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# The Disaster Press Conference: Form and Function

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# THE DISASTER PRESS CONFERENCE: FORM AND FUNCTION<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

This study uses a structural functional perspective in examining the form and function of a presidential disaster press conference on May 27, 2010 about the Deepwater BP Oil Spill. Clayman and Heritage (2002) proposed a framework to examine the questions and responses in a press conference while Fisher (1991) offered a method to study media function. These were both applied to the disaster press conference. Findings were used to develop recommendations for public officials and PIOs in working with the media. Despite the fact that this case suggests an adversarial relationship between public officials and the media, public officials need to focus on public information needs in meeting with the press. In addition to questions about the reasons and impact of the disaster, public officials need to be prepared to respond to questions about accountability and responsibility for disasters.

Key words: Presidential disaster press conference, Structural functionalism, Form of questions and responses, Media functions, Adversarialness

## Introduction

Officials in public safety and emergency management organizations are responsible for ensuring that the affected public receives accurate and timely information during an emergency. Armed with good information, people are better able to make good decisions and, by doing so, contribute to the overall response goal of saving lives and protecting property. One of the primary ways for emergency management officials to provide this vital information to the public is through the media. One of the tools they use is the press conference (FEMA, 2009). However, many public officials when they hear the words, "press conference," feel apprehensive.

The pen-ultimate press conference is when the press meets the president, which Larry Speakes compared to a "Roman Circus" (Mountains out of Washington molehills, 1985). No wonder ordinary executives, including those at the city level or county level, find the press conference intimidating. This paper examines the literature related to press conferences in public service, looking at the role of the press conference in emergencies, and making recommendations to emergency management officials for using it more effectively. Because the presidential press conference is the most studied press conference, it is appropriate that it be examined in the context of disasters and lessons learned applied to public officials at all levels. This study uses a structural functional perspective in examining the form and function of disaster press conferences.

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## Using the press conference in emergency situations

The press conference is an opportunity for public officials to show the media and the public that they are “organized, effective, and responsible ... in the face of disaster” (Folkerts, 1999). Regularly scheduled press conferences through the course of the crisis can keep the press up-to-date on developments and provide them with vital information to pass along, thus allaying public concerns and preparing them to deal with the emergency situation. In catastrophes, emergency personnel and health facilities will not be able to meet the needs of everyone affected. While first responders may not be able to reach all members of the public, the media’s outreach will provide information to protect them and their property.

The “Giuliani model” press conference has received a lot of praise and has become an ideal for crisis communication. Twice a day during the aftermath of 9/11 and the following anthrax attacks, New York’s mayor would stand with other officials and respond to media questions. He showed he was clearly in charge, but he also displayed “both empathy and mastery over information.” He “helped the city cope with the unbearable by bearing it himself.” When he called on officials next to him, he reassured the public by letting them know he trusted those who worked with him. He supplemented the press conferences with other communication tools. During the anthrax response, the city broadcast faxes to hospitals, disseminated fact sheets, maintained a website, and a 24/7 hotline. The mayor constantly communicated with elected officials and community groups and provided expert information to the press to supplement what was said in press conferences (Mullin, 2003, 15-16).

## Greater adversarialness

A growing trend exists in English-speaking countries towards adversarial questioning in news interviews. Journalists formulate their questions in an increasingly challenging or 'hostile' manner which was rarely seen decades ago. This is particularly true in broadcast interviews with politicians or public figures.

Burriss (1989) explored the “changing relationship between the press and Presidents by looking at the questions reporters ask and the answers Presidents give to those questions” (468). Over the period of time studied from 1963 (President Johnson) to 1988 (President Reagan), the length of questions and statements made by reporters, and the length of presidential responses increased significantly. While Burriss couldn’t give the reasons for the changes, he surmised, partly because of the dishonesty of the Nixon presidency, that reporters may have become less trusting of the presidency and more aggressive in their questioning. Reporters are more arrogant and combative, according to one viewpoint. The world has also become more complex. Reporters tend to give longer statements with their questions and the length of presidential responses is much longer.

Officials’ responses have also changed with the increased adversarialness of reporters’ questions. Based on an analysis of 33 televised British political interviews, Bull (1994) developed a set of guidelines for differentiating between questions, replies, and non-replies. Responses to questions in political interviews are not simply dichotomized into replies and non-replies, but examined on a continuum. Politicians choose what question to answer and whether or not to answer it fully or only partially. Using a different approach, Harris (1991) arrived at a similar conclusion based on the analysis of three dimensions of answering, i.e. direct, indirect and challenges, from officials. She concluded that

politicians tend to give evasive answers in front of the media, based on her finding that the number of direct answers given by politicians (barely over 39%) were considerably lower than any other groups of interviewees (averaging over 67%). In sum, studies on question-answer sequences in broadcast interviews (including press conferences) seem to suggest that interviewers are more likely to use more aggressive questions, and politicians are more likely to give evasive answers than other groups of respondents.

Ekström (2009) showed how President George W. Bush used a number of techniques to control reporters in press conferences. He interrupted to control who would be able to ask questions, disagreed and rejected criticism, demonstrated certainty and conviction, and made jokes with the journalists. Sequences of jokes and laughter strengthened the interactive power of the President, created affiliations, and questioned the expected neutrality of journalists.

Tingting Sun (2010) examined adversarial questioning and answering strategies in Chinese press conferences and found similar trends, indicating that adversarial questioning is also emerging in Chinese broadcast press conferences. The study examined ten Chinese government press conferences and coded all the question turns based on the four dimensions of adversarial style (initiative, directness, assertiveness and hostility) and a modified set of nine indicators for the design of adversarial questions. Of the nine indicators, two were newly identified in the Chinese context, i.e. target-oriented questioning and question tilt. More adversarialness is occurring despite traditional values such as 'face-saving' and 'face-giving' in the Chinese socio-cultural context. Chinese journalists are asking more challenging questions that employ complex and target-oriented question designs. However, Tingting concludes that foreign journalists are much more aggressive than their Chinese counterparts in asking politicians challenging questions, in particular hostile questions. This may be partly because of greater news freedom in the west and a desire among the local Chinese journalistic community to safeguard national dignity. Chinese officials address the challenging questions in a firm and candid manner. They employ various strategies such as prefacing with an initial comment on the preceding question, challenging the credibility of the interviewer or the appropriateness of the question, using idioms, quotations, and pointing out misconceptions.

## What is form?

Form is synonymous with structure. Structure is defined as a pattern or observable uniformity in terms of the action or operation taking place. In the social sciences, the focus of analysis has been on the structure of societies and other social systems or the structures (patterns) of actions in general. Patterns become institutionalized as normative patterns develop. When they become institutionalized conformity is expected, and failure to conform is sanctioned or met with indignation. The structure becomes a requisite of the system (Fisher, 2010).

Ostman, Babcock, and Fallert (1981) used the form of questions to examine President John F. Kennedy's use of the press conference. President Kennedy "genuinely liked reporters" and many of his best friends were reporters. He held more press conferences on average than other presidents and he listened carefully to the questions reporters asked. While his answers were not always detailed, he "demonstrated time and again that he had listened, often by using an exact word or phrase which the

reporter had voiced in the question" (580). Ostman, Babcock, and Fallert (1981) hypothesized that "good" questions from reporters would elicit "good" answers from the president. As the basis for analysis, they used 16 suggestions for good "interview" questions derived from a review of research. They examined three hundred question and answer sets from 62 press conferences. Reporters who asked questions in keeping with the textbook suggestions generally received the answers they desired. They got "good" answers when they asked questions "without words with double meanings, where time, place and context were specified, where all alternatives were specified, where the unfamiliar was explained, where opinions and self-perceptions were expressed when wanted, where immediate experience was referred to, where emotionally-charged words were not used, and where the President stuck to the topic and subjects broached" (580).

**TABLE 1. Analysis of Reporter Questions in President Kennedy's Press Conferences** (Ostman, Babcock, and Fallert, 1981)

<b>Good reporter questions</b>	<b>Findings from Pres. Kennedy's press conferences</b>
1. Avoid words with double meanings.	Kennedy responded with double meanings more often when reporters asked questions with double meanings.
2. Specify exactly the time.	Resulted in good answers.
3. Specify exactly the place.	Resulted in good answers.
4. Specify exactly the context.	Resulted in good answers.
5. Make explicit all alternatives, or make none of them explicit.	Resulted in good answers.
6. Preface unfamiliar or technical subjects with explanations or illustrations.	Provided in good answers.
7. Ask questions in terms of the respondent's own immediate and recent experience rather than generalities.	Resulted in good answers.
8. Ask questions for facts about a topic of interest.	Direct requests stimulated factual answers more often but not significantly more than when questions made no request for facts.
9. Ask questions which elicit opinions and attitudes of the respondent—what is thought or felt about a particular subject at a particular point in time.	Resulted in good answers.
10. Ask questions which elicit respondent's self-perceptions—the respondent's evaluation of his or her own behavior or thoughts in relation to others.	Resulted in good answers.
11. Avoid "loaded" or "leading" questions (those which suggest to the respondent the answer which the asker wants to hear).	While loaded questions were asked by reporters 40 times out of the 300 questions analyzed (13.3%), President Kennedy responded with "correct" answers on 16 of these occasions, ignoring the loaded or leading question.
12. Avoid questions which contain emotionally-charged words.	When questions avoided emotionally-charged words, reporters got good answers.
13. Avoid embarrassing questions. They often lead	When asked embarrassing questions, Kennedy

to untrue answers.	showed embarrassment 11 of 68 times (16.2%). He also showed embarrassment in 15 other answers, to questions that were not meant to be embarrassing. The findings suggested President Kennedy consistently demonstrated honesty and openness in answering questions.
14. Adhere to the principles of good grammar when asking questions.	The President responded with good grammar even when reporters used poor grammar.
15. Avoid multi-part questions, which introduce more than one subject.	Multi-part questions led to multi-part answers, giving reporters a broad range of opinions and reflections which may be helpful in reporting. Reporters asked questions which contained from one to five topics, with a mean slightly over two. The President responded in answers of up to 10 topics, with a mean of 2.25.
16. Avoid long questions.	The shortest question was one word and the longest was 119 words. The average number of words in reporters' questions was 42.7. President Kennedy's answers ranged from no words at all (an option chosen only once in 300 times sampled) to 751 words. The average number of words in the President's answers was 117.56.

These findings from Ostman, Babcock, and Fallert (1981) provide public officials a set of guidelines to follow when anticipating questions and when providing statements or answers to questions. Officials should be clear about time, place and context of events, factual and explicit about details and avoid emotional or embarrassing and loaded or leading questions. Be prepared for questions asking for opinions and attitudes as well as self-perceptions. Use good grammar and avoid multi-part answers and long answers.

To measure the degree of “deference or adversarialness” of questions in media interviews, Clayman and Heritage (2002) developed a model for analysis, which they used to examine press conferences of Presidents Eisenhower and Reagan. It consisted of four basic dimensions of adversarial questioning: (a) initiative (the practice of questioning in which journalists 'set a more independent and constraining agenda' for interviewees while leaving the latter less leeway to pursue their own agendas), (b) directness (referring to the aggressiveness or hostility of journalistic questioning), (c) assertiveness (the practice of questioning in which journalists 'push for a particular response' from the interviewee) and (d) hostility (the practice of questioning which is overtly critical of interviewee's ability or questioning his or her accountability). The four dimensions are further divided into ten indicators. Under the initiative dimension were complex questions, question cascades (where the question is repeated several times in different words), and follow-up questions. Directness was marked by other referencing question frames where the reporter suggested the president was unable or unwilling to give a response, demanding a response with words like “would you” or “can you.” The opposite, indirectness, resulted in self-referencing question frames, a more polite form of questions that included words like “I was

wondering” or “I would like to ask.” Assertive questions used preface tilt (seeking a yes/no answer) or were negatively formulated, beginning with statements like “isn’t it,” “aren’t you,” or “don’t you think that.” Hostility questions used preface hostility (where hostile statements are made before the question) and global hostility (where both the preface and question as well as follow-up questions are hostile). Hostility was also shown by accountability questions, using “why did you” or “how could you.” Clayman and Heritage's study suggested increased adversarialness in journalists' treatment of U.S. Presidents Eisenhower and Reagan, based on major differences in the adversarial dimension and question design indicators in the two U.S. press conferences.

**TABLE 2: Dimensions of Adversarial Questioning** (Clayman and Heritage, 2002)

Dimensions of adversarial questioning	Question design indicators
1. Initiative – setting agenda for questioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- question complexity</li> <li>- question cascades</li> <li>- follow-up questions</li> </ul>
2. Directness – aggressiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- other referencing question frames</li> <li>- self-referencing question frames</li> </ul>
3. Assertiveness – pushing for a particular response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- preface tilt</li> <li>- negatively formulated questions</li> </ul>
4. Hostility – overtly critical or questioning accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- preface hostility</li> <li>- global hostility</li> <li>- accountability questions</li> </ul>

## What is function?

Functions are those activities that influence the way decisions are made and executed. Function determines the purpose or result of the action. In formal functional analysis the effects of a trait are used to explain the system rather than the trait. In other words, function is studied by looking at its impact on the system (Fisher 2010). Understanding form or structure (patterns) could possibly lead to a better comprehension of the function or purpose of the action.

In 1991 Fisher examined mass media functions in covering education policy making. In his study he suggested the following 14 media functions in six policy stages.

**TABLE 3: Media Functions in Policy Making** (Fisher, 1991)

Policy stages	Media functions
1. Problem identification / articulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Identification of problems</li><li>- Relaying problems to public</li></ul>
2. Policy recommendation / aggregation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Identification of groups &amp; proposals</li><li>- Identification policymaker proposals</li><li>- Media suggestion of content</li></ul>
3. Policy decision / adoption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Setting tempo of decision making</li><li>- Recommending how to vote</li><li>- Informing public of content</li></ul>
4. Policy implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Describing administration</li><li>- Alerting public to problems</li></ul>
5. Policy evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Evaluating effectiveness</li><li>- Reacting to policy</li></ul>
6. Issue resolution or change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Stimulating review</li><li>- Proposing change or termination</li></ul>

### **What is the function of the press conference?**

As mentioned previously, public officials use the press conference to provide information to the public so that they in turn can make decisions to protect themselves and their property. On the other hand, executives in private business use the press conference to protect the interests of their stakeholders



(stockholders, employees, customers) and assure business continuity. Generally, the media use the press conference to learn what happened and why it happened. Figure 1 suggests the relationship between the public official, media and the public.



**Figure 1: Function of the Disaster Press Conference**

## Study questions

This study attempts to answer the following questions:

- What is the purpose (function) of the press conference in disaster situations?
- Do the pattern of questions (form or structure) lead to a better understanding of the purpose (function) of the press conference?
- Does an adversarial tone exist in reporter questioning during disaster press conferences?

## Propositions

The review of the literature suggests a number of propositions that are worth examining in the context of a study of the disaster press conference. While not all these propositions can be confirmed within the limitations of one study of one press conference, this study should provide insights into most of the propositions.

1. The public officials' purpose is to provide information to the public so they can make decisions that will protect their safety.
2. The media purpose is to find out the reasons for the disaster and the impact of the disaster.
3. Press conferences for man-made disasters will be more adversarial than press conferences for natural disasters.
4. As adversarialness increases questions and answers will become longer and more multi-faceted.
5. Understanding the patterns of questions (form) leads to greater comprehension of the purpose (function) of the press conference.

## Methodology

This study uses the frameworks proposed by Clayman and Heritage (2002) (see Table 2) and Fisher (1991) (see Table 3) to examine form and function in the May 27, 2010 Presidential Press Conference about the Deepwater BP Oil Spill. Following a statement by President Obama, he invited 10 reporters to ask questions. These questions are examined using the dimensions of initiative, directness, assertiveness, and hostility and the 10 forms of questions proposed by Clayman and Heritage as well as the 14 media functions proposed by Fisher. A worksheet (found in the Appendix) was used in performing the analysis.

This study is limited in its scope and findings because it uses only one methodology (content analysis) and examines only one disaster press conference. Thus, generalizability of results are also limited.

## Results

Table 4 shows the results from the analysis of the questions at the presidential press conference about the BP deepwater oil spill. Ten reporters asked 29 questions on 18 topics. The original questions averaged 95 words (ranging from 40-162 words). Four reporters asked seven follow-up questions (ranging from three to 46 words). Only two people asked one question on one topic. Twenty-two of the questions (76 percent) focused on the main topic of the oil spill. Seven of the questions dealt with four topics different from the main topic: one about the war in Afghanistan, one about immigration, one proposing an embargo of Arizona, and a fourth about ethics in an appointment.

**TABLE 4. Results from Analysis of Press Conference Questions**

Questions	Number	Average	Range
Original question	10 reporters	95 words average	40-162 words
Follow-up	4 reporters, 7 questions	14 words average	3-46 words
Total questions	29 questions	Average 2.9 questions per reporter	1-7 questions *
Topics	18 topics	Average of 1.8 topics per reporter Median 2	1-3 topics

\* 2 people asked 1 question each on 1 topic

## Discussion – Form

The discussion is in two parts: an examination of the findings about the form (or structure) of questions and about the functions performed by the media in asking the questions. Firstly, here is the discussion about form.

- Most questions were multi-part questions with preliminary statements, suggesting a high level of question complexity, showing high reporter initiative.
- Cascading questions (multiple questions on the same topic) were used three times.
- Reporters showed little global hostility, but asked accountability questions 12 times.
- Only once did a reporter suggest the president was unwilling to answer a question (other referencing question frames). Only once was an indirect question asked.
- Reporters used preface tilting twice (asking for yes-no responses) and used negatively formulated questions 4 times.

## Discussion - Function

This section examines reporter functions that were suggested by the questions they asked.

- Most reporter questions functioned at the policy implementation stage (stage 4), and at the issue change stage (stage 6, stimulating review).
- Reporters described and asked questions that pointed out problems in policy implementation. These alerted the public to these particular problems in administration.
- While reporters repeatedly identified problems (stage 1), only once did a reporter suggestion policy action (stage 2) and only once did a reporter suggest a position the president should take on an issue (stage 3).

## Conclusions

The study was able to provide responses to the three questions posed in its problem statement.

- *What is the purpose (function) of the press conference in disaster situations?* The questions clearly indicated that the press performed functions in asking the questions. Reporters asked questions that pointed out problems in policy implementation and alerted the public to problems in administration. While reporters repeatedly identified problems, only once was a policy proposal suggested.
- *Do the pattern of questions (form or structure) lead to a better understanding of the purpose (function) of the press conference?* The form of questions suggest functions of the press in the news conference. For example, accountability questions pointed out problems in the administration of the policy.
- *Does an adversarial tone exist in reporter questioning during disaster press conferences?* In this particular press conference all but possibly one reporter adopted an adversarial tone. Even then, while the question was in an indirect form, it suggested the need for administration accountability.

The following section reports on whether the proposed propositions were supported or not:

1. *The public officials' purpose is to provide information to the public so they can make decisions that will protect their safety.* In this case the President did not provide information to protect property or improve quality of life in the area of the oil spill. He mainly defended administration actions in regards to the cleanup of the spill and shifted blame to BP.
2. *The media purpose is to find out the reasons for the disaster and the impact of the disaster.* Clearly the purpose of the media was to point to administration problems in the oil spill clean-up and to hold the administration accountable. Since this press conference was held many weeks into the clean-up, questions about why and what were already answered.
3. *Press conferences for man-made disasters will be more adversarial than press conferences for natural disasters.* While this press conference was highly adversarial, the study did not provide information that would allow conclusions about whether it was more so than press conferences for natural disasters.
4. *As adversarialness increases questions and answers will become longer and more multi-faceted.* No comparison data is available to determine if this is true or not.
5. *Understanding the patterns of questions (form) leads to greater comprehension of the purpose (function) of the press conference.* As reported earlier, the form of questions suggests functions of the media. It would follow this would lead to a greater understanding of the purpose of the press conference. The media clearly felt a need to hold the administration accountable, while the President's purpose was mainly to show how the administration was doing all that it could in the situation.

Further study is needed to determine if this is typical of disaster press conferences at the presidential level or whether this was isolated to the BP deepwater spill.

Comparisons of disaster press conferences at other levels (state and local) are needed to determine patterns and distinguish between man-made and natural disasters.

Analysis and review of press conferences appears to have potential as a tool in preparing public officials for disaster press conferences.

More study is needed to determine whether the tone (adversarialness) of questions is different between man-made and natural disasters? In this case questions showed a high level of adversarialness. However, the study did not make a comparison with other studies to determine whether this level of adversarialness is typical or atypical.

## **Recommendations for public officials**

Public officials and PIOs need to understand clearly their role in informing and keeping the public safe in disaster situations and how the media can assist in achieving these goals.

However, they also need to understand the other motivations the media have for reporting emergencies. The media report disasters because they make "good" news stories and draw in huge audiences. In other words, disasters are news worthy and receive a lot of public attention.

The media also perceive a role in holding public officials accountable. This has potential for creating adversarialness. While public officials should never believe they are friends with the media, they should develop a relationship with the media before a crisis happens so that in the midst of the emergency the media focus more on the important news story than that of keeping the public safe.

Finally, the press conference can be a valuable tool in reaching the public and providing information that will allow the public to make life saving decisions in disaster situations.

A key to effective community response in an emergency is good public information. The press is one of the primary ways of reaching the public in a disaster. The press conference can be a valuable tool in keeping the media current and providing the public up-to-date information in a catastrophe. While most communities prepare extensively in the event of a disaster, “how many of them are prepared to face the media when tragedy strikes? Who will face the press and what will they say? Or, perhaps more importantly, how will they say it?” (Folkerts, 1999) This study and further studies of the disaster press conference can provide guidance to public officials and PIOs in working with the media when disaster strikes so the public is better informed in an emergency.

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## APPENDIX

Analysis of questions asked at press conference with Pres. Obama about the Federal response to the Deepwater BP Oil Spill.  
May 27, 2010

27 103 2-2	(Jennifer Loven) You just said that the federal government is in charge, and officials in your administration have said this repeatedly. Yet how do you explain that we're more than five weeks into this crisis and that BP is not always doing as you're asking, for example with the type of dispersant that's being used? And if I might add one more; to the many people in the Gulf who, as you said, are angry and frustrated and feel somewhat abandoned, what do you say about whether your personal involvement, your personal engagement, has been as much as it should be either privately or publicly?	Question complexity and question cascading shows initiative. Global hostility and questions of accountability show hostility.	Describing administration and alerting public to problems
43 162 1	(Jake Tapper) Thanks, Mr. President. You say that everything that could be done is being done, but there are those in the region and those industry experts who say that's not true. Governor Jindal obviously had this proposal for a barrier. They say that if that had been approved when they first asked for it, they would have 10 miles up already. There are fishermen down there who want to work, who want to help, haven't been trained, haven't been told to go do so. There are industry experts who say that they're surprised that tankers haven't been sent out there to vacuum, as was done in '93 outside Saudi Arabia. And then, of course, there's the fact that there are 17 countries that have offered to help and it's only been accepted from two countries, Norway and Mexico. How can you say that everything that can be done is being done with all these experts and all these officials saying that's not true?	Preliminary statements result in question complexity, showing initiative. Questions accountability leading to hostility.	Problem identification. Reporter identifies problems and relays problems to the public.
50	(Chuck Todd) I just want to follow up on the question as it has to do with the relationship between the government and BP. It seems that you've made the case on the technical issues. But onshore, Admiral Allen admitted the other day in a White House briefing that they needed to be pushed harder. Senator Mary Landrieu this morning said it's not clear who's in charge, that the government should be in charge. Why not ask BP to simply step aside on the onshore stuff, make it an entirely government thing? Obviously BP pays for it, but why not ask them to just completely step aside on that front?	Preliminary statement cascading questions Negative question. Questions accountability. Complexity and initiative.	Media suggestion of policy.
51 127 3-2	And then also, can you respond to all the Katrina comparisons that people are making about this with yourself?	Accountability questions shows hostility.	Identifies problems.
56 21	Q You understand the credibility of BP seems to be so bad -- that there's almost no trust that they're getting --	Follow-up shows initiative.	Identifies problems.
61 76 2-2	(Steve Thomma) Thank you, sir. On April 21st, Admiral Allen tells us the government started dispatching equipment rapidly to the Gulf, and you just said on day one you recognized the enormity of this situation. Yet here we are 39, 40 days later, you're still having to rush more equipment, more boom. There are still areas of the coast unprotected. Why is it taking so long? And did you really act from day one for a worst-case scenario?	Question complexity Negatively formulated question Accountability questions	Identifying problems. Relaying information to the public.
72	(Chip Reid) Thank you, Mr. President. First of all, Elizabeth Birnbaum resigned today. Did she resign? Was she fired? Was she forced out? And if so, why? And should other heads roll as we go on here?	Question complexity 5 Cascading	Identification of problems
73 108 7-2	Secondly, with regard to the Minerals Management Service, Secretary Salazar yesterday basically blamed the Bush administration for the cozy relationship there, and you seemed to suggest that when you spoke in the Rose Garden a few weeks ago when you said, for too long, a decade or more -- most of those years, of course, the Bush administration -- there's been a cozy relationship between the oil companies and the federal agency that permits them to drill. But you knew as soon as you came in, and Secretary Salazar did, about this cozy	Preliminary statement Negatively formulated questions Accountability questions	Describing administration Alerting public to problems

	relationship, but you continued to give permits -- some of them under questionable circumstances. Is it fair to blame the Bush administration? Don't you deserve some of that?		
80 59 1-1	(Julianna) Thank you, Mr. President. We're learning today that the oil has been gushing as much as five times the initial estimates. What does that tell you and the American people about the extent to which BP can be trusted on any of the information that it's providing, whether the events leading up to the spill, any of their information?	Accountability questions directed at both the administration and BP	Identifying problems Describing administration Alerting public to problems
87 40 3-1 off	(Helen Thomas) Mr. President, when are you going to get out of Afghanistan? Why are we continuing to kill and die there? What is the real excuse? And don't give us this Bushism, "if we don't go there, they'll all come here."	Off topic multiple questions Accountability questions Negative	Describing problems with administration and altering public
91 4	Q -- a threat to us?	Follow-up question	
96 64 2-2	(Jackie Chalmes) Thank you, Mr. President. I want to follow up on something -- exchange you had with Chip. Leaving aside the existing permits for drilling in the Gulf, before -- weeks before BP, you had called for expanded drilling. Do you now regret that decision? And why did you do so knowing what you have described today about the sort of dysfunction in the MMS?	Follow-up question showing Initiative Accountability questions	Describing problems in administration and altering the public
102 5	Q If I could follow up --	Follow-up question	
104 46 3-2	Q Do you -- are you sorry now? Do you regret that your team had not done the reforms at the Minerals Management Service that you've subsequently called for? And I'm also curious as to how it is that you didn't know about Ms. Birnbaum's resignation/firing before --	Follow-up cascades Accountability Global hostility and questioning willingness to answer questions	Describing problems in administration and alerting public
106 8	Q So you rule out that she was fired?	Follow-up question	
115	(Macarena Vidal) Mr. President, you announced -- or the White House announced two days ago that you were going to send 1,200 people to -- 1,200 members of the National Guard to the border. I want to -- if you could precise what their target is going to be, what you're planning to achieve with that -- if you could clarify a bit more the mission that they're going to have.	Self-referencing question frame showing respect Indirect question	Describing administration and alerting the public
100 2-2 off	And also on Arizona, after you have criticized so much the immigration law that has been approved there, would you support the boycott that some organizations are calling towards that state?	Preface tilt requesting a yes-no answer	Recommend a policy position
127	(Major) Two issues. Some in your government have said the federal government's boot is on the neck of BP. Are you comfortable with that imagery, sir? Is your boot on the neck of BP? And can you understand, sir, why some in the Gulf who feel besieged by this oil spill consider that a meaningless, possibly ludicrous, metaphor?	Question cascades Preface tilt toward a yes answer Accountability question	Stimulating review
128 115 5-3 off	Secondarily, can you tell the American public, sir, what your White House did or did not offer Congressman Sestak to not enter the Democratic senatorial primary? And how will you meet your levels of expressed transparency and ethics to convey that answer to satisfy what appear to be bipartisan calls for greater disclosure about that matter? Thank you.	Accountability question Question complexity	Identifying problems with administration Alerting the public
130	Q From you, sir?	Follow-up question	
	Q Can you assure the public it was ethical and legal, sir?	Follow-up	