a continuous process. Humans are constantly in situations learning new things or new behaviors. Learning researchers have studied how humans are able to transform their experiences into knowledge using reflection and observation, conceptualization, and practice/experimentation (Wilson et al. 221) and how the different aspects of learning and real-life situations can inform such learning. The inclusion of experiences and real-life situations inform the two theories of situated learning discussed in this chapter: constructivist and cognitive learning approaches. I believe these approaches to be the most advantageous for organizational learning, which I elaborate on below.

The constructivist approach focuses on how learners actively construct "knowledge in context of the culture and situations in which they are participating" (Kirkley and Kirkley 43). This type of approach involves interaction since the learners are active in the knowledge acquisition and structuring. Situated cognition argues that "human learning is not just a matter of what goes on inside people's heads but is fully embedded in (situated within) a material, social, and cultural world" (Gee, *What Video Games Have to Teach Us* 9). Cognitive learning outcomes are typically focused on three types of knowledge: "*declarative knowledge* (i.e., knowledge about what), *procedural knowledge* (i.e., knowledge about how), and *strategic or tacit knowledge* (i.e., knowledge about which, when, and why)" (Wilson et al. 222). These approaches are best suited to studies and analyses focused on media because with both constructivist and cognitive learning approaches, learners interact with their environments to interpret, define, and acquire their knowledge (Cox 198). This interaction leads to the idea of discovery learning, or the premise that humans learn better when they find it out on their own rather than have it told to them (Prensky 160).

Organizations are inherently learning communities since they are comprised of individuals who are learners. Organizational learners are no different than individual learners; they learn through the same processes of "knowledge acquisition, information distribution, information interpretation, and organizational memory" (Seeger et al. 18). Earlier I argued that knowledge acquisition occurs through language (narrative, metaphor) and situations (crises). Within organizational crisis situations learning operates as a two-fold concept: learning can occur as part of the resolution process and can help

inform the development of plans to avoid the same event in the future (Seeger et al. 80). In chapters 3 and 4, I will point out specific situations and scenarios depicted in the media that could potentially be used to make internal organizational crisis communication training more effective. A proposed course structure, based on those scenarios discussed in chapters 3 and 4, is provided in chapter 5.

Learning with Media

What research on learning has made clear is that learners must be motivated to learn. Some of the research on learning has focused on the many strategies employed in order to spark that motivation. One such strategy is the use of mass media as instructional tools. Mass media are loosely defined as any media forms that reach large numbers of people (e.g., television or cable programs, Internet sites, radio, and newspapers and periodicals) and include entertainment, educational instruction, and more.

Motivation leads to mental engagement, which, in turn, results in learning and retention. This engagement allows learners to relate the information to prior knowledge, both voluntarily and involuntarily. Researchers have begun to focus more on active learning (voluntary engagement) paired with media literacy. Media literacy is defined as the set of skills learners need in order to be able to distinguish fact from fantasy in media content. This literacy helps to inform learners of the different media genres and the different purposes and intents of those genres (e.g., the ability to differentiate between the type of content that is profit-driven and the type of content that is focused on entertaining) and lead them to a “more critical and aware use” of the media (Perse 196).

Both the constructivist and cognitive models of learning are used when investigating the learning potential of media.

As previously mentioned, situated learning approaches allow learners to interact with their environments. This interaction is typically a problem-based approach (discovery) to knowledge acquisition. Learners encounter problems and learn through the resolution of the problem. Kristian Kiili, an educational games researcher, defines problem-based learning as "a student-centered learning approach helping learners to acquire and develop the knowledge, skills and capabilities needed to solve problems effectively" (396). The problem-based learning approach is supported by situational learning theory with its stress that "learning is a context-dependent activity. Such an approach supports the transferability of learned knowledge and skills into the practice. . . . Furthermore, the collaborative nature of problem solving is emphasized" (Kiili 396). This approach is designed to prepare learners to experience and address the problems normally encountered in daily lives and is typically used in real-life instruction situations (Kiili 396).

Computer games are more closely related to film and television than some think. Games rely on similar conventions for "depiction and navigation" and both tell stories (H. Brown 27). Both films and computer games "provide for a deeply immersive experience, inviting us . . . to transcend . . . and to escape to imaginary worlds. On the other hand, they allow us to take control of images and events on screen, inviting an interactive engagement with these imaginary worlds" (H. Brown 22). Both media provide a motivation for the audience or player to explore the created space through multiple

perspectives: those of the film's directors and actors and those of the computer game's designer and players. The motivation is created through narratives, or compelling storylines, that persuade the audience or player to become immersed and increase the level of engagement as the created space is navigated and learning activities are presented. The idea of a camera and the ability to control that camera in computer games "enables the synthesis of films and games" (H. Brown 54). This level of experience creates the illusion by which viewers interact with the media and the media is capable of capturing their attention. This unique way of capturing attention through sight and sound has been found to be an effective learning strategy (Burton 263). These representations, or presentations, of a reality create an entertaining experience; yet the spectacle of the fantasy world or fictional story is what audience members are able to engage with.

Computer games, particularly those games designed as problem-based games, fit the situational and discovery learning approaches well. Games allow the environment for players/learners to test solutions to problems and reflect on outcomes in a low-stakes environment. In *What Video Games Have to Teach Us*, Gee references psychologist Eric Erickson's term "*psychosocial moratorium*" and describes how computer games employ "a learning space in which the learner can take risks where real-world consequences are lowered" (*What Video Games Have to Teach Us* 59). The virtual space allows the players to take chances and learn from their actions; thereby providing the ability to learn from the experience and adjust future performance accordingly. This creation of a consequence-lowered learning space is also true of films as the audience watches events unfold and does not physically experience any of the effects of the actors' decision

making. While the audience cannot control the decision making, they can learn from the actions of the actors and relate that knowledge to their own experiences. The immersive quality of the space in films and computer games creates a "high degree of attention" and can increase the effectiveness of the training through the immersive involvement of the audience and the players (Pannese and Carlesi 451).

One important distinction between games and films is that the games discussed in this project are designed for entertainment and play, whereas the selected films are designed for entertainment. One can play a computer game, but one cannot play a film. Marc Prensky, founder and CEO of Games2train, argues that play is closely related to learning in that "Play has a deep biological, evolutionary important, function, which has to do specifically with learning" (Prensky 112). Prensky notes that the biggest difference between a game and a computer game is that the media interface (console, computer) enhances the experience and he argues that the enhanced experience is what people want most out of games (Prensky 128). He argues that there is a language, a rhetoric, involved in computer games and that this discourse is shared by all players and learned through experience (Prensky 143). This argument will be revisited in chapter 4 when I provide the analysis of the games for this project.

While films may not necessarily demand the same level of interaction as computer games, they can still be viewed as an interactive and immersive media. According to video artist and art educator Dan Nadaner, cognitive attention to the actions unfolding in the film is required as

> Film viewers must work to adapt their perceptions of the film as subsequent scenes evolve; otherwise the work as a whole, even at the level of plot, could not exist. Viewers must exert considerable cognitive activity in accommodating their schemas as later scenes impinge on the meaning of prior ones; and they must assimilate at the same time, as prior scenes color the meaning of later ones. (126)

According to sociologist C. Emory Burton, strong films can request participation from the audience through identification with the characters, the action as past experience, and other strong ties (264). Burton claims that "In the hands of a creative artist, film can appeal to the imagination and engage the emotions" (264). The power of film has been demonstrated by its ability to affect audience emotions and behaviors (for example, eliciting laughter or tears). Some popular films are designed with that level of persuasion in mind. According to social effects researchers Lisa D. Butler, Cheryl Koopman, and Philip G. Zimbardo:

> A film designed to influence audience beliefs, moods, and perhaps actions as well can have: 1) no measurable impact on certain dependent variables; 2) a positive, energizing effect in line with the thesis and emotional tone of the film; or 3) it can induce a negative, numbing, or 'chilling' impact on feelings and actions. (241)

Films provide an immediate experience and the ability for the audience to identify with what is depicted on the screen. But such identification is not exclusive to film. Character identification can occur in games as well and audience members or players may

experience greater effects as they imagine themselves actually doing what the character on the screen is doing (Perse 49). Critics and defenders of computer games agree that one of the most compelling features of a computer game is its ability to change the player's perspective through role-playing (H. Brown 121). Computer game critic J.C. Herz writes:

> The character is a reflection of every action a player has taken in the virtual environment, similar to an existential self-portrait. Not surprisingly, players are emotionally invested in the statistical profiles of these characters, far more so than they would be a simple score tally (or grade point average). In a sense, the [role-playing game] RPG game persona is the most fully dimensional representation of a person's accumulated knowledge and experience gained in the online environment. (186)

This "reflection" is available to the player through his/her identification with the narrative and the immersive environment. Additionally, the ability for the computer game to provide a multi-perspectival environment capable of evoking emotion and identification reflects their pedagogical power (H. Brown 119).

Consequently, storylines, narrative, and plot have a strong impact on a film's or computer game's reception by the audience/player. Humans tell stories and relate to performance aspects of that storytelling by creating the images for the audience or as an audience member comparing personal experiences to what is being told. In this manner, audience members and players become co-producers of the performance (Boje 107). Audio, visual, and spatial aspects of both films and games lend to their overall experience

as the narrative is played out. This experience is enhanced by the spectacle of the event: certain shots or points of view "marked by visual or sound effects that simulate the physical or psychological experience of the character: blurred or tinted vision to indicate an injury, a binocular or magnified view to indicate peering through a lens or a scope, or panting or heaving to indicate fatigue" (H. Brown 54-55). This experience heightens the immersive quality of the media and strengthens the ability for the audience/player to identify with the plot and action, thereby making it a successful learning tool.

The unknown helps to create the spectacle of both media. Researchers have defined two specific types of fantasy, both found in films and computer games: "endogenous/intrinsic (i.e., the content and the fantasy context are embedded within one another) and exogenous/extrinsic (i.e., no relationship exists between the content and the fantasy context)" (Wilson et al. 229). Films and computer games further enhance the idea of spectacle with mystery through their ability to portray "novelty, complexity, inconsistency, surprise, incomplete information, and the inability to predict the future" (Wilson et al. 233). The spectacle allows for learner interaction as the learner can further reflect on (or as mentioned above, the learner can interpret and define) the newly acquired knowledge and then reify the knowledge acquisition through the categorizing and organizing of the information. The idea of spectacle is important to this project's use of entertainment media because it helps to argue the immersive capabilities of the media and the potential long-term effects it can have on learners when used to instruct.

Learning as Rhetorical

Earlier in this chapter, I established that there is a rhetoric involved in an organization's response to a crisis. In chapter 1, I cited Burke's definition of rhetoric as rooted in the function of language. In *Rhetoric*, Aristotle defines rhetoric as "the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion" (6). He goes on to present the kinds of rhetoric, acceptable subjects for public speaking, and the basic figures, or framework, for constructing an argument. The response strategies mentioned earlier are rhetorical by their nature of language use to explain and to motivate or persuade.

Ian Bogost, professor of media and a videogame researcher, critic, and designer, has taken Aristotle's rhetoric further with his own term, "procedural rhetoric," which describes the practice of using processes persuasively. If one views learning as a process, then the definitions offered by Aristotle and Bogost imply that learning is rhetorical. The mere activity of teaching is persuasive, so learning would also be considered as such. Learning is a social interaction as well since learners engage in discovery and rely on experience when acquiring and ordering knowledge.

The implication that there is an underlying rhetoric to instruction and learning carries over to specific instructional mediums. When using media technologies as learning mediums, there is an implied audio and visual rhetoric since the sounds and images are being used for a specific intention. Media technologies can provide a certain level of "sensory stimuli" to present "new and vivid visual, auditory, or tactile simulations with the purpose of distorting perception and using temporary acceptance of an alternate reality" (Wilson et al. 232). This alternate reality becomes the educational

domain for the learner and provides a space for the media, like films and computer games, to play out a learning narrative (Wolf, "Narrative in the Video Game" 93).

The use of certain content and images points to the potential that one can invent content designed to persuade and to educate. This content could inform specific goals of controlling the message or material to provide a specific learning outcome. In so doing, one can provide an environment of play and practice that is also rewarding and spectacular. Remember, dramatic programming like film can convey rhetorical information, even if it was not purposefully designed that way.

Current Training vs. Media-based Instruction

The flexibility and power of today's technology has transformed the way we entertain ourselves, stay informed, and work. An entire generation, labeled the "Games Generation" by Prensky, has adapted to the greater speed with which we get our information, but is still educated in the techniques used hundreds of years ago. Even today in organizational classrooms, learners are subjected to lectures. But in the past few decades, organizations have made the attempt to "catch up" with technology and provide video-on-demand options and computer-based training; however, the forms of media used in organizational settings are typically lacking in a form of motivation or a reason for engagement.

With the wider use of computer games for entertainment, organizations have begun to invest in "serious gaming" as a method of instruction. These games

> merge high engagement and powerful content, they trigger profound reflections and permit a rapid understanding of complex business

> environments. They even avoid a sense of 'failure' as they turn mistakes into precious learning elements, avoiding giving the message that an error is something that cannot be recovered. This method of 'trial and error' results in accumulation of knowledge because trainees have the possibility to actively weigh consequences and mull over decisions. Thus, representing a new form of experiential and situated learning, a learner is soon able to use the new competencies in his or her daily job. (Pannese and Carlesi 439)

Serious gaming is beginning to answer the organizational learner's need for motivation to learn and engagement with the subject to be learned. Games and electronic simulations of actual situations that an organization's members may encounter provide a level of interactivity that has not been present in traditional organizational learning in the past. Organizational introduction and adoption of games and simulations is happening at an increasing pace. This is advantageous since more technological advances are made each day and the new members entering organizations today have more experience with the technology as forms of entertainment and communicating.

In their study of how university students and business personnel perceive serious games, Lucia Pannese, international researcher on learning simulations, and Maria Carlesi, business analyst and modeler, found that the majority of participants perceive the games to be effective in teaching concepts and enjoyable to play (448). Their analysis showed that

> the typical high interactivity of the games assures a high degree of attention while playing the game and consequently increases the effectiveness of training and the involvement of players. In fact, [organizational personnel] are not merely required to passively receive and assimilate learning contents but have the opportunity to experience situations and problems similar to those faced during working activities. People like having control of the scenario they are working with and to feel responsible for the success of their actions in understanding the dynamics of the environment. (Pannese and Carlesi 451)

Their study shows that serious games provide organizations with a platform to keep these workers engaged and provide continuous, and critical, learning in a way that the information will be retained. With the adoption of serious games by organizations, the perception of computer games is changing. Those who are using them typically find them to be "valuable training and educational instruments" and the learners "seem to appreciate this innovative and unconventional training tool more than traditional exercises" (Pannese and Carlesi 451).

Additionally, if one views learning as a cyclical process, then the encounters learners have in a game world can directly influence their knowledge construction through both individual and group interaction in the environment. According to Kiili, "a game itself is a big problem that is composed of smaller causally linked problems" (396). As the learner progresses in the game, there can be different levels of educational content "blurred" with specific game characteristics (Pivec 388). According to Gee, games will

often operate "within, but at the outer edge of, the learner's resources, so that at many points the game is felt as challenging but not 'undoable'" (*What Video Games Have to Teach Us* 67). These games are also typically session-based in order to magnify the acquisition of precision skills. This allows learners to return to the same concept numerous times in order to practice and master what they have learned. Designers pay special attention to details, especially graphics, to enhance the immersive experience and generate motivation to make decisions and solve problems. The session-based experience also provides the environment for learners to own their learning. Players can make decisions, observe the consequences, consider alternatives, and influence the virtual environment.

An example of a problem-based game used to educate is the U.S. Army's game. *America's Army* was created as a tool to recruit soldiers "but has since been used to train future officers at West Point" (Fong 453). Additionally, the US Marine Corps developed their own version of a popular and publicly available game, *Doom*, and used it to "hone the teamwork and coordination of four-soldier fire teams" (Fong 453). Governments, research groups, and educational institutions have explored the potential of crisis gaming using simulations and serious gaming (Hermann, "Threat, Time, and Surprise" 188).

Building off of the recent successes with serious gaming, this project explores how popular film and computer games—those media designed to entertain—could be used to educate people within organizations on the rhetorical responses for internal crisis communication. I want to shift the focus in the ensuing discussion and look at a learner's ability to watch a film designed to entertain and to play a game designed to entertain and

explore the potential for those media to inform or educate the learner on the rhetorical responses involved in internal organizational crisis communication. Additionally, the learner would not need to be a part of the organization as I argue that the skills taught by these media can be used by anyone who encounters a crisis situation. The following chapters will focus on specific examples of representations of crises in films and computer games, and provide a discussion of how both good and bad examples rhetorically represented in these media might be leveraged to provide learning and instruction to response and recovery teams through crisis communication.

CHAPTER 3 – VIEWING DISASTER: POPULAR FILMS AS TRAINING TOOLS FOR FIRST RESPONDERS

My previous chapters introduced the project, its exigence, and associated terminology. In the preceding chapters I argued that people think and learn through experiences. One way to enhance learning through experience is to provide engaging representations. Entertainment media are ubiquitous. The media are prevalent in our society and easy to access by most. The media provide an engaging and immersive experience for audiences and have the potential to arouse an emotional response from the audience that can lead to understanding and knowledge, which I argue in the next two chapters as I provide an analysis of how crises are represented in the entertainment media selected for this project, specifically three films and three computer games. Before beginning the analysis, I will summarize the relevant research into media effects and relate that research to the forthcoming analysis. I will then provide definitions of the use of narrative in film and introduce some ideas surrounding audience engagement with the medium. Once I have created a basis for my argument, I will then move forward with my analysis of the presence of the most common rhetorical devices used in crisis communication in three films selected for the project.

In *Media Effects and Society*, Perse provides a summary of the type of research that has been performed by media scholars. The research she summarizes has typically been focused on how media content is delivered to the audience and can be categorized into social effects, which include direct, conditional, cumulative, and cognitive-transactional effects. *Direct effects* include the medium and how it is responsible for or

related to involuntary audience responses. *Conditional effects* explore the medium's audience by examining audience demographics (age, race, gender); how audience members selected the medium; and their level of "attention, perception, and recall" in understanding the medium (Perse 258-259). Perse's *cumulative effects* model explores the nature of the medium's content to identify if similar topics and images are relevant. Finally, the *cognitive-transactional model* focuses on the content and audience. Here, the spotlight is on the acquisition of information—what is learned, how much is learned, what is retained. Perse's categorization is helpful when discussing similar effects of popular forms of entertainment media.

Audience members have the power to selectively expose themselves to specific forms of media, making any study of media effects subjective and conditional. Researchers are able to negotiate if there are any learning patterns involved in how learners select and access forms of media, aside from the effects of cumulative exposure to more pervasive forms (e.g., television or cable advertisements, advertisements on web sites, radio commercials, coming attractions on DVDs or in movie theaters, and many more). When studying the impact of entertainment media, one can investigate how certain attitudes or evaluations are obtained by audience members and identify emotional responses. My analysis is primarily interested in the direct, cumulative, and cognitive-transactional effects of the selected media. I will investigate the use of narrative and metaphor in the selected films to determine if they provide useful instruction for real-world organizational training scenarios.

What makes film an important medium to study is the ability of audiences to "undertake a perceptual dialogue" with the images portrayed on the screen (Nadaner 126). According to Nadaner, the film is an immediate experience that differs from reading "in that the viewer cannot take his eyes from the film, reflect, and return to the same point" (124). Many theorists view this level of "compulsory" attention as "a deepening of experience, rather than a loss of comprehension, reflection, or analysis" (Nadaner 124). According to Perse, humans model what they observe (190). Through a film's repetition of images and behavioral depictions, the likelihood of learning is increased. This type of experience and attention is arguably related to the viewer's development of knowledge using cognitive skills to make sense of what is presented in the film and how it is presented.

Because discovery learning is typically problem-based, learners usually take part in some form of knowledge organization. This involves grouping or categorizing information into models that can be recalled later. This type of organization also enables a learner to develop and apply specific cognitive strategies later. Part of organizing the knowledge occurs through reflection and debriefing. Through reflection, film viewers relate what they have witnessed and can apply the action to formulate their own strategies in similar, real-life scenarios. Debriefing involves constructive discussion about the experience. With film, debriefing allows viewers to identify the action being depicted in the film, relate cause and effects, and analyze the decisions made by the actors. Narrative is key to the organization of knowledge on the part of the viewer and is the focus of the next section.

Narrative in Film

Film theorist, film critic, and author David Bordwell uses Aristotle's distinctions of the means of imitation (mimesis) as a guide for discussing conceptions of narration. For Bordwell, the fictional narrative begins with the construction of the action to be framed and the goal of narration is the viewer's understanding of the story to be told. Bordwell provides a constructivist account of film viewing that is a "dynamic psychological process, manipulating a variety of factors" (32) to include one's ability to perceive the images and colors on the screen; one's ability to draw upon prior knowledge and experience in order to make assumptions, form expectations, and confirm or "disconfirm" hypotheses; and one's ability to construct a story from the film based on the provided cues, patterns, and gaps (32-33). His idea of viewing relates back to my earlier discussion of Burke and terministic screens in that the viewer brings his or her own knowledge and perceptions to bear on the understanding of the material presented. This approach aids the viewer in knowledge creation by allowing him or her to compare the new experience to previous experiences based on an understanding and ordering of events, time, and space.

Part of this process of understanding and knowledge creation is based on how a film is constructed. Films are able to provide more than one narrative, or point of view. Plots can be constructed around multiple characters and multiple narratives aid the viewer in understanding the whole story. Additionally, time can be compressed in order to complete the telling of the story in the culturally accepted amount of time it takes to view a film in one sitting, thereby controlling the "order, frequency, and duration of the

presentation of events" (Bordwell 74). Narrative in film "works quite directly on the limits of the spectator's perceptual-cognitive abilities. . . . It is evident that in cinema many processes of narration depend upon the manipulation of time" (Bordwell 74). Unlike reading a book, this type of constraint prohibits a viewer from skipping a portion, revisiting a scene, or jumping forward in the story.[4]

Film theorist Murray Smith defines films as both visual spectacle and aural experience. Within films, he classifies narration as "the force which guides and constrains the spectator" (Smith 76). Smith agrees with Bordwell that fictional films and narratives allow viewers to "make inferences, formulate hypotheses, categorize representations, and utilize many other cognitive skills and strategies" in developing an understanding of the narrative content and that they "enrich our 'quasi-experience', that is, our efforts to grasp, through mental hypotheses, situations, persons, and values which are alien to us" (Smith 74). Such an understanding relies on how the narrative, or storytelling force, presents events both temporally and spatially.

Interactive educational designer and researcher Janet Murray claims that "it is always the story that comes first, because storytelling is a core human activity, one we take into every medium of expression, from the oral-formulaic to the digital multimedia" (3). When talking about similarities between games and stories, Murray mentions the puzzle "which can also be seen as a contest between the reader/player and the

[4] Current advancements in technology have led to the adoption of certain abilities like rewind and fast-forward. While such advancements allow viewers to alter the ways in which they view film—rewinding, pausing, and fast-forwarding—this style of viewing is not usually the intent of the film's director when depicting the narrative.

author/game-designer" (2). I would argue that her concept of the puzzle also fits when discussing filmic narratives. The main narrative unfolds, sometimes with the help of sub-narratives, and allows the viewer the opportunity to piece events together to create knowledge, or an understanding, about the event being depicted from the director's—and arguably each viewer's—point of view. The process of piecing together the events is an interactive experience, making viewing films an interactive experience rather than a passive one.

Character Identification in Film

A filmic narrative's range and depth, or ability to move among different characters and time (Smith 74) further aids in the construction of knowledge. Characters within films are responsible for moving the narrative forward and providing a mechanism by which the viewer is able to engage with, or become immersed in, the narrative. Smith argues that characters are "central to the rhetorical and aesthetic effects or narrative texts" and are "perhaps the major way by which narrative texts solicit our assent for particular values, practices, and ideologies" (4). For Smith, the narrative organizes the film's "text" and allows for character engagement or identification. The character engagement is what creates a sense of identification with the viewer. How viewers are capable of responding to the characters depicted in film makes knowledge construction possible, as I discussed in both chapters 1 and 2. By relating to characters on the basis of perceived qualities or shared values, one can vicariously experience the emotions of the characters.

Smith defines three levels of engagement for identifying with characters. The first level is alignment and is concerned with "the way a film gives us access to the actions,

thoughts, and feelings of characters" (6). This alignment describes how viewers are positioned in relation to the characters being depicted in regards to action, thought, and emotion. Narration's role in alignment is providing attachment by restricting access to a single character or providing more range and providing access to two or more characters (Smith 83). Thus, the range and depth of the narrative provides character knowledge to the viewer and results in alignment with the character(s).

The second level of engagement, according to Smith, is allegiance. Allegiance "concerns the way a film attempts to marshal our sympathies for or against the various characters in the world of the fiction" (Smith 6). Allegiance is determined by how a viewer evaluates the morality of a character. This is dictated by what a viewer considers "to be reliable access to the character's state of mind, on understanding the context of the character's actions, and having morally evaluated the character on the basis of this knowledge" (Smith 84).

Smith's third level of engagement is recognition, describing the "spectator's construction of character: the perception of a set of textual elements, in film typically cohering around the image of a body, as an individuated and continuous human agent" (82). This recognition is determined by real-world comparisons of the fictional characters to individuals known to exist in the real world. As an example of such recognition, multimedia researcher Ken Perlin analyzes the character Tony Soprano from the HBO series *The Sopranos*. Perlin points outs that the narrative and point of view provide the viewer insight into Tony's thought processes. He argues that the power of character engagement "lies in pulling us into the point of view of a character who makes moral

choices wildly at odds with the choices that most of us would make" (12) and that the recognition—or to use Perlin's word, transference—is "effected in such a focused and powerful way only because we agree (when we start watching) to give over our choice-making power, and to passively allow the narrative to lead us where it will" (Perlin 12). The recognition continues only as long as the narrative does not contradict it. According to Smith, "Characters, and fictional worlds in general, rely upon this process in order to be mentally represented at all" (82). It is the ability to make the real-world connections that allows the viewer to comprehend the fictional representation. The potential for such connections is an interesting concept to study. Looking at how the connections are made can lead to a greater understanding of how films function rhetorically using depictions of crises and whether such depictions have instructional value.

These real-world connections are responsible for the emotional responses on the part of the viewer. Once the characters are aligned, the viewer chooses allegiances and makes recognizable connections to actual individuals. Based on which allegiances are made, the viewer is able to respond emotionally to the context of the narrative and associated action. According to Smith:

> Engagement is not a process in which we vicariously experience the emotions of characters in any simple sense, nor one in which we are 'possessed' wholly by a single character. It is, rather, a complex, heterogeneous set of interacting responses—autonomic, cognitive, affective—to what we know to be fictional entities. (230)

One's response to a fictional character and the narrative inhabited and experienced by that character provides a level of interaction on the part of the viewer. This interaction creates the space for the viewer to potentially use the response and knowledge of the situation and apply it to reality in a way that is reflective of the viewer's own experiences and prior knowledge. Given the importance and persuasive power of a film's characters to interact with viewers and aid knowledge creation and acquisition, the potential for using entertainment-oriented films for the purposes of real-life instruction and exercises is compelling.

The Disaster Film

According to teacher, actor, and director Andrea Stulman Dennett and Yiddish theatre specialist Nina Warnke, dramatizations of disasters became a "marketable trend" at the beginning of the 20th century (101). Driven by profit, the amusement industry began to fictionalize all sorts of disaster events, making them accessible to a large percentage of the population "as fictionalized reality, creating what seemed to be almost firsthand experiences" (Dennett and Warnke 101). Their research shows that this started as theatrical displays of live actors in front of live audiences in venues like Coney Island. It was not until the 1970s that the filmic "disaster" genre was born (Sanders 11). Like the live action scenarios played out at the turn of the century, access to new media technologies made it even easier to relive "eyewitness visual and audio testaments time and again" and provided audiences the "knowledge of what it is to live through a disaster" (Sanders 8) through media broadcasts.

Filmic depictions of disasters provide viewers with a representation of the event while obscuring the possible effects with spectacle. Based on the camera angle, the timing, and the music the viewer becomes transfixed with what is displayed and does not consider what actual consequences could persist based on the event (Murray and Heumann 45). According to film studies scholar and professor John Sanders, typical disaster narratives in film:

> focus on natural disasters, accidents (caused either by a freak accident or aided by human folly), terrorist or criminal attacks/plots, threats from space (either natural or by aliens) or they are technology-oriented (nuclear, computers, science). As such, the disaster film is able to tap into prevailing fears in any particular era and, indeed, appeal to the human fascination with people in peril; the rubber-necking motorist, craning to catch a glimpse of the car crash at the side of the road, is that evening's disaster film viewer. (17-18)

This is indeed true of the films selected for this analysis. And I think it is important to note that disaster films often include more than one type of event, which makes them more closely aligned with the reality of crisis situations. Such films contain a central narrative that is impacted by a multitude of events that build off of one another and create more stress and tension than the initial event, further complicating the actual response. Additionally, disaster films typically provide a narrative for how the survivors or group of characters impacted will eventually make their way to survival (Keane 5).

The depiction of disasters in entertainment films continues to flourish and advancements in the media's technologies have created additional visual possibilities, leading to the "tendency for the disaster film to focus on global catastrophe rather than localized incidents" (Sanders 15). Additionally, critics argue that the disaster film genre mixes with the genres of science fictions, horror, and action films to focus more heavily on current fears involving sweeping devastation such as pandemics and "nuclear oblivion" (Sanders 16).

The Analysis

My analysis is focused on the representation of crisis events and associated communication responses in films. I will look at each artifact and explore how it does or does not represent the rhetorical devices outlined in chapter 2 that I argue are inherently a part of organizational crisis communication. The identification of narrative and metaphor in the media will help to inform the selection of both good and bad examples of crisis communication. Additionally, the analysis will focus on examples of social effects, specifically direct effects, cumulative effects, and cognitive-transactional effects. How those examples might be leveraged in organizational training scenarios will be discussed in chapter 5.

The following sections will be focused on individual films. Each section will provide an overview of the film's plot, identification of how narrative and metaphor are being used in the film, and discussions of the presence of specific social effects (i.e., direct, cumulative, and cognitive-transactional effects) in order to analyze how meaning is made and communicated using the rhetoric of crisis response.

Virus *(Haruki Kadokawa Films 1980)*

This 1980 film depicts the destruction of the world's population due to a deadly virus called MM88. The film's central narrative is one about the virus: its origins, its abilities, its ultimate release and the ensuing devastation, and the eventual discovery of a vaccine. Additional storylines, or what I term sub-narratives, also exist: the narrative behind how the virus is released, the discovery that the virus is being considered as a weapon, nuclear arming in response to the worldwide devastation and resultant blame, the story of the survivors creating a new government and way of life, a blossoming love story, and the threat of worldwide destruction due to seismic activity. These narratives work to create an unfolding of events, individual crises, and disasters that build to an overall crisis of the end of the world and life as we know it.

Language Use: Narrative and Metaphor

This section is focused on examples of language use in the film and relates this language use back to what I defined earlier as crisis communication. The characters within the film use language to help move the narrative forward. They describe past events through conversations with one another to help the viewer create an understanding of what has happened to lead to the currently depicted events. In addition to narrating past events, the characters in the film also use metaphor to convey emotion and the depth of certain situations.

The film opens with a caption placing the action in East Germany at the Bacterial Research Institute.[5] German scientist Professor Krause is meeting with some gentlemen to hand off a vial. He gives clear and concise instructions as to how to handle the vial and to whom it should be delivered. Krause even asks the men to confirm their understanding of his instructions. This is the first good example of what I refer to as a crisis communication: Krause provides detailed instruction and asks for confirmation of understanding. Additionally, Krause narrates the origin of what is in the vial: MM88. He tells of the discovery of the virus and its evolution, referencing it as a "doomsday weapon." His temporal telling of the events in easy to understand terminology and use of metaphor help convey the knowledge and its importance to the viewer.

One month later at the University of Maryland Institute for Biological Research, scientist Dr. Myer is typing some sort of document that he quickly hides when Colonel Rankin enters the room. Through conversations between Rankin and Meyer the viewer learns more about the virus and its capabilities. Their exchange is an excellent example of how language creates knowledge. Their conversation helps the viewer understand the virus. Meyer creates a sense of urgency and fear using metaphor to describe MM88 as a "massive" threat and a "little monster." Meyer confides that he is "scared to death of this thing" and voices his realization that the virus is a weapon that is being developed in "piecemeal fashion" by the "system," referencing the military's biological weapons program.

[5] This is a convention used throughout the film to take the viewer from location to location in order to keep the narrative moving without actual travel time.

Rankin denies Meyer's accusations and states that MM88 is only being researched as a "defensive element." Their continued dialogue reveals that the US has developed a missile deployment system called the Automatic Reaction System (ARS) and that the Soviets have developed a deployment system of their own. MM88 is being researched as a way to have leverage over the Soviets since they are matching all defensive and offensive measures of the US. Meyer does not believe Rankin and exits the lab, his previously hidden document falling to the floor at Rankin's feet. Rankin reads the paper and discovers that Meyer is going to "blow the whistle" to the Senate's Defense Oversight Committee and orders that Meyer be sent for a "routine physical." This "physical" results in Meyer being declared insane and institutionalized in order to keep him from sharing his knowledge with the Senate's committee. These examples show how the language use in the film creates knowledge among characters and with the viewer. Using a common language and employing metaphor, Krause, Rankin and Meyer move the narrative forward and provide the necessary information to the audience.

Another example of knowledge creation through language use occurs at the US White House, where President Richardson and cabinet members are seated watching the news broadcasts and discussing the "Italian Flu," the name that the virus has been given due to its origins of discovery. Richardson compares the Italian Flu to the common cold and states that "it's everywhere and nowhere," conveying a sense of hopelessness. Richardson is informed that no vaccine exists and that first responders (police and medical personnel) have been given a placebo vaccine in order to keep them working. This admission results in an eruption of anger and protests from the cabinet members.

The scene becomes tense as Richardson and the cabinet members argue and blame one another for the situation; illustrative of poor crisis communication.

The chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Garland, claims that the virus is not just an epidemic but that it is "germ warfare" and blames the Soviets. He compares the germs to missiles as "incoming" threats and requests that ARS be activated. Rankin remains silent throughout the arguments and accusations, all the while knowing the truth of the situation. By failing to express what he knows, the rest of the room is denied the situational knowledge. There are high levels of emotion—panic, anger, frustration—and finger pointing. Agendas come to the surface: blame the Soviets for the germ warfare and launch nuclear war. The blame and accusations are poor examples of how to handle a crisis situation and illustrate the potential breakdowns in communication when not all available information is shared.

In a different scene at the White House, the viewer watches as Senator Barkley, head of the Defense Oversight Committee, questions Garland on "Operation Phoenix." Garland claims that the research was only a "paper study" and calls Rankin in to explain the project since it fell under his command. Rankin denies that the study resulted in anything but a benign strain. His withholding of information is exposed when Barkley introduces Meyer, freed from the asylum. Meyer counters what Richardson has been told. The narrative provided by Barkley and Meyer fills in the gaps for Richardson and Garland; an example of how language—and narrative in particular—create knowledge. The next few interactions are heavily laced with metaphor to imbue a sense of urgency. Garland urges a "strong military posture" and asks for ARS activation, even after being

told that the US developed the virus. A “lid of complete secrecy” is placed on the conversation, which is interrupted by a phone call. Richardson’s wife has “come down with a cold.”

In a later scene at the White House, both Richardson and Barkley have become ill. Commiserating about the current situation, Barkley and Richardson come to the realization in conversation that perhaps some people could be spared from MM88. Richardson addresses Palmer Station via radio and orders them to patch all polar stations in to the address. These bases range from the USSR, to Chile, Japan, and France. Spatial constraints of a typical narrative are ignored as the film shows all stations listening as Richardson states that “the world has been beset by a horrible plague.” Using accessible language and metaphor, he narrates the events, explaining what is known of the virus, how it stays dormant, and what they should do to survive. He orders “do not leave your sanctuary,” forbid entry to outsiders, and do not attempt to return.

Later in the film, at Palmer Station, is a meeting of survivors from all Antarctic stations. Using excellent crisis communication, the meeting opens with a status: 855 men and 8 women are all that is left of the world’s population and there are only enough supplies for 2 years. Admiral Conway assumes control of the council and directs that they all need to work together to survive until the virus dies out. Another good example of crisis communication, Conway details the actions to be taken: pooling scientific knowledge to survive, establishing priorities, and organizing priorities. But past politics infect the atmosphere and dissent results in physical fights providing the viewer an example of poor crisis communication.

Through additional dialogue later in the film, the viewer learns that Yoshizumi, a Japanese geological researcher and expert in seismic activity, has identified that the eastern coast of the US will be impacted by an earthquake in approximately one month due to fault lines created from off-shore drilling. While this in itself is not a crisis, only a disaster by my earlier definitions, the American soldier, Major Carter, continues to raise awareness and create knowledge through language use, specifically dialogue. He alerts Conway that the earthquake would be catastrophic because the ARS is armed and located at the epicenter of the predicted earthquake. The earthquake would launch the missiles, which would in turn launch a retaliatory response from the Soviets, who had also armed their system prior to everyone dying from the virus. A Soviet representative at the station informs Conway that there is a missile aimed at Palmer Station because the Soviets believed that the US was working on an offensive tactic from that base. The decision is made that someone must be sent to Washington, DC to disarm the system.

Language use throughout the film operates to introduce each unfolding crisis using techniques found in crisis communication. The characters make use of metaphor to create knowledge, provide planning using innovation and creativity, and use easy to understand terminology to avoid misinterpretation. The instances of poor crisis communication are highlighted by blame, intentional silence (or purposefully withholding information), and physical violence.

Direct Effects

Earlier in the chapter I cited Perse's definition of direct effects as being concerned with the involuntary responses of viewers. This section provides examples of direct

effects in relation to the film and relates those examples back to the film's representation of crises.

Within the film, suspense and threats are signaled by building and ominous music. In the beginning of the film, once Krause has been killed and MM88 stolen, music signals the negative impact the broken vial will come to have on civilization. In another scene, the music's tempo builds to create a feeling of suspense when a Soviet submarine, filled with sick passengers, declares they will land at Palmer Station. McCloud, aboard a British submarine, interrupts the radio message and threatens violence if the Soviet submarine does not abide by Conway's command. In accordance with the building tempo, the film utilizes quick shots to show different points of view—McCloud's and the Soviet submarine captain's—as the two arm their torpedoes and view the other submarine using the periscope's cross-hairs. The British submarine fires on the Soviet submarine and it explodes.

The relief at Palmer Station does not last long before the next crisis situation begins to build. The council at Palmer Station is faced with the task of creating a new government with new laws that require a great deal of compromise and teamwork—both are excellent examples of crisis communication—to be successful. A female survivor at Palmer Station, Sylvia, has been attacked and raped. This leads the council to discuss how to handle human sexuality and the will to reproduce. The situation and the language used in this scene are juxtaposed. The issue is calmly discussed using very concise terms; however, the issue itself is emotional and violent. It is determined that "conventional relationships" are no longer possible and that an innovative approach is needed: each

woman will have to "accommodate" more than one man. This exchange provides another good example of crisis communication as the council uses creativity and innovation in defining guidelines for the survivors to follow and providing reasoning for those guidelines. The juxtaposition of the situation and how it is handled foreshadows an emotional response from the viewer.

In the film, representations of teamwork and compassion help to create character alignment. The choices the characters make in order to increase their chances for survival lead to further emotional engagement by the viewer.

Cumulative Effects

Cumulative effects, or those effects concerned with the type and relevancy of images shown in the media, are also present in the film. Many of the images depict violence and death. At the beginning when Krause attempts to hand off the vial, bloodshed and violence are shown as the building is attacked by gunmen who kill Krause. The getaway plane, with Krause's assassins onboard, experiences mechanical trouble and crashes into snowcapped mountains. The plane explodes and the vial falls from the plane, breaking open on the rocks and releasing the deadly contents. The camera provides a close-up of the broken vial with ominous music playing in the background; thus, foreshadowing the terrible events to come.

Other scenes in the film operate to show the devastation caused by the broken vial. In the Cossack (Soviet Socialist Republic), a young boy leads a group of horsemen to a field full of dead sheep. The inferred message is that MM88 has thawed and has begun to reproduce. Multiple images of television broadcasts show the worldwide

epidemic with riots and civil disorder. The displayed spectacle and violence help to illustrate the building crisis. Additionally, newspaper headlines in several languages about the Italian Flu are flashed in front of the viewer with photographs depicting the sick and dead.

Other images illustrate the impact the virus is having on civilization. Scenes of chaos and screaming at hospitals are shown. Ambulances race through the streets and hospitals are overflowing with panicked and emotional patrons. Once the viewer learns that Japan has declared martial law, images of military deployments throughout Japanese cities are shown. Dead bodies are loaded into trucks and then piled and incinerated. Famous skylines and popular tourist attractions of New York, London, Paris, Rome, Moscow, and Tokyo are shown with corresponding death tolls in the millions.

Later in the movie, when Yoshizumi and Carter arrive at the White House to disarm the ARS, action and spectacle work together to create a sense of urgency and impending misfortune. The men gain access to the building using explosives as the tremors increase in strength and frequency, resulting in falling debris, which mortally wounds Carter. Yoshizumi runs through the hallway dodging falling ceiling and wall panels as the tremors get worse. Just as he locates the control panel, the tremors trigger the launch of the ARS and Yoshizumi watches each missile deploy on the screens. Buzzers and alarms accompany the launch, then silence.

A nuclear blast hits the city. Spectacular images of explosions and mushroom clouds mixed with views of the famous skylines and attractions shown earlier display on the screen. A caption on the screen reads “Four Years Later.” Destruction, ashes, and

corpses are shown as a solitary man walks across the landscape. The viewer discovers that the man is Yoshizumi. The majority of the film portrays images of death and destruction, emotional outbursts, and physical altercations. However, the final images offer hope and relief that humanity will overcome and survive.

Cognitive-Transactional Effects

What is learned and how it is learned in this film relies on several effects. The extensive use of narrative in conversations helps the viewer piece together the story and understand the unfolding crises. The characters' use of language—through metaphor and accessible terms—provides the cues for the shifting narratives and episodes of crisis communication. The overall mood of doom, fear, and devastation is created through the use of music and spectacle (or images). All of these effects operate together to relay the many crises in the film, create an understanding with the viewer, and attempt to move the viewer to feel specific emotions (such as suspense, discomfort, or fear). The ability for the film to arouse emotion in the audience and to create an understanding of the narrative and character behaviors supports my argument that entertainment media can entertain and educate.

Throughout, the film has depicted crisis after crisis. At the end of the film, the mood shifts to a more hopeful tone. After the viewer discovers that Yoshizumi has survived the nuclear blast, the story unfolds to show that several women and children have survived but are running out of food and hope. A scientist from Palmer Station is with them and the viewer learns that the reason they have survived is due to a vaccination he created. The scientist provides the final example of good crisis communication as he

pleads with the survivors to focus on what is going right (the birth and survival of babies and a working vaccination) and to seek better shelter in order to survive the coming winter. Yoshizumi appears on the horizon, Marit—a survivor and his love interest—runs to him, they embrace and Yoshizumi says, "life is wonderful." The film ends with the promise of a better tomorrow.

Apollo 13 *(Universal 1995)*

Based on actual events, *Apollo 13* depicts the events of the thirteenth Apollo moon-landing mission on April 11, 1970, and spans the entire seven days of the mission. The overall narrative is about the mission, but includes several sub-narratives: the US' space program to date, the relationship of the lead astronaut with his wife and family, the interactions of the crew members, the interactions and responsibilities of Mission Control, the story told by the news broadcasters, and the narrative of superstition and fear throughout.

Language Use: Narrative and Metaphor

Apollo 13 demonstrates a different level of communication than *Virus* with a focus on the team and down to the individual team member. Like *Virus*, the characters within the film use language to help move the narrative forward. They describe past events through conversations with one another to help the viewer create an understanding of what has happened to lead to the currently depicted events. In addition to narrating past events, the characters in the film also use metaphor to convey emotion and the depth of certain situations.

The action opens with video showing the first Apollo mission and a voice narrating the events of the pre-launch test on January 1, 1967. Using accessible language and metaphor, the narrator highlights how America has risen to the challenge, compares space exploration to an adventure, likens the space program to a race with Russia, and then details the tragic deaths of US astronauts due to a launch pad fire.

As with *Virus*, time is compressed in this film so that the months of training and all seven days of mission time can be represented in the conventionally accepted running time for films. Captioning is used to alert the viewer to the date in order to reduce confusion. According to one of these captions, the viewer is experiencing action that occurred three months prior to launch where the original crew—Jim, Fred, and Ken—are training. While training, an issue is introduced in the docking scenario. The team depicts excellent crisis communication skills by remaining calm and working through the issue successfully. At the end of the exercise, Ken asks that they do it again to perfect it and mitigate any issues and the other two agree. This is an example of contingency planning in crisis response scenarios. The men have identified a potential problem and are working on how they can best correct or mitigate the situation in a safe environment before actual action is necessitated in a crisis situation.

As the mission is beset by crisis after crisis, the crew demonstrates positive crisis communication through their use of clear and accessible language. From the moment a "problem" is identified, Jim maintains his calm and stays focused. He takes control of the situation and begins narrating what he will do before doing it so that Mission Control and his crew members are aware.

Likewise, at Mission Control, Gene Krantz, director at Mission Control, demonstrates his excellent leadership capabilities during a time of crisis. He asks direct questions, waits for the answers, and then questions Mission Control personnel of the crew's status once received. When the situation becomes tense and the personnel appear to become emotional, Gene instructs them to only provide status one at a time so no information is lost or overlooked. He tells Mission Control personnel to "be cool" and instructs "let's work the problem" and "let's not make things worse by guessing." As additional problems arise, Gene focuses on what is going well instead of everything that is going bad. His attempt at doing so is a common technique used in events to instill confidence in leadership and helps to create an optimistic attitude.

As the crew and Mission Control weigh their options before making a decision, they repeat each order in a different way to illustrate understanding and to confirm what is being asked. The crew begins looking at alternatives because they are the craft's experts and know what needs to be done. Their experience and knowledge is respected by Mission Control, another excellent example of interactions in a crisis—acknowledging who the experts are and letting them take control. The crew and Mission Control coordinate their actions closely; Jim tells Mission Control and the other crew members what he needs and they confirm their understanding.

Throughout the film, the crew and Mission Control use a common language to enforce widespread understanding. Both Mission Control and the crew resort to metaphor as a way to provide quick and easy-to-understand status of the situation. This use of metaphor is typical of crisis communication. As I mentioned in chapter 2, one extremely

successful way to ensure group consensus and understanding is through the use of predefined and accepted metaphors. Metaphor use allows a broad understanding across a diverse audience using concise language. When Fred states that the ship is "bleeding to death" and Mission Control personnel say the "Odyssey is dying," their use of language creates a consensual understanding among the crew and support personnel. The message is conveyed clearly and quickly. Other examples of how metaphors are used throughout the exchanges include the following scenes: when told that the mission is over and they will need to return to earth, Jim says "we just lost the moon;" Jim continues to give clear instructions focused on getting the crew "home;" the loss of steering control is compared to "flying with a dead elephant" on their back; and news broadcasters provide public status using phrases like "close call," "narrow margin," and "not out of the woods."

As the crew readies for the "burn" to correct their angle of trajectory, Jim gives clear instructions on responsibilities to Jack and Fred. He then asks for understanding, communicates his expectations, and asks for confirmation of readiness. When the module appears to misaim, Jim accepts responsibility instead of blaming one of the other crew members for the mistake. Jim's willingness to accept accountability for his actions further highlights an earlier scene of blame between Jack and Fred and operates as exemplary crisis communication.

The next crisis is realized when Jim asks for the re-entry procedure. His boss, Deke, explains that Ken—previously removed from the crew for fear of illness— is simulating it for them now and that it is not ready. When Gene asks for the same and is told that the power-up procedures are not ready he loses control and begins yelling.

While some would argue that his yelling is an example of poor crisis communication, I would argue that he still clearly demands what he wants and what he does not want from his personnel. His tone and volume work to create a sense of urgency and relay the tension and emotion of the situation.

The film's representation of crisis communication is exceptional. Clear instructions, demonstrated understanding, delegation, and teamwork convey the types of responses needed for success. Using metaphor and accessible language broadens the impact of knowledge creation for the film's multiple internal audiences: the crew, Mission Control personnel, family members, and the public.

Direct Effects

Apollo 13's devices for creating involuntary audience responses are similar to *Virus* in some ways. Using audio and close-ups, the film represents moments of building tension designed to create suspense and emotion in the audience. In one example, the viewer watches a scene with the master alarm sounding, gauge glass breaking, and space suits ripping open. The spacecraft appears to be coming apart at the seams and the astronauts have no control over the situation. An astronaut is expelled from the ship and drifts off into space. Suddenly, the viewer realizes it is all a dream that Marilyn, Jim's wife, is having. This scene, among several others, helps relay Marilyn's superstitions surrounding the failure of the mission.

Later in the film, as the landing time approaches, increasing music tempo builds suspense. When the craft begins re-entry, all radio contact between Mission Control and the crew is lost. The silence operates to further increase suspense. The portrayal of

relationships between the characters strengthens viewer engagement and identification. As a viewer, one can align with at least one of the represented relationships: parent, significant other, friend, co-worker, or spectator. This helps the direct effects to be successful in creating emotional responses with the viewer as he or she witnesses the exchanges. As status is given during each crisis event, the viewer shares the emotions represented by the characters on screen based on his or her own personal experiences with similar people and in seemingly similar situations.

Cumulative Effects

As I mentioned previously, there is a sub-narrative of superstition and fear with the mission. This sub-narrative is conveyed through the use of some of the images within the film. The superstition is due to the association of the number 13 with the mission. The astronauts do their best to dismiss each mention of superstition and assure the press that it is only a coincidence. Marilyn's superstitious nature is continuously referenced throughout the narrative. Aside from voicing her concerns with the mission number, she is shown the morning of the launch losing her wedding ring down the shower drain. Gene is also aligned with this sub-narrative. As preparation for the launch is shown, the viewer is taken to Mission Control where Gene eagerly awaits the arrival of a vest from his wife, his own superstition that a successful mission hinges on the receipt and wearing of the vest. The vest arrives and they begin the go/no-go countdown for launch.

Many of the images used in the film create a sense of fear and disaster. During the countdown, there is a camera shot of Jim looking at the Abort switch. The crew is cleared for launch and the countdown commences. The viewer is shown spectacular images of

the jet boosters arming, jet fuel burning then sucking back in to create the propulsion, and equipment breaking away as the spacecraft begins to launch. The music increases tempo and the camera shots are choppy. When the first crisis occurs, Jim looks at the Abort switch again.

After the crew is in space, the next crisis is signaled using imagery. While executing routine "housekeeping" procedures Jack is asked to "stir" the oxygen tanks. He flips the switch and the camera angle journeys the length of the cable from the control panel to the tank and shows the cable disconnecting from the tank. An alarm sounds and a piece of the ship breaks off.

The film's imagery is straightforward yet spectacular. The viewer watches the crew and Mission Control manipulate equipment and can almost experience the spacecraft's movement during launch, turbulence, and landing due to camera angles, spectacle, and sound effects.

Cognitive-Transactional Effects

What is learned and how it is learned in this film relies on several effects. The depiction of events paired with narrative conveys the overall story to the viewer. When something is not explicitly stated, an image is provided or an action is relayed that usually allows the viewer to infer what is happening and why. The characters' use of language—through metaphor and accessible terms—aids in the representation of action. The overall mood of suspense, superstition, and fear is created through the use of music and spectacle. All of these effects work together to aid the story in unfolding each crisis

event and portraying the solutions for each using innovation and creativity, cornerstones of crisis communication, as well as clear communication.

Like in *Virus*, a focus is placed on the need to be creative and innovative in the situation. Gene instructs Mission Control to forget the existing flight plan and to work on improvising a new mission. His orders are to explore available options and he is there to help regain control of the situation when Mission Control personnel become emotional due to the stress and start talking over one another. The majority of the crisis communication depicted in the film is effective because the team members were able to predict one another's moves and know one another's tones. There was an implicit and an explicit trust in each other's ability to perform their jobs. Members communicated expectations and timelines, explored all options and associated risks, and stated fact over assumptions. Similar to *Virus*, there was a focus on the positive and on essentials: what was needed at a bare minimum to continue on a path forward.

In chapter 1 I provided an overview of how preplanning is useful in crisis response and strategy formation. Most organizations have some sort of documented plan or procedure for crisis response. These plans identify the responders, resources, and potential mitigations or solutions. Contingency planning includes documented procedures and plans for addressing specific failures or risks; however, innovation is welcomed during crisis events because it is necessary for addressing problems that had not previously been accounted for. Scenarios in both films showed the need for improvisation and contingency planning (e.g., running simulations under the same conditions, creating

an air filter out of only what is available, using the earth as a guide when instrumentation fails).

2012 *(Columbia Pictures 2009)*

2012 depicts devastating environmental catastrophes that are leading to the end of the world as we know it. The overarching narrative of the sun's effect on the Earth's crust is paired with sub-narratives of survival and continued government, familial and interpersonal relationships, deception, and luck versus planning or predictions. The film uses the same captioning conventions as *Virus* and *Apollo 13* to compress time and show widespread locations in the conventional filmic viewing time but provides faster cuts in action and intertwines the sub-narratives more conspicuously, thus making it harder to summarize temporally. Different from the other two films, *2012* depicts the overarching story through introductions to all of the different characters and their life stories using quick snapshots of action.

Language Use: Narrative and Metaphor

The film opens in India in 2010 to set the storyline, but then quickly ignores spatial and temporal boundaries by shifting time and location. The viewer is introduced to the many characters in the film along with the unfolding sub-narratives. The action moves from India to Washington, DC, where Adrian briefs the situation to Carl Anheuser and President Wilson. The action then quickly moves to the 2010 G8 Summit, where Wilson provides a narrative of the scientific findings of the past six months claiming, "the world as we know it will soon come to an end."

For the next several scenes, the viewer is transported to Tibet, then London, then Paris, then a Mayan Temple (the scene of a mass suicide), to Los Angeles, and then to a cruise ship. All of the sub-narratives unfold in the expanse of two years. These quick cuts to different locations help begin each of the sub-narratives while emphasizing the overall narrative of the world's destruction due to the sun's forces. The viewer learns about a massive dam project (deception sub-narrative) in Tibet's Cho Ming Valley while being introduced to Tenzin, Nima, and their grandparents (sub-narrative of family). In Paris the viewer learns about a project to keep the world's art safe (sub-narrative of deception) and is introduced to Wilson's daughter, Laura (sub-narrative of family). The news report of the mass suicide at a Mayan Temple provides the viewer with information that the Mayans believed the world would end on December 12, 2010 (primary narrative). The newscaster says scientific records support their belief and that the world is "heading for the biggest solar climax in recorded history."

Much of the early language use in the film focuses on describing the problem and explaining the plans for humanity to overcome the problem. Statuses and briefings are provided among the characters as a way to keep the narratives and action progressing. Through conversations between the characters, the viewer learns that the world's leaders' plans for survival and continued government include the creation of massive ships—arks—to ride out the eventual and expected flooding due to the heating of the earth's crust.

The film depicts several seemingly separate events and situations that could escalate to a crisis. After Wilson begins to connect the events for Laura, the

foreshadowing of the sun's destruction and the character introductions begin to take shape as a large unfolding of events. Here, the examples of crisis communication begin to surface. In the hallway, Carl and Adrian are talking and Carl clearly dictates responsibilities: Adrian is to determine the timeline for when "this is all going to fall apart" and Carl is to "figure out how to retain some semblance of government after it falls apart."

Cues and clues have been provided to the viewer to enable an understanding of a larger picture and the interrelations between sub-narratives and characters. It is at this point that the characters' paths begin to intersect and the viewer pieces together the many narratives at almost the same time as the main character, Jackson Curtis. Through conspiracy theorist Charlie, Jackson learns about the Mayan prediction and how the sun's flares could lead to a destabilization of the earth's crust. Charlie claims that the end of days is coming and references the apocalypse and the end of the world. He says our planet had an "expiration date."

At the White House the status is given that only four arks are operational, resulting in the survival of 400,000 people. Wilson agrees to initiate the boarding process. Adrian briefs the latest geological status, offering an estimate of two to three days before "it" happens. Wilson says "the longer we wait, the more luck plays its part" and orders evacuation. This statement begins the sub-narrative of luck versus planning or predictions.

Back in Washington, DC Air Force 1 takes off as Wilson, who has stayed behind, addresses the nation. Using highly figurative language, he tells the American people that

a “catastrophe has struck our nation, has struck the world” and that the “coming destruction is not preventable,” “today, none of us are strangers, today we are one family stepping into the darkness together,” and “we are a nation of many religions but I believe these words reflect the spirit of all our faiths.” His speech, using metaphor and accessible language demonstrates good crisis communication as he explains what is happening and rallies the public to come together.

Crisis events continue to occur, interspersed with the sub-narrative of luck. Jackson’s plane experiences engine failure and they prepare to crash into the ocean; however, due to luck and the shifting of the Earth’s crust, they are closer to their final destination than anticipated. Instead of being over water, they are over Chinese land.

At this point in the film, the narrative and action become more sporadic. When language is featured in the film, it is to provide summations and status of the impending disaster and the evacuation. Blame becomes a central theme to all of Carl’s exchanges; he blames Adrian for inaccurate predictions. Toward the end, while the world leaders are aboard the arks and watching panic ensue among the crowds who have not boarded, Adrian addresses them with a passionate speech about humanity and civilization (reminiscent of Wilson’s earlier address), which includes the following phrases: “the moment we stop fighting for each other, that’s the moment we lose our humanity” and “Everyone out there has died in vain if we start our future with an act of cruelty.” His emotional and passionate appeal results in a unanimous decision to open the gates.

Metaphor, statusing, and reasoning operate in the film as good examples of crisis communication. The language used and the way in which it is used help create

understanding across broad internal audiences: individual characters, the public, and world leaders.

Direct and Cumulative Effects

The devices used in *2012* to create suspense and audience reaction are similar to the previous two films. Close-ups of action and quick cuts to different sub-narratives help create a feeling of tension and suspense. From the very beginning, the film relies heavily on spectacle to communicate the mass devastation and destruction. The opening images are the spectacle of solar flares on what the viewer accepts to be the sun's surface. This image remains central to the rest of the film as the characters appear to be in a race against time to find safety before the end of the world.

As the primary narrative unfolds, cracks in asphalt are shown more frequently to illustrate the earth's instability. When the viewer is first introduced to Jackson as he races to pick up his children for a camping trip, the viewer is shown the image of a crowd looking at a huge crack in the middle of a residential street and the voice of two radio hosts blaming the damage on a "mini quake." While Jackson, Noah, and Lily are camping, Kate and Gordon are separated when a crack forms in the middle of a grocery store floor. Later, when Jackson delivers Yuri's sons to the airport, he sees a crack forming in the asphalt at the airport and the viewer gets the impression that Jackson is now connecting the multiple narratives he has been subjected to: Yellowstone as unstable, Charlie's conspiracy, the idea of ships to save "us" from the end of the world.

While the film has employed several spectacular effects up to this point, here is where the spectacle becomes a standard and ever-present part of the storyline. With his

family safely inside his limousine, Jackson outraces a sinkhole with freeways and buildings collapsing all around him. They reach the airport, get into a plane, and dodge falling buildings and bridges as they make their escape. They watch from the safety of the plane as California slides into the ocean.

Jackson and family arrive in Yellowstone in order to find Charlie and a map he referenced in an earlier conversation that depicts the location of the arks. The spectacular effects continue as geyser-like explosions approach the area where they find Charlie. The entire mountain explodes as Jackson retreats and the viewer watches as he and Lily outrun a new sinkhole with flaming chunks of mountain falling around them. Once they arrive at the plane, they have to outrun destruction again as they take off for Las Vegas in search of a bigger plane.

When the tsunamis begin to strike land, the viewer is subjected to spectacular views of huge waves in India and Tibet. The water comes crashing down from great heights and destroys anything in its path. A tsunami hits Harry and Tony's cruise ship, destroying the vessel and presumably everyone onboard, and spreads to Washington, DC where an aircraft carrier comes rolling down on the city in the wave as Wilson looks on.

In the cargo plane with Yuri's family, Jackson and his family must make a fast escape as the engines fail. Further spectacle shows the cars in the plane's compartment tumbling around and the family piled into one car and speeding out of the compartment when the plane dips low enough to the ground. The plane comes to a stop, precariously perched over a cliff, but then tumbles down the cliff and explodes.

In Tibet at the ark location, the mountain has been designed to open and allow the arks to sail out. The opening of the mountain during the boarding process creates panic that not everyone will be able to board. The personnel at the control bridge watch the hysterical crowd from surveillance cameras. People shove one another and fall over the edge to their deaths as they struggle to board before the ark doors close.

As the suspense builds and emotions become more tense among the characters, more spectacular scenes are shown: ark compartment doors dividing family members, ark compartments filling with water and threatening to drown the characters, and the impending impact of the ark with Mt. Everest. The action sequences are filmed in a manner to create tension and a sense that time is running out. Additionally, tearful good-byes between family members and friends as they succumb to the devastation further add a level of emotional response in the viewer.

Despite the spectacular scenes of destruction, the film concludes in an uplifting and promising note. The survivors are afforded the opportunity to exit the arks and the viewer is shown a pan out shot of the arks opening their doors and helicopters flying around at sunset. Pairing spectacle with emotional appeals and passionate conversations helps to create alignment with characters. Turbulent relationships, fear for the well being of children and loved ones, and the need to be a strong leader help viewers identify with the imagery and narrative.

Cognitive-Transactional Effects

2012 differs from the other two films in the way the events unfold so quickly and so seemingly unrelated from one another. The film relies a great deal on special effects,

or spectacle, as a way to engage the viewer's attention and to create suspense. Similar to the other two films, *2012* does provide sub-narratives that work with the main narrative to further the story and develop character engagement and identification. While the film does not offer as many examples of crisis communication as the prior two, it does provide some immediate examples of statusing throughout the narrative, use of metaphor, and use of easily accessible and clearly understood language that promotes broad understanding and knowledge creation.

What is learned and how it is learned in this film relies on several effects. Spectacle, like the ground cracks, and intertwining narratives operate to provide the necessary information to the viewer. The characters' use of language—through metaphor and accessible terms—aids in the representation of action, but not always to the extent of the other two films. In *2012*, status and updates on the impending disaster create tension and help further understanding, but it is the actual intersections of narratives and cross-character relationships that make the storylines meaningful.

Summary

Each film depicts the unfolding of multiple events and the building crisis. Through the representation of rhetorical devices found in crisis communication, the films provide rhetorical depictions of crises and both good and bad examples of crisis communication using a combination of social effects. Based on the experiences represented in the films, this entertainment media offers insight into crisis response scenarios that could be used to inform real-life instruction for internal organizational

response teams. The potential instructive uses for the medium will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 5.

CHAPTER 4 – PLAYING WITH DISASTER: COMPUTER GAMES AS TRAINING TOOLS FOR FIRST RESPONDERS

Chapter 3 provided an overview of the media effects research relevant to this project and related that research in particular to representations of crisis in popular disaster films. Ultimately, I showed that what is learned and how it is learned in the selected films relies on several effects. Spectacle and narrative operate to provide the necessary information to the viewer. The characters' use of language—through metaphor and accessible terms—aids in the representation of action and helps to depict both positive and negative examples of crisis communication. The cross-character relationships and the ability for the viewer to align him or herself with the film's characters are what make the storylines and depicted actions meaningful to viewers, and thus potentially useful for the films' deployment in internal organizational crisis communication training curricula.

In this chapter, I extend this same argument into the realm of computer games, a newer mass medium than film, but one that also has an affinity for representing—and even making interactive—crisis. Indeed, it is this interactive component that makes the computer game medium a particularly intriguing training technology for internal organizational crisis responders. In order to illuminate this potential, I begin with a characterization of the medium of computer games. I will present the structural elements of computer games and compare those elements to simulations. Once I have clarified the nature of the medium, I will review how narrative functions in games, explore the type of games used for this analysis, and finally provide an analysis of how crises and crisis

communication are depicted in the three games selected for the project. The goal of this chapter is to analyze how the entertainment medium of computer games functions rhetorically vis-à-vis the depiction of crisis and to begin to explore whether or not those representations could be usefully instructive for real-world, organizational training scenarios.

What makes computer games an important medium to study is the way they encourage players to identify with the dramatizations of crises and crisis response offered through their content. It has been noted by many computer game scholars that the games are usually created to represent models of systems or spaces that players are familiar with and can inhabit in the medium. As with films, computer games ask players to suspend an established reality and truth in order to be more accepting of new experiences. The computer games become "models of real and imagined systems" (Bogost 136) and can create representations of an "ordinary world that might give players new perspectives on the world they inhabit" (Bogost 122). By providing storylines fraught with many types of crises—from personal to global—the player finds ways to identify with the action and immerse him or herself in the virtual world to encounter challenges and identify solutions. Unlike film, computer games provide a certain level of interactivity that aims to further engage the player by asking him or her to make decisions, form strategies, and test hypotheses. I will offer additional discussion on how computer games use interactivity, engagement, and immersion in the following sections.

The Computer Game versus The Simulation

Gee has noted that humans tend to store what they experience as memory and use these memories to "run simulations in their minds to prepare for problem solving in new situations" (Gee, "Learning and Games" 21). Digital, or virtual, simulations are created to assist researchers in making predictions and assisting with interpretations and assessments. While simulations are excellent diagnostic tools and have been used to train, they are not the focus of this project. Simulations and computer games have specific structural differences and I argue that it is these differences that make computer games better learning tools.

Simulations can allow users to practice specific skills or test certain hypotheses in a safe environment. By providing a virtual environment, real-world risks are removed and researchers and trainees can practice cause and effect outcomes without risk of actually creating a new effect or harming oneself. Computer games are similar to simulations in their ability to represent or model reality, as I mentioned above. Espen Aarseth, editor in chief of Gamestudies.org, claims, "*The computer game is the art of simulation*. A subgenre of simulation, in other words" (52). Aarseth argues that all forms of computer games contain some sort of simulation, from problem-based games to strategy games. The existence of this simulation is what makes the game engaging and productive. By providing a simulation of an action, a challenge, or a problem, the game creates a level of interest to play the game according to the game's prescribed rules in order to reach a conclusion or outcome.

Yet, computer games contain specific structural elements that differentiate them from simulations. The number of necessary elements and the terminology associated with each element differs among scholars. Prensky has noted six elements that are key to the structure of computer games: rules, goals and objectives, outcomes and feedback, conflict/competition/challenge/opposition, interaction, and representation or story (119). Arguably, some of these elements are found in simulations. To further delineate the difference between the two, Mark J.P. Wolf, professor of communication and a video game scholar, has identified the necessary elements of computer games as

> *conflict* (against an opponent or circumstances), rules (determining what can and cannot be done and when), use of some *player ability* (such as skill, strategy, or luck), and some kind of *valued outcome* (such as winning vs. losing, or the attaining of the highest score or fastest time for the completing of a task). ("The Video Game as a Medium" 14)

It is important to note that there is overlap between the definitions provided by Prensky and Wolf. Both agree that rules, a challenge, and an outcome must be present in the medium to characterize it as a game; however, the level at which these elements make themselves known differs in computer games and simulations. While both simulations and computer games have explicit goals, the ways in which the goals are achieved are different. Simulations are designed as learning or research tools and depict reality as closely as possible. Computer games are designed for entertainment, and sometimes learning, and require the player to interact with the game itself through character development, narrative, and fantasy. Both mediums ask the user/player to overcome

conflict and challenges, yet simulations typically require the user to perform a specific task that is directly related to a real-world action instead of creating a fantasy world for the player to explore and interact with.

While both simulations and computer games offer representations of reality, these representations help to differentiate simulations and computer games. Games are subjective in the way they represent a reality to the player. According to Chris Crawford, computer game designer and writer, a simulation is a "serious attempt to accurately represent a real phenomenon in another, more malleable form," whereas a computer game is an "artistically simplified representation of a phenomenon" (8). He further differentiates the two by arguing that

> A game is not merely a small simulation lacking the degree of detail that a simulation possesses; a game deliberately suppresses detail to accentuate the broader message that the designer wishes to present. Where a simulation is detailed a game is stylized. (8)

One example of this would be a flight simulator. Within the simulation, the user must take off, fly, and land the plane using the simulated control instruments. Within a game, the player would do the same but the need for the control instruments to be simulated as closely to real-world circumstances is not needed because the challenge is not only taking off, flying, and landing. Instead, within computer games, a storyline and a character are introduced to create additional challenges and obstacles to completing the task. This is not to say that simulations do not also provide challenges to completing the task; however, they do so in much different ways and focus on potentially real events. The

goal of a simulation is to research cause and effect and to teach specific skills while the goal of a computer game is to explore and interact with fantastical elements and other characters in order to complete an objective, all while having fun. In computer games, the player is offered guidance in a way the simulation does not: by interacting with other players and the storyline or through preprogrammed dialogue and spectacle, interactions I discuss in more detail below.

The three games selected for this analysis—*Splinter Cell: Conviction* (Ubisoft Montreal, 2010), *Gears of War 2* (Epic Games, Inc., 2008), and *Call of Duty 6: Modern Warfare 2* (Infinity Ward, 2009)—incorporate the basic elements mentioned above, making them computer games and not simulations. Through the use of a narrative, or storyline, the conflict or challenge is presented to the player. This conflict arises naturally as an effect of interacting with the game's storyline and characters (Crawford 12). However, as the player encounters conflict, there is no risk of danger or harm in the virtual environment. Instead, the player can practice decision making and review the cause and effect occurring in the game to learn the safest and fastest way to experience the challenge as a character.

Additionally, as the player progresses through the game and its levels, he or she must obey the rules of play. According to Bogost, rules of play help construct the game's meaning (121). In some games these rules are explicitly stated ("Do not harm civilians"). In other games the rules are programmed into the game as an action the player cannot perform. For example, within the games selected for my analysis, certain movements cannot be performed. The rules help to guide the player through the virtual reality by not

allowing the player to turn left in some instances, to climb cliffs, or to battle certain non-player characters (NPCs).

The rules of the game can be influenced by establishing a level of difficulty at which to play. Most current games allow players to determine the level of play—ranging from easy/beginner to challenging/veteran. As the player progresses through the game, the challenges become more "daunting" the better the player becomes (Herz 186). Designing levels into games enables the player to practice skills before increasing the difficulty at a next level (Gee, "Learning and Games" 23). This also enables a player to fail at a task and start over (a concept that I will revisit when I talk about how time is depicted in games). By failing, the player is afforded the ability to learn underlying patterns in the game and take advantage of these patterns in future attempts at successfully completing the level. Each game also offers a conclusion when the game is played successfully to completion (for example, saving the world).

The elements that make computer games different from simulations also make them successful entertainment media and learning tools. The need to solve a problem presented by conflict, the player's ability to manipulate action in the virtual reality, and the win/lose outcome all work to engage a player and offer the player the opportunity to experience cause and effect in a safe environment. These elements lead the player to experience pattern recognition, active learning, critical learning, and assuming new identities in the context of computer games. Pattern recognition promotes learning by allowing a player to reason based on patterns of actual experiences. Because learning can be viewed as social and experientially based, recognizable, familiar experiences form

patterns of thinking and reasoning from which the player can later pull to aid in decision making and critical thinking. Pattern recognition is closely linked to active learning: learning through experiencing the world in new ways. Active learning involves forming new affiliations (or membership in new communities and groups) and helps to prepare individuals for future learning based on these experiences in new contexts. Critical learning builds off of the presence of active learning but incorporates the "ability to reflect on, critique, and manipulate" knowledge gained from experiences (Gee, *What Video Games Have to Teach Us* 32). In computer games, according to Kiili:

> the ability to reflect may be the main factor that determines who learns effectively from experience. Reflection is not always consciousness, but only when a player consciously processes his experiences can he make active and aware decisions about his playing strategies. (397)

Therefore, players learn from the actions and moves they take as a character in the storyline and can form strategies to use in future gameplay and relate those same strategies back to real-life scenarios.

The content of a computer game, depending on its design, is largely responsible for allowing a player to apply these principles. The computer game provides the location in which a player can situate meaning through experiences or play. Using the rules of the game, players are given the opportunity to solve problems and reflect on the design of the imagined space, incorporating the design of real and imagined social relationships, interactions, and identities in the real world experiences (Gee, *What Video Games Have to Teach Us* 40-41). (The concept of player-character identification is discussed below.)

The pace of the game is determined by the difficulty setting the player chooses, thereby making the cognitive effort on the part of the player match the level of skill required to complete the game successfully.

In the preceding chapter I discussed Bordwell's theory of viewing film and related that to Burke's idea of terministic screens. Both are useful when discussing computer games. When playing a computer game, the player brings his or her own knowledge and perceptions to bear on the material presented in the game. By doing this, the player forms a basic understanding of the story and the game's expectations, thereby aiding him or her in creating new knowledge as he or she compares the playing experience and the game's storyline to previous experiences. This basic understanding of the story and the game's expectations is aided by the game's portrayal of event ordering, time, and space and helps to create knowledge. For many players, a limited understanding of good and evil and the desire to save the world are all that is needed to engage with the storyline and attempt to overcome the challenges the game presents.

Game goals differ based on the type of game being played. Problem-based games can be conflict oriented and strategy based. Conflict-oriented games typically involve a challenge where the player must beat an opponent (either computer-generated or another player) by establishing mastery of a skill, like battling or racing (Wolf, "Narrative in the Video Game" 105). Strategy-based games require the player to create ways to play the game and overcome the challenges without the need to demonstrate proficiency in battle skills, although those skills can also be useful in strategy-based games. The player learns to master skills related to stealth and strategy by recognizing patterns of behavior and

action in the game. In these types of games, "the player tests his strategy and possible hypotheses in the game world and observes the consequences of his actions" (Kiili 396). Of the games selected for the analysis, all three games employ strategy formation to be successful in overcoming the game's challenges.

As well as being simulations of something, computer games are also representations. They contain representations of the familiar to further induce interest and engagement through immersion. This immersion provides the player with "the feeling of being present in another place and engaged in the action therein" (Mateas 21). The computer game provides the space in which a player can situate meaning through experiences or play. Within games, the narrative typically "unfolds in spatial terms" (H. Brown 54). This allows the player to encounter new or different stories in different areas of the depicted world. This spatial unfolding can operate as a way to enhance a player's sense of immersion by offering certain decision making opportunities. For example, players are given the opportunity to solve problems, like which weapon is best suited for a given battle, while reflecting on the design of the imagined space.

Games are designed to teach skills from a "bottom up" perspective (Gee, *What Videos Games Have to Teach Us*, 140). Players perform certain actions repeatedly and learn how to combine those actions to accomplish goals in the game. Gee refers to this skills mastery as the "Transfer Principle," and explains this concept as the opportunity for players to "practice transferring what they have learned earlier to later problems, including problems that require adapting and transforming that earlier learning" (*What Videos Games Have to Teach Us*, 142). This principle is evident in games that teach

certain behavioral norms for specific identities. Skill transfer has been proven in games focused on teaching business skills like ethics, diversity awareness, and policy issues and extends into teaching other skills such as how to bag groceries, how to run a business, and how to log (Prensky 227-294). Arguably, games focused on crises employ problem-solving skills that can be carried from the virtual to the real world by allowing players to enhance and practice certain skill sets in a low-stakes, almost consequence-free environment.

In order to analyze the potential usefulness of the games selected for this analysis, I played all three games—*Splinter Cell: Conviction*, *Gears of War 2*, and *Call of Duty 6: Modern Warfare 2*—in "co-op" mode, or cooperative gameplay. Co-op mode allows multiple, live players to access the same game and communicate from geographically dispersed locations using Internet connections and headsets. According to Brown, "multiplayer games especially encourage achievement through competition and reward both cooperation and teamwork" (H. Brown 120). This style of gameplay has been argued to "foster the formation of teams, clans, guilds, and other self-organizing groups" (Herz 173) and the "online, networked environment is a team sport. There are ways for groups to form, bond, and collectively succeed" (Herz 184).

Players are able to communicate strategies and needs to one another during the game: reviving one another when injured, covering one another during battles, and assisting each other in accomplishing a common goal. All three of the games used in this project allow teammates to revive one another, thus illustrating a focus on having the player learn from mistakes and make different decisions moving forward. The co-op

mode also allows the players to strategize together on next moves and request help throughout the game. Additionally, the co-op gameplay helps to teach group dynamics as leaders develop based on gaming experience. As a novice player, I was provided information on how best to approach the game's challenges and obstacles from a more experienced player. With multiple players interacting and facing the same challenges, cooperation and teamwork are encouraged in order to succeed or achieve the next level of the game (H. Brown 120).

Variables such as alliances and communication patterns are central to many studies of crisis and both are illustrated in co-op gameplay. These variables directly relate to the skills taught in simulations and games focused on crises, especially those games that deploy multi-player action. Governments, research groups, and teaching institutions are only a few of the organizations that use games and simulations to teach and study incident response.

In their essay, "Games, Motivation, and Learning: A Research and Practice Model," Rosemary Garris, Robert Ahlers, and James E. Driskell —researchers interested in battlefield performance—argue that "Debriefing provides a link between what is represented in the simulation/gaming experience and the real world. It allows the participants to draw parallels between game events and real-world events" (454-455). Their definition of debriefing includes describing what happened in the game, analyzing why certain events occurred, and discussing mistakes made by the player and how to correct those mistakes moving forward (Garris et al. 455).

The evidence gathered from studying popular computer games designed to entertain can provide a means of understanding crises from the standpoint of the context in which they occur, the decision making processes involved in the response, and coping mechanisms of the responders. The next sections provide discussion of how narrative and character identification operate in computer games and how the two help the games function rhetorically as they depict crises and crisis communication.

Narrative in Computer Games

In chapter 3 I cited Bordwell's use of Aristotle's means of imitation (mimesis) as a guide for discussing conceptions of narration in film. In that discussion, I referenced Bordwell's argument that the fictional narrative begins with the construction of the action to be framed and the goal of narration is the viewer's understanding of the story to be told. Within computer games, Wolf argues that "Although characters in a film or novel may be goal oriented, video games (and games in general) frequently rely more on the attainment of a particular goal and a win/lose distinction rather than on character and thematic development" ("Narrative in the Video Game" 105).

Therefore, while an underlying narrative, or story, is present in computer games, the game's goal is not necessarily to ensure the player's understanding of the story. While both computer games and films are capable of telling compelling stories, computer games utilize story to provide for a more interactive experience by inviting the player to "take control of images and events on screen" (H. Brown 22). In this way, the storyline helps move the game's action forward by providing challenges for the player to overcome and

offering guidance when needed through in-game dialogue—a point I discuss in more detail below.

Similar to film, computer games can contain multiple narratives, or storylines. Crawford argues that the "facts presented in the fiction are themselves unimportant" (9). Instead, a "story is a vehicle for representing reality, not through its facts per se, but through the cause and effect relationships suggested by the sequence of facts" (Crawford 9). The difference between computer games and films is that the player is able to make choices in a computer game that allow control over the story, no matter how minor that control is. These choices provide a sense of agency for players because the players' choices help to "create the world they are in and shape the experiences they are having" (Gee, "Learning in Games" 35), which is not possible when viewing a film.

Another difference between film and computer games is their treatment of time. While the majority of films are designed to be experienced in one sitting and in a culturally accepted running time, recent computer games are designed to be played in a manner in which the player controls some aspects of time. Within the game there is one temporal experience, the narrative, or story. This experience is a mix of "prerecorded sequences or animated clips" (Wolf, "Time in the Video Game" 86). When time needs to be compressed within the game, the in-game character will be moved to a new location in the virtual world with explanations for the location shift offered through the use of cutscenes and level changes. Cutscenes are points within a game where the narrative is moved forward through pre-programmed drama and dialogue. This shift is also managed by level changes. Once a goal has been achieved, some computer games will take

advantage of the level change to move the story forward and provide additional background for the next challenge.

During gameplay, though, the player has an added aspect of control. In the preceding chapter I mentioned that current advancements in technology have led to the adoption of certain abilities like rewind and fast-forward, which allow film viewers to alter the ways in which they view film—rewinding, pausing, and fast-forwarding. While that style of viewing is not usually the intent of the film's director when depicting the narrative, it is a part of the experience the viewer can control. With recent computer games, the technology that allows games to be played at home on consoles or computers capable of saving data allows players to pause and save the action and return to it at a later time without losing progress. Computer games are now designed with this sort of player control in mind and offer milestones in the game, usually at decision points or level endings, where a player can choose to halt the game's action and return to it later, or even repeat the level or action making different choices (Wolf, "Time in the Video Game" 86).

While film does not offer the type of control that computer games do in relation to experiencing the same section of a game in a different manner, storytelling, or what I have been referring to as narrative in this project, does have additional similarities to film when present in computer games. Jordan Mechner, video game designer, screenwriter, author, and filmmaker, defines the "traditional way to tell a story" within video games as through the use of a series of "cinematic cutscenes that serve as 'rewards'—transitions between gameplay levels" (111). When cutscenes are incorporated within the game, the

player's point of view is constrained and controlled for a period of time; making the viewing experience similar to a film. Greg Costikyan, game designer, consultant, and author, differentiates between good and bad uses of cutscenes in games when he states that they can help advance the story "when skillfully used" (8). But both the gameplay and the storyline need to have a balance if the player is to become fully immersed in the virtual environment and engaged in the story and the game's goal or challenge. By providing a storyline that includes choices for the player to take, the player remains engaged by having the ability to make decisions that will impact the outcome of the game and the story can continue to move forward to the game's ultimate goal.

Allowing for a sense of freedom with decision making, although it will always be constrained by the rules of the game, the player creates a sense of narrative comprehension just like a film's audience. With a film, the audience is engaged through their active construction of the narrative. While they watch the film, they absorb cues and clues from the actors. They can then test their hypotheses as the film progresses and the narrative unfolds. In a game, players are equally engaged and immersed in the story. The decisions players make in the game space move the story forward, making it a more interactive experience and requiring a similar level of identification, as in film, with the character whose identity they have assumed in the game. Character identification, discussed in the next section, offers insight into how players can become emotionally attached to the storyline through the character roles they assume in the gameplay. The character identification and level of interaction required on the part of the player are what make the medium an intriguing training tool when paired with film. Film can offer the

opportunity to view an unfolding storyline and character response, whereas computer games provide the environment to contribute to how the story unfolds and make the decisions for how a player or character will respond.

Character Identification in Computer Games

As I mentioned earlier, computer games provide a level of interactivity that is not present in film (at least not yet). Storylines, or narratives, help to provide a cause and effect pattern between character actions and plot that help instruct the player on what to do and why (Mateas 25). Typically, a game's narrative will include multiple storylines with at least one storyline that affects the main character(s) on a personal level. Within the three games selected for this analysis, each game has a personal sub-plot that has an emotional impact on the main character. This impact helps to explain the motivation behind the character's actions in cutscenes, thereby lending a filmic similarity to the game and an additional level of immersion and character engagement and identification. By explaining the motivation behind the character's actions, the cutscenes afford a level of identification that is similar to the type of identification experienced by film audiences. Players are able to assume new identities, ones different from their own in the real world. Gee argues that the identity the player assumes in the virtual space forms a bridge to the player's identity in the real space and provides a new space for inquiry and learning as the player reflects on the differences and similarities of the multiple identities.

Gee has defined identities within computer games as "a way of being in the world" that is connected to the character's goals and a set of norms "composed of rules or principles or guidelines" that help to instruct the player's actions ("Learning and Games"

24-25). The storyline, or narratives, within the computer game inform these identities by providing "*content* knowledge," or the skills, processes, and facts the player must learn in order to successfully play and complete the game (Gee, "Learning and Games" 25). In *What Video Games Have to Teach Us,* Gee further argues that computer games "encourage work and reflection on identities in clear and powerful ways" (46). I argue that this statement applies to both gameplay and real life in that the virtual environment provides a safe practice space to interact and exercise control, or agency, that can be transferred to the real world.

Michael Mateas, whose research includes interactive art and entertainment, claims:

> The dialogue (language) spoken by the characters and the opportunities for the player to engage in dialogue are other material resources for action. Dialogue is a powerful means for characters to express their thoughts, thus instrumental for helping the player to infer a model of the characters' thoughts. (Mateas 25)

Consequently, a player's ability to reason about a character's motivations can influence the player's actions in the game as he or she makes decisions that could help or hinder the goals of the character (Mateas 25). Dialogue in computer games provides a situational awareness through language use—both the language use in cutscenes and the language use between players. Language use, or dialogue, offers a way to influence character behavior and allows for player expression (Mateas 25). It also helps communicate the game's plot and goals. Such a representation echoes real-life situations where effective

crisis communication can only occur when the individuals communicating have an idea of the other person's motivations. By creating situational awareness and the ability to understand one another, responders are able to communicate effectively and successfully.

In the preceding chapter I outlined Smith's three levels of engagement for film audiences. In video games, the same three levels of engagement can be applied. The first level, alignment, is supported by cutscenes and gameplay as both provide the player access to the character's motivations and emotions. These same cutscenes operate to invoke allegiance (the second level) with the player and his or her character in the game, helping to provide a more engaging experience for the player. The third level, recognition, is also furthered by the cutscenes. The drama depicted in the narrative can allow the player to recognize similar characteristics in people they know. These levels of engagement help to immerse the player in the game environment and, consequently, the storyline, and guide the player's decisions throughout the game.

According to Gee, computer games offer an emotional attachment on the part of the player with his or her in-game character by associating character identity and action to the storyline ("Learning and Games" 35-36). This association leads to a sense of agency for the player. While the player's control of the character is halted during cutscenes, during exploration of the game space, the player is afforded control of the movements of the character by making decisions on whether to engage in combat or to apply stealth. Such control allows players to make decisions regarding whether or not they should allow the other player's character to lead the way due to greater expertise and experience, or if they should initiate action in their own character.

Mateas claims that in interactive drama, like the kind depicted in computer games, "the player assumes the role of a first-person character in a dramatic story. The player does not sit above the story, watching it as in a simulation, but is immersed *in* the story" (20). Along those same lines, the level of immersion—or "the feeling of being present in another place and engaged in the action" (Mateas 21)—lends itself to the level of engagement and identification the player will have with characters in the game. Computer game narratives may not have the same power to create a character that a player can engage with at the same level as a film's narrative, but they do create a sense of empowerment for the player that a film viewer does not have. With agency, or the ability to take action in the virtual world and make decisions that affect the character, the player has a sense of empowerment. Of course, this agency and empowerment is only as good as the player's abilities and the controls with which to signal and control action in the character. The interactivity offered in computer games and within gameplay are what make them particularly interesting training tools for first responders.

The Analysis

As in film, computer games with storylines have a strong focus on disaster and crisis. The games rely on visual spectacle to create epic battle scenes and suspenseful missions and challenges. The use of color, graphics, and animation provide what Crawford claims is a "sensory 'proof' of the game's reality" and makes the events represented therein more realistic (19). The presence of storylines focused on crisis and disaster, the use of visual spectacle, and the interactivity inherent in computer games make them a good medium to study. My analysis of computer games is focused on how

they function rhetorically to represent crisis and crisis communication. I will look at each game and explore how it does or does not represent the rhetorical devices outlined in chapter 2 that I argue are inherently a part of organizational crisis communication.

Due to the interactive nature of the medium, the identification of narrative and metaphor in the media will differ from the analysis performed in chapter 3. Much of the focus of this chapter's analysis is on the communication scenarios between players instead of characters. Because the focus is different from the preceding chapter, I will identify the types of events depicted in the games that are representative of crisis scenarios and explore how the players communicate in the medium to reach common goals for success (for example, employing strategy formation for battles and stealth in order to overcome the game's challenges and obstacles).

The following sections will be focused on individual computer games. Each section will provide an overview of the game's plot, identification of how narrative is being used in the game, and discussions of the presence of specific social effects (i.e., direct, cumulative, and cognitive-transactional effects) in order to analyze how meaning is made and communicated using language and which rhetorical acts are present to evoke emotion or action in the player. A final section has been provided to summarize how the analyses performed on each game relate to the question of how the medium represents crises and crisis communication. The plot summaries are much shorter in this chapter than in the earlier chapter due to the structure of computer games. While the games selected for the analysis have linear narratives, the player contributes to how the story unfolds based on strategic decision making and communication with the other player.

Because of the interaction between players, an individual's experience of the story may differ from player to player based on what is communicated, the decisions made, the experiences the player brings to bear on the game, and the personal or emotional impact of the storyline. The focus for this chapter's analysis will be on the communication scenarios afforded the player instead of a description of the narrative and unfolding action.

As I noted earlier, all three games were played in co-op mode. The decision was made to play the games this way in order for me to experience the types of interplayer communication that could occur. Based on the types of communication between players that were identified, I explore how the exchanges are indicative of recommended rhetorical responses to crises as defined by organizational communication specialists and the rhetorical responses frequently portrayed in various forms of mass media entertainment. The analysis should show how computer games function rhetorically to represent crisis and crisis communication, which is important because it demonstrates the pedagogical power of the media for organizational training scenarios.

Splinter Cell: Conviction *(Ubisoft Montreal, 2010)*

Splinter Cell: Conviction is a third-person shooter game, where the point of view is over the shoulder of the character being controlled by the player. When played as a single player, the game's plot is focused on the lead character's quest to find his daughter's murderer while protecting Washington, DC from a serious threat. Because I played the game in co-op mode, the storyline was different. In co-op mode, the story is a precursor to the single player narrative. The game's players take on the identities of Third

Echelon agent Archer and Voron agent Kestrel. Their first mission is set in St. Petersburg, Russia, where they must disrupt the sale of advanced warheads on the black market.

In this gameplay mode, the first challenge involves terminating human and drug trafficker Lesovsky, obtaining Lesovsky's contact list, terminating Lesovsky's associate Boris Sychev, and exiting the building without being detected by police. The game employs what I term "tension devices;" in some cases, decisions must be made in a short period of time and the soundtrack operates to increase emotional stress through shifting tempo. Much of the game's challenge hinges on players' ability to be stealthy, sneaking around in the shadows without being detected. Experience shows that the best strategies are ones that allow players to move quietly through rooms unnoticed. If the characters are detected, NPCs raise an alert, thereby making progress through the next section more difficult to accomplish.

Language Use: Knowledge Creation

This section is focused on examples of how co-op players can use language to communicate and create understanding and common knowledge while playing the game. In co-op mode, players need to stay in constant communication to be successful. While the screen displays chevrons to identify where the "bad guys" are located and in what direction they are moving, constantly providing a location status or plan is necessary for character survival. The game provides visual cues to represent when the characters are "in cover," or hidden from the view of the bad guys. While the characters are in cover, the players are able to take the time necessary to communicate to each other what would

be done next. This level of statusing, also present in crisis communication, helped prepare the other player to provide protection or assist in "reviving" the fallen character before time ran out and the challenge had to be restarted from the beginning.

Additionally, players communicate in order to coordinate actions that required both characters in order to be executed. For example, both players are needed to open some of the doors within the game. The players must communicate when to press the specific controller button to execute the action and be prepared for the consequences—what is waiting for them on the other side of the door. Players can also coordinate what the game calls "dual executes." With enough experience points, players can mark the bad guys and press the same button on their respective controller to launch a pre-programmed action where the players' characters execute the bad guys.

The dialogue within the cutscenes operates to move the storyline forward, but does not provide specific examples of what I have termed crisis communication. One of the NPCs, Kobin, communicates objectives to the characters/players, but nothing more than that. In two scenarios in the first mission, the players' characters can "interrogate" the NPCs. Again, the ensuing cutscenes and dialogue provide information relevant to continuing the mission and create dramatic tension, but they are not relevant to the discussion of crisis communication in the project. The communication that is of note is what occurs between the players when they plan their next move or need help from one another. Within the game, pattern recognition—or where the bad guys are situated and will be moving—was key to completing each mission. Through constant player status

updates and using clear and concise language to communicate needs and plans, players are able to motivate one another to action.

Direct Effects

In chapter 3 I cited Perse's definition of direct effects as being concerned with the involuntary responses of viewers. The co-op mode in this game does not offer the opportunity for a player to identify with any personal aspects of the character aside from survival. Instead, the goal of the game is to strategize about how to successfully complete several mini missions. While the players must work together to succeed, players typically experience little emotional engagement with this game's characters in co-op mode. Instead, the players' focus is typically on coordinating action with one another in order to be successful within the game space.

Cumulative Effects

Cumulative effects, or those effects concerned with the type and relevancy of images shown in the media, are present in the game. In order to further the storyline of the bad guy—a human and drug trafficker—images of women who appear to be under the influence of some sort of drug are shown. These women vary in how they are represented. Some are tied to cots and others are free of restraints but appear to be unable to function in the same manner as the other NPCs: inability to sit up straight, walk, or speak. The other NPCs are depicted as bad guys. These characters appear throughout the levels toting automatic weapons and smoking cigarettes.

The action occurs in a building and the rooms are modeled after realistic rooms a player would normally encounter. Couches, beds, fencing, and automobiles are depicted

realistically and help to keep the player immersed in the action appearing on screen. Overall, the images work together to create a background location populated with characters that complement the storyline.

Cognitive-Transactional Effects

What is learned and how it is learned in this game relies on several effects. The use of narrative in cutscenes helps the players understand the action within the storyline and what is expected of their characters. The overall theme of illegal drugs and weaponry and the intensifying pressure is created through the game's use of music and spectacle (or images). All of these effects operate together to create an understanding with the players and attempt to move the player to feel specific emotions (such as suspense, discomfort, or fear).

Gears of War 2 *(Epic Games, Inc., 2008)*

Gears of War 2, true to an actual crisis event, contains stories within stories that lead to a multitude of escalating crises. These crises are situated as new challenges or missions to be encountered and addressed. The game is a third-person shooter set in the future on planet Sera. A subterranean collection of species, the Locust horde, and a giant worm-like creature are threatening human life on the planet. Additionally, there are the subnarratives of Dom's missing wife and Marcus' deceased father to add to the stress and tension the characters are under to be successful in their missions. This game also employs tension devices. Unlike in *Splinter Cell: Conviction*, multiple decisions must be made in a short period of time and the soundtrack continuously operates to increase emotional stress through shifting tempo.

Language Use: Knowledge Creation

Within *Gears of War 2,* both the NPCs and the players' characters provide statusing throughout the game using cutscenes. In co-op mode, players status one another when strategizing ("I'm going to hide out here and provide you cover fire" or "I need ammo so if you see some, let me know"); assign tasks ("You take that route and turn off the security system while I go this way"); and ask for help as the situations constantly shifted ("Help me! I'm dying!"). The dialogue between the players in addition to the pre-programmed, on-screen dialogue between the characters continues to move the narrative forward.

In co-op mode, players encounter several decision points. Problem solving is required to figure out the next move or most appropriate weapon to select. Pattern recognition, statusing, and instruction-giving—cornerstones of successful crisis communication—are what make these actions successful. The players must decide who is responsible for performing specific actions that would make both players triumphant. Character movements have to be coordinated in order to open doors, carry an explosive unit, or kill attackers. One example from the game is within the New Hope Research Facility. Here the players must make their way down a hallway to a door by avoiding security turrets. One player positions herself to turn off power to each turret while the other player continues down the hallway. The players are able to see one another's character on the screen; however, experience shows that they still have to verbally communicate the strategy and movements to each other in order to be successful.

Another excellent example in the game requiring clear communication is when the two players are onboard the Centaur (similar to a tank). One player is the driver while the other player operates the gun and spotlight. What is interesting about this situation is that player driving is provided a directional arrow on the screen and the other player is not. Therefore, once the Centaur is underground in a dark cave, the player driving has to be specific about location in order to get the other player to position the spotlight in the appropriate direction so the two players can continue to make forward progress. Again, the game relies on pattern recognition and clear interplayer communication for the two players to be successful. The players are in constant communication to plan the next move, relay positioning, and direct the other player to assist or wait as needed.

Direct Effects

The multiple narratives in the game are what invoke emotional attachment between the player and the character. The storyline of one character, Dom's, missing wife provides the background for several of the decisions the characters make in the cutscenes as well as the challenges the characters face. When Dom's wife is finally found and the cutscene takes control of the character action, the player is moved to feel empathy for Dom because he is forced to kill his own wife[6] and then move on to accomplish the overall objective: save human life from extinction.

[6] Part of the storyline for the game involves the search for Dom's missing wife. NPCs offer clues to her whereabouts throughout the game's action. When Dom finally finds her, she is barely recognizable and does not appear to know who he is or be aware of her surroundings or current condition. She has been tortured and starved to a point where Dom believes he should end her life rather than allow her to continue to suffer.

Cumulative Effects

The images portrayed in the game are aligned. The bad guys, the locusts, appear the same way each time they are encountered, as do the humans. The human NPCs are typically represented as thin, dirty, and battered which helps to invoke apathy for their situations and reaffirm the desire to kill off the Locust horde. The graphics used to represent Sera were modeled after scenery the player would be familiar with in everyday life—snow capped mountains, lakes and waterfalls, and wooded forests—making the fantastical depictions inside the worm or underground easier to accept.

Cognitive-Transactional Effects

More so than in *Splinter Cell: Conviction*, what is learned and how it is learned in this game relies on several effects. The use of narrative in cutscenes helps the players understand the action within the storyline and what is expected of their characters. The cutscenes offer glimpses of emotional exchanges, background and history, and what the characters need to know in order to move forward. The realistic representations of humans and scenery help to ease the player in accepting the fantasy when the equipment or surroundings are new and fantastical.

Call of Duty 6: Modern Warfare 2 *(Infinity Ward, 2009)*

My third example is the game *Call of Duty 6: Modern Warfare 2*. This is a first-person shooter game, where the player sees and experiences action through the eyes of the character. The narrative combines acts of multi-national terrorism amid undercover missions and intelligence operations. Similar to *Splinter Cell: Conviction*, the storyline changes when the game is played in co-op instead of single player. As a single player, the

player progresses through the game's storyline in a somewhat linear fashion, as the players do in *Gears of War 2*. However, in co-op mode, the players select specific operations (known as Special Ops–Two Player Online). These missions fit within the overarching narrative but do not provide a linear feel. Instead, the players complete the missions and can revisit the missions to improve their performance for more points. Because there is no prescribed order to the scenarios and because each one can be played multiple times, there is no pressing need for a linear narrative or overt cutscenes to keep the action moving forward. The missions are short enough that all that is required is an objective so that the players know what needs to be done.

Language Use: Knowledge Creation

Within *Call of Duty 6: Modern Warfare 2* several missions were played. The first mission, "The Pit," is a training scenario on a timed shooting range. The scenario operates as a way to familiarize the players with the game terrain and the controller functionality. The objective is to kill all targets representing foes but not harm any targets representing civilians. With two players, it quickly becomes obvious that they need to work together in order to meet the objective within the allotted time. By strategizing and coordinating action, each player can save time and ammunition.

In "O Cristo Redentor," the gameplay takes place in a city full of terrorists. The objective is to terminate all terrorists in the city without harming civilians. In this mission, the characters could be wounded and the players were able to revive one another. This scenario required coordination by the players in order to cover one another and strategize movement through the city. In another scenario, "Evasion," players must

employ stealth as the characters make their way through a snow covered forest to an encampment. The characters encounter soldiers and dogs and must evade or terminate them as quietly as possible without raising awareness of their position. Experience shows that players should coordinate movements to maximize the stealth and speed of their progress forward.

The "Overwatch" and "Big Brother" scenarios are similar. Both scenarios split the players up: one is on the ground and one is in the air in a chopper or helicopter. The one in the air must provide a "bird's eye view" of the area and communicate the existence and position of foes to the player on the ground as the ground player battles through to the goal. Players work together to terminate the ground threats and make it to the challenge's goal. The player in the air also has the ability to locate ammunition for the other player and identify areas where the ground player can seek cover and direct him to it. Again, stealth is employed where possible by the player on the ground. Language use in these scenarios is also key as players are not in a position to revive one another. In "Overwatch," players have a limited amount of time to meet the scenario's objective.

Direct Effects

The lack of a personal narrative for the players' characters in the different scenarios makes it difficult for a player to feel an emotional connection to a character. However, players operate with a sense of duty to provide the other player with as much assistance as possible via his or her character in the game. The games employs tension devices, like music and actual countdowns, to create stress and offer a sense of panic as

time begins to run out. This increases the need for clear and concise communication across players.

Cumulative Effects

Much of the imagery used in the scenarios was familiar. Farmhouses, trenches, restaurants, and neighborhood streets help to position the action in familiar territory. The NPCs are also realistic with the bad guys depicted as such with weaponry and the civilians unarmed and frightened.

Cognitive-Transactional Effects

While there are clear examples of statusing and coordination in the scenarios depicted in this game, the lack of cutscenes makes the knowledge acquisition more reliant on the action being depicted and the communication between players. There is very little emotional attachment in the game. Very brief introductions and radio exchanges are programmed into the game space to provide the necessary information for each mission and the realistic representations of humans and scenery help to ease the player in accepting the fantasy.

Summary

In all three of the games selected for the analysis, there is a narrative that includes building crises. Through the use of NPCs and cutscenes, the narrative moves forward by communicating objectives and missions and motivating the players toward a common goal. All three games provide a low-stakes environment for experiencing crises and formulating solutions and strategies for dealing with them; while the action on the screen includes violence and death, the players are afforded the opportunity to replay each

challenge until they perfect it or are happy with the resulting score. The ability to revisit the scenarios allows the players to leverage what they learned in earlier challenges and test hypotheses: strategies that work, patterns of play and NPC behavior and action, and the need to communicate more with the other player.

Playing the computer games in co-op mode allows for a different type of knowledge creation through language use not currently available from watching a film. The players are able to communicate with one another, ask questions to clarify meaning and understand concepts, realize patterns and strategies, and ask for help. The language use required in the gameplay between players also helps to motivate the players to perform specific actions whereas film audiences are forced to watch the actions played out on the screen by other actors.

Because players are engaged and immersed in the action, the medium offers an additional level of instruction over film. Players are forced to make decisions in the game space while experiencing certain emotional effects like fear, suspense, and tension. The impact of that engagement can help teach skills for coping and responding under stress that can be transferred to real-world situations. The games' fantastical representations are balanced with more realistic representations, making it easier for a player to accept the fantasy and use the game space as a safe place to practice interactions and exercise control, which are currently not available for film viewers.

CHAPTER 5 – CONCLUSION: ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL POTENTIAL

I undertook this project because of the lack of research on internal organizational crisis communication and the rhetorical strategies deployed to make sense of a crisis among those who do this work every day. I also undertook it because I have experienced that there is insufficient training for internal organizational crisis communication in many organizations. My goal for this project was to analyze mass media depictions of crisis and crisis response—especially those dramatized in films and computer games—for ways in which they may be able to improve crisis-oriented organizational response and recovery training.

In order to investigate the existence of any useful overlap between the recommended rhetorical responses to crises as defined by organizational communication specialists and the rhetorical responses frequently portrayed in various forms of mass media entertainment, I set out to answer the following questions as I shaped my argument:

(1) How do entertainment media, specifically films and computer games, function rhetorically vis-à-vis the depiction of crisis?

(2) Is the depiction of crisis in entertainment media usefully instructive for real-world organizational training scenarios?

(3) Can internal organizational response and recovery teams benefit from the depictions of crises in entertainment media?

Chapter 1 was designed to provide an introduction to the overall project and the current state of organizational training, to the key terms related to the project, and to the methodology and artifacts. I provided definitions for the key terminology, the rhetorical situation, rhetorical discourse, and crisis communication.

In chapter 2, I provided several definitions to help guide the project as the aforementioned questions were addressed. In that chapter, I provided a detailed treatment of organizational and crisis communication. The chapter explained that crisis communication is a discourse that involves rhetorical devices. I argued that organizational members use a specific set of rhetorical strategies, namely narrative and metaphor, when communicating within the organization every day, and it is important for organizations to better train the organizational members in how to respond to crisis events using those same, familiar techniques. The familiar rhetorical devices used in organizational discourse communities transfer over to crisis communication and help with knowledge creation and meaning making through language use.

Toward the end of chapter 2, I introduced the artifacts that would be analyzed in the project: entertainment media. Because entertainment media can include storylines focused on crises or disasters, offer displays of character emotion, and incorporate visual spectacle, I believe their ability to engage and immerse viewers/players can have a more memorable impact when used as teaching aids over traditional lecture approaches. Due to their representative and engaging nature, I wanted to explore how popular film and computer games—those media generally designed to entertain—could be used to educate

key organizational personnel about the range of rhetorical responses available in and surrounding moments that call for crisis communication.

My analysis was primarily interested in the direct, cumulative, and cognitive-transactional effects of the selected media, as summarized by Perse. Her categorization of these media effects states that direct effects include the medium and how it is responsible for or related to involuntary audience responses, cumulative effects explore the nature of the medium's content to identify whether or not similar topics and images are relevant, and cognitive-transactional effects focus on the content and what is learned, how much is learned, and what is retained by the audience. In chapters 3 and 4, I reviewed the artifacts—three films and three computer games—with these effects in mind and began to explore the potential for those media to inform or educate the learner on the rhetorical responses involved in internal organizational crisis communication. The films and computer games were selected because they depicted events realistically through the unfolding of events, building crises, and inclusion of narratives focused on solutions and survival. Also in chapters 3 and 4, I focused on specific representations of crises in films and computer games and provided a discussion of how both good and bad examples were rhetorically represented in the media. This concluding chapter explores how the media might be leveraged to provide learning and instruction to response and recovery teams through the media's representations of crisis communication.

One of the biggest pushes for organizational training reformation is that some of the current instructional approaches have not kept up with technology and do not always focus on the learner's experience. Historically, it was acceptable to provide pages of

reading and lectures to educate a learner on what he or she needed to know or to teach a specific skill. Today, technological advances offer more interactive and engaging methods for delivering the necessary content to learners in a way that attracts (and holds) their attention and that may engage more active learning processes.

The last two decades have seen an increase in research on mass media as potentially successful platforms for accelerating learning through increased learner motivation. By capitalizing on existing technologies, learning researchers are exploring how to create new educational domains for learners to acquire knowledge and practice its application. These technologies include film and games. The current scenario is calling for a new form of organizational education that mimics what learners are comfortable with—either their leisure activities or the business environment—to keep them engaged. This engagement can be created through the representations depicted in popular films and computer games.

Narrative, one of the rhetorical devices used in crisis communication as a way to create knowledge and understanding of a situation, is represented in both film and computer games. The presence of narrative is one of the ways the media engage viewers/players. By providing a storyline with characters viewers/players can identify with, these media create interest and motivate the viewers/players by stimulating emotions and (ideally) creating understanding. Both mediums provide the viewer/player an immediate experience, making both capable of teaching. But this claim is not true of all entertainment media. Representations of crises and crisis communication differ across films and computer games, both in their depictions and the depth and breadth of

representation. Some entertainment media may not even have a focus on crisis, which is why the disaster film genre was a focus when I selected my artifacts. As for the selection of computer games, arguably first person shooter games provide the element of crisis in order to make them engaging for players. However, not all computer games would support my argument. Not all games offer a storyline (or a narrative) or a main character, and the presence of both elements is helpful in relaying the unfolding crisis events and creating the need for dialogue and player communication scenarios.

Of the films analyzed in this project, all three depicted a crisis narrative and engaging characters; however, *Apollo 13* and *Virus* represented the most useful scenarios of both good and bad models of crisis communication. These two films offered multiple examples of how language was used to create meaning and how metaphor could create broad audience understanding both in and outside of the films. The narrative in both films appeared to be balanced fairly with the spectacle and worked to create certain emotional responses in the viewer, namely tension, stress, and hope. While *2012* portrays a multitude of crises, the focus of the film seemed to be on the visual experience, or the special effects. While crisis response is featured in the film, its use is limited and appears to be there as a way to move the story forward and to invoke emotional responses from viewers based on character relationships and devastating scenes of disaster and death. The exchanges between characters are highly charged and emotional, conveying the overarching messages in the film: a sense that time is running out, devastation and death, and a sense of urgency to act in order to save humanity.

The computer games selected also provided storylines, but these differed in depth based on the mode in which they were played. Of the games played, I believe that *Gears of War 2* offered the best examples of crisis communication through the multi-player interactions in forming strategies and communicating status and location. While the other two games offered similar strategy formation and the need to communicate, I believe that the overall structure of *Gears of War 2* make it a much more useful tool for training purposes. The narratives used in the co-op mode of gameplay were more robust than those used in *Call of Duty 6: Modern Warfare 2* and *Splinter Cell: Conviction*. Arguably, all three games represented the rhetorical techniques used in crisis response, but the level of engagement and identification was less than in *Gears of War 2*. *Gears of War 2* offered longer gameplay in a more linear story with unfolding crises that were inclusive of personal and global crises.

I have argued throughout this project that people think and learn through experiences. While there are distinct learning styles that differ among individuals, experience is a key enabler of the learning process. One of the ways to enhance learning through experience is to help the learner organize and link specific behaviors and responses to those behaviors that are necessary to be effective and successful while communicating in crisis situations. Based on my analyses, I conclude that entertainment media are one effective way to help learners make these practical, even life-saving, connections.

Part of the pedagogical value of entertainment media are their ubiquitous nature. They are prevalent in our society and easy to access by most. The media provide

experiences, and the response from the audience, generally but not always, is a form of cognition, or understanding. Many audiences have become acclimated to viewing entertainment media, especially film. Thus, by internalizing the depictions and reflecting on them, audiences create their own understanding. This understanding is further aided by the entertainment media's use of language and spectacle to convey action, unfolding crises, and character/audience response.

Likewise, understanding the pedagogical functions of games is useful because the games can allow for mastery of certain skills, like those required for successful crisis communication. Such mastery, however, also has far-reaching consequences when we think of pedagogy even more broadly in terms of training, particularly crisis communication training. Game narratives are typically problem-based and can enhance problem-based and experience-based learning as players work through the obstacles and challenges of the narrative. Computer games allow a player to participate and explore or identify and interact. The situational awareness the media provide—through the players' immersion in an environment and multiple crisis scenarios—aids in their educational value because they provide situations for the player to both experience and interact with. Entertainment media can provide an engaging and immersive environment to learn about a concept, like crisis communication. Both films and computer games provide the learner with a "safe" environment to observe both good and bad examples of crisis communication and response. This type of situational awareness can be enhanced by reflection and debriefing, which I discussed in chapters 3 and 4.

When introducing an organizational learning program focused on illustrating the rhetorical techniques used in crisis communication, reflection and debriefing are key to making the training successful. Films and games offer some striking and strikingly divergent crisis discourses that can be usefully deployed in first responder training sessions. I would like to provide an example of how an organizational training scenario using entertainment media might be employed. To begin, I recommend that the instructor offer a screening of a film that includes the same features as those films selected for my analysis. Beginning with film and concluding with computer games allows the instructor to introduce the concepts; provides the media forum for the learners to watch, or experience, how the concepts are used in crisis response; and then allows the learners to practice what they have learned and relate it back to real-world scenarios through debriefing.

Consider, for example, the use of *Apollo 13* as the first film to be shown at a training session. The instructor should provide several guiding themes to the trainees (comprised of organizational responders) prior to showing the film. Sample themes might be:

(1) Identify the character relationships depicted in the film. How do these relationships make themselves known to an audience?

(2) Identify at least three crisis scenarios within the film. How are these crises represented or how do they build/unfold in the film?

(3) Identify common response elements depicted in the film. How do these elements operate either positively or negatively for the characters involved?

After viewing the film, the instructor might dismiss the trainees and provide time for them to reflect on the viewing experience and answer the guiding questions. Upon their return the following day, the instructor would use the guiding questions to engage the class in a discussion about *Apollo 13* and help the trainees identify the positive and negative crisis response examples in the film. Executed well, the discussion would result in the identification of the relationships and communication scenarios in the film as well as the rhetorical devices used both in the character's responses and the film's spectacle. The spectacle, used as a way to invoke emotional responses from viewers, also operates as a way to make a scene or situation more memorable and helps the audience to relate the events depicted to actual events that could be encountered. By offering the comparison of the film's spectacle to a real event, the class can analyze the characters' responses and understand how those responses contribute to the crisis or help to mitigate it.

The instructor should be prepared to draw upon specific examples of the use of metaphor within the film and guide class discussion on how the metaphor does or does not create understanding of the situation and need for action among those in the film's audience. Examples can be pulled from Mission Control and shuttle crew exchanges, news reports, and interpersonal interactions as highlighted in the analysis provided in chapter 3.

Certain ambiguities in the responses depicted in *Apollo 13* will need careful guidance during class discussion. For example, the scene where Gene angrily demands results is actually an example of effective crisis communication, although his delivery is

not aligned with recommendations made by crisis communication researchers. He clearly demands what he wants and what he does not want from his personnel. His tone and volume work to create a sense of urgency and relay the tension and emotion of the situation. This example provides the opportunity for crisis response trainees to critique his delivery and offer recommendations for different ways of handling the situation.

After the class has analyzed *Apollo 13*'s depiction of crisis response, the instructor can then offer a second film, such as *2012,* for review and discussion. The examples in 2012 are not as strong as those in *Apollo 13* and should provide the ability for the instructor to guide a discussion based on the comparisons across both films, highlighting the strengths and weaknesses in the depictions of crisis communication and the use of spectacle and character identification to create engagement.

The third step to using film in an organizational training environment would be to ask the trainees to find their own filmic examples. Once an instructor has created an understanding of which rhetorical devices are used, and how those devices are used in differing degrees of success across two films, the trainees should be able to identify similar examples in popular film to discuss. The instructor should ask the trainee to guide the analysis and discussion of his/her example and be prepared to complicate the discussion with prompts like:

(1) What human action(s) contributed to the formation of the crisis depicted?

(2) How do the characters use rhetorical devices, specifically metaphor, to communicate with one another and create a general consensus?

(3) Are there any examples of poor crisis communication depicted in the film? If so, what could the characters have done differently to be more successful at communicating?

(4) Why do you believe the example used is an example of good crisis communication?

(5) Is knowledge being creating among the characters? Are specific rhetorical devices and response strategies being used? If yes, what are they and how are they being employed?

After concluding the segment on popular film, the instructor should then introduce the gaming element using *Gears of War 2*. The game will provide the class the opportunity to safely practice the elements of crisis response they have identified from their analyses of crisis films. Again, the instructor should provide the trainees an opportunity to reflect on the game's narrative structure and the character/player interactions depicted within and offer opportunities to draw comparisons to real-world events. When the trainees reconvene, the instructor should then lead a discussion using the prompts that were used for the film and guide the discussion on the interactive experience. In addition to the guiding questions from the film, some additional themes could be used:

(1) Were the players able to identify moments in their gameplay when they found themselves using positive and/or negative crisis response? Provide examples.

(2) Did the game's ability to allow them to revive one another and attempt the same scenario more than once afford the opportunity to form new strategies with their

partner? What changes did they make in strategy formation or approach? What real-world analogues to "revival" exist (or could be created) within organizational crisis response plans?

Through discussion, connections can be encouraged across the experiences the learners have had with viewing the film and engaging in the gameplay. By allowing the class to first experience the film, where they have no ability to change the events depicted, the class is better prepared to provide direct input and make quick decisions while playing the game based on the cause and effect analysis of the film. A final question to help reinforce the learning, the reflection, and the future application could be: If you were to design a game with the objective of teaching internal organizational crisis communication, how would you do so and what elements from film and the gameplay experience would you include? The responses to this question may afford the opportunity to develop more specific, entertainment-focused games to use in the organizational training scenario.

This style of instruction, using entertainment media like film and computer games, can also be beneficial to globally dispersed learners. Due to the ubiquitous nature of the media, participants in other locations can gain access to the films and the computer games being used. Additionally, using co-op mode in the gaming segment of the course would allow members from different global locations to play with one another, adding an additional layer of learning to the way the players interact from different social and ethnic backgrounds. This type of play could also strengthen relationships among players. This relationship strengthening has long-term effects for organizational responders who have a

need to frequently communicate and need to have a quick understanding of what is said, how it is said, and where misinterpretation could occur.

To investigate the benefits of this type of instruction, organizations could institute more crisis response exercises to determine if the flow of information is improving. Additionally, responders should be asked to participate in an initial survey, before receiving the training, on their experiences with communication during organizational response and recovery exercises. The same responders should then be asked to take the same survey after completing the training and two additional exercises to see if they have noticed internal communication improvement amongst themselves.

The analysis provided in this project is significant because it implies that entertainment media can be used to teach certain behavioral and verbal responses necessary for effective crisis communication. This research project identified how certain relations and relationships depicted in film and computer games can be transferred to a classroom setting. The analysis provided here could be tailored for many other scenarios and offers insight into additional applications of the research, some of which are now well established and some of which are only now emerging.

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