

Top Dawgs
Group Crisis Case Book
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Healthcare Crisis

Trump Administration Measles Outbreak

By Aubrey Skinner

I have chosen to focus on the recent Measles outbreaks in the US and how this is a crisis connected to HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. The Trump administration has chosen vaccines to be a core talking point. HHS Secretary RFK Jr. has been a key factor in that fight. His longtime vaccine skepticism, especially surrounding the Measles vaccine, created mass deadly outbreaks in the U.S. in 2025(Jenco, 2026).

Timeline

- February 13, 2025: Robert F. Kennedy Jr. sworn in as the secretary HHS(Office, 2025).
- March 11, 2025: RFK Jr. goes on Sean Hannity's show and talks about the Measles vaccine negatively(*We*, 2025).
- September 2025: RFK Jr. repeals recommended vaccine schedule removing many different vaccinations(Turner & Turner, 2025).
- January 2025-September 2025: Deadly Measles outbreak in Texas leading to over 700 cases(Texas Health and Human Services, 2025).
- April 7, 2025: RFK Jr. walks back statements on Measles vaccine and endorses it as the safest way to prevent Measles(Brumfiel, 2025).
- February 2, 2026: South Carolina Measles outbreak surpasses Texas as largest outbreak in recent US history(*South Carolina Measles Outbreak Now the Largest in Recent US History*, 2026).

Crisis Information

This is a public health crisis that was preventable because it was caused by an unnecessary statement made by HHS Secretary RFK Jr. His statements about the safety and efficacy of the measles vaccine went against proper medical advice by the CDC. Previous studies had confirmed that one dose of the measles vaccine is 93% effective and that two doses are 97% effective(CDC, 2024).

RFK Jr. has been a longtime skeptic of vaccinations and advocate for declining them. He previously caused a similar Measles outbreak in Samoa. A faulty vaccine program was suspended after killing two infants, RFK Jr. traveled to Samoa to spread misinformation about vaccine safety. Afterwards the vaccine rate dropped leaving the population vulnerable to an outbreak that killed over 80 children(Rozansky, 2023).

This outbreak was very severe in 2025 and 2026. In 2025 there were 49 outbreaks compared to 16 the previous year. Among the cases three people died including two children(Jenco, 2026). So far in 2026 there have been 733 confirmed cases in the US. This crisis has been severe in affecting the Trump administration's approval rating. 40% of respondents

disagreed that the Trump administration was handling the measles outbreak well(Lange & Steenhuysen, 2025).

Primary Stakeholders

The first primary stakeholder is the American public. This vaccine skepticism coming from the government greatly confuses the American public in what is right for their children. With this information coming from the Health Secretary parents don't want to put their kids' in danger with a potentially dangerous vaccine. The American public has always had a complicated relationship with the Trump administration. The public does disapprove of his handling of the measles outbreak. However a strong portion of Trump's support base has always been anti-vaccine, his recent moves appeal to them(*Trump Met with Prominent Anti-Vaccine Activists during Campaign*). The second stakeholder is the Trump administration. The spread of misinformation is actively creating a public health crisis in the US. Citizens are no longer taking the advice of doctors because of this misinformation. President Trump has backed RFK Jr.'s statements on rolling back childhood vaccines(Jewett, 2026).

Media's Response

The influence traditional news media has had on this crisis has been mostly informative. Spreading information about how many cases have been reported, hospitalizations, and deaths. Other channels have been responsible for connecting some of the Trump administration's actions to the outbreak.

Organization Crisis Response

The organizational crisis response to the outbreak was justification and a corrective statement. After meeting with victims of the outbreak RFK Jr. posted that the MMR vaccine was the most effective way to prevent contracting measles. This was in contradiction with his previous statements about the MMR vaccine, he has stated that the MMR vaccine does not actually reduce measles related deaths. This crisis response strategy has been coupled with the administration continuing to push anti-vaccine policies. The administration has primarily used social media to communicate their crisis response, including RFK Jr. who posted his approval of the MMR vaccine on X.

Evaluation

The primary publics of the Trump administration have responded badly to both the crisis and the response to the crisis. As previously stated 40% of the public disapproved of the administration's handling of the measles outbreak. There has also been backlash from Trump supporters that were anti-vax when RFK Jr. decided to endorse the MMR vaccine after previously not supporting it(Brumfiel, 2025). In terms of this crisis affecting the administration it is hard to say whether Trump's approval rating is being affected by the measles outbreak or by other crises currently ongoing within his administration. His current approval rating is 41%(*CPR PollTracker: Trump Trendlines & Crosstabs*, 2026). I don't think this crisis was managed ethically because there was contradiction on the administration's part and no real apologies made to the people this outbreak has gravely affected. I would summarize that the court of public opinion disapproves of RFK's comments on the safety of vaccines and the effects these

comments have had on vaccination rates. There have not been any verdicts in a court of law yet but I could see the administration being sued later on for spreading misinformation. I would have handled this crisis extremely differently. I would recommend RFK Jr. apologize for misleading the American people and specifically apologize to the families affected. The administration would then need to put together a campaign to endorse the MMR vaccine to convince people that it is safe and effective. To better prepare this organization for another crisis I would improve communication within the organization to stop members from making statements that reflect badly. I would also hire a full-time crisis communications team to better control the narrative of crises coming out of the administration, to prevent another crisis of this magnitude.

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Corporate Crisis

Cracker Barrel Logo Change

Case Introduction:

The corporation I have decided to focus on involves Cracker Barrel and their famously controversial logo change. The logo was changed on August 19, 2025 from its iconic “Old Timer” logo to a more simplified design. CEO Julie Felss Masino went on “Good Morning America” saying that the veteran restaurant needed a refresh. This caused massive chatter and was changed back to the original logo by August 26, 2025.



The old Cracker Barrel logo (left) sits beside the now-revoked replacement. (Eric Thomas illustration)

The store's vibe with the rebrand would change from classic southern to contemporary country (ABC). Although the restaurant's values of “hard work, family, and scratch-cooked food made with care” would stay the same, customers had strong opinions. President Donald Trump Jr. even commented on a post on X that implied the rebrand is motivated by DEI on the event saying, “WTF is wrong with [@CrackerBarrel](#)??! ” (USA Today, 2025).

On August 25, 2026, Cracker Barrel responded to the backlash saying that customer feedback showed them that they could have handled the rebrand better by sharing more about who they are and always will be (CNBC, 2025).

Timeline:

- Aug. 19, 2025: Cracker Barrel reveals new logo
- Aug. 21, 2025: Company stock dips by nearly \$10 in one day
- Aug. 25, 2025: Cracker Barrel issues statement addressing logo backlash
- Aug. 26, 2025: Trump says Cracker Barrel 'should go back to the old logo'
- Aug. 26, 2025: Cracker Barrel says it's going back to old logo

Reputational and Operational Threat

In this scenario, the Cracker Barrel logo change falls under reputation/branding crisis. Cracker Barrel is at full responsibility for this crisis as it was internally caused and could have been completely avoided. Corporate leadership is to blame for the branding decision making. However, this is not the first time the corporation has faced backlash. They have faced troubles concerning civil rights and employment policy. In the 2000s they faced a federal class action suit for its racially discriminatory practices (Heisler, 2025). The lawsuit exposed a lot of unfair treatment involving customers and employees. Cracker Barrel ended up settling for 8.7 million dollars with the money going to those affected by discriminatory treatments. The outcome confirmed to employees that racial discrimination will no longer be tolerated (Heisler, 2025).

Although Cracker Barrel has faced backlash in the past, the changing of the logo in 2025 was the biggest of them all. Within a day the public's opinion of the rebrand was reflected in the company's stock value. Over the course of one day the restaurant chain saw almost \$10 drop in stock value.

Primary Publics/Stakeholders

Loyal customers were most affected by this controversy. Customers expressed anger over the nostalgic logo switching and even held boycotts. It is always important to keep long-time, loyal customers happy since their service contributes highly to the company's success. The logo change was so symbolic and voluntary, customers saw this as a betrayal of what the brand stands for rather than an accident

Investors and company leadership also were affected. They were faced with anxiety as the company's stock dropped and negative backlash from social media. Investors also saw the crisis as a preventable that was seen as a poor judgment by leadership.

Even employees expressed their anger with the decision being above them and having to absorb customer frustration first hand. A server at a Cracker Barrel said, "It was terrible. The customers were so angry and they took it out on us" (Brian Dodd, 2025). She also directed

customers to go on social media or contact the corporate office if they had complaints. (Brian Dodd) The decision was not made by the employees and they should not have had to reap the consequences of leadership's bad brand decision.

This crisis reached not only loyal customers and food critics radars, but politicians like former president Donald Trump. He publicly urged the corporation to restore their classic logo saying, “should go back to the old logo, admit a mistake based on customer response (the ultimate Poll), and manage the company better than ever before” (AP News, 2025).

The controversy got widespread coverage online. From traditional media outlets, social media platforms, and comment sections. Most traditional media outlets covered the story as more of a business and cultural issue. The media outlets discussed more about the financial implications, political reactions, and the company's decline. While social media was seen as a stimulus for immediate response with the majority of content coming from bots or automated accounts. Comment sections like Reddit and threaded discussions talked about the authenticity of the outrage. One popular Reddit post is titled “Cracker Barrel Outrage Was Almost Certainly Driven by Bots, Researchers Say” (Reddit, 2025). Comment sections served as an outlet for many to express debate and judgements. All of these channels provided a network of influence that reflected and amplified public perception of the crisis.

Organizational Crisis Responses

Cracker Barrel originally tried to defend the choice to change its logo saying it was just a modern update and that the company is not changing what it stands for. The company explained itself and suggested the problem was that communication was poor, not bad values. This could be seen as Cracker Barrel in denial and shifting blame rather than taking responsibility for the poor brand choice. This is a low-effort response made by the company. As criticism grew on platforms like traditional media and social media, Cracker Barrel changed its response. They thanked their loyal customers for speaking up and apologized, then fully reversed their actions by getting rid of the new logo and returning to the original. This change was clear and communicated better through interviews and company statements. Since they acted quickly and dropped the logo, they were able to reduce backlash and regain control of the situation.

Evaluation

Cracker Barrel's publics like their loyal customers reacted negatively to the logo change. Outlets like social platforms and traditional media amplified this reaction, while reports later showed that bots and automated activity made the backlash appear larger than it really was. In reality, the crisis had short term effects like a temporary drop in stock price, creating investors and leadership to be concerned. Ultimately, the company managed the crisis well after listening

to customers, reversing the logo, and apologizing for not having better judgement. No legal consequences occurred and the public's opinion on the matter softened after corrective action was taken. I believe moving forward companies need to anticipate emotional reactions to changes, test decisions before making drastic decisions, and strengthen crisis management with better listening and proactive scenario planning.

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Nonprofit Crisis

San Francisco Parks Alliance Collapse

Ansley Robinson

Introduction

San Francisco Parks Alliance (SFPA) was a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that partnered with the City and County of San Francisco to support and fund public parks, open spaces, and community programs. It was committed to ensuring each park had sufficient resources and were suitable for public access (Parks Alliance, 2022).

Their mission was to activate and transform public parks and green spaces throughout the city. SFPA's Community Partner Network is made up of passionate and knowledgeable stewards that collaborate on their shared visions of improving public spaces across San Francisco. It consisted of over 80+ Community Partners, 150+ additional public space stewards, and 25+ organizations that share their mission. Through its Community Partner Network, SFPA offered a fiscal sponsorship where interested groups that aligned with SFPA could receive funding (GrowSF, 2020).

Timeline

- Early 2024: Internal financial irregularities begin to surface. This includes delayed payments to sponsored organizations and concerns regarding restricted funds.
- May 2024: SFPA leadership acknowledges financial mismanagement issues and begins internal reviews of spending. Their sponsored organizations reported delayed reimbursements and a lack of financial transparency.
- June 2024: SFPA leadership and longtime CEO Drew Becher, informs a major donor that the nonprofit is “cash poor” and facing a “dire cash-flow shortage.” The restricted funds are not disclosed to city partners as being used for operational expenses (Zimmer, 2025).
- February 2025: Drew Becher resigns as CEO amid financial concerns and allegations surfaced. Robert Ogilvie is appointed as the new CEO. Next, SFPA begins to lay off employees to attempt to stabilize its operations.
- April 2025: Ogilvie admits to the San Francisco Recreation and Park Department that SFPA used restricted funds to cover general operating expenses — violating donor agreements. The SF Recreation and Park Department halts collaboration with SFPA until the funds are fully paid off (Zimmer, 2025).
- May 2025: Mayor Daniel Lurie halts all city funding to SFPA after revelations of misuse of at least \$3.8 million in restricted funds intended for specific park projects; Lurie froze roughly \$290,000. The City Attorney and Controller launch a joint audit of SFPA. Multiple civic investigations, including from the San Francisco City Attorney and Board of Supervisors, are underway into SFPA's financial practices and oversight (Barba, 2025).

- June 2025: SFPA's board announces the nonprofit will shut down and begin an Assignment for the Benefit of Creditors to wind up operations and repay debts. All staff and directors depart and community partners are left without any fiscal sponsorship.
- September 2025: Community groups that partnered with SFPA report estimated losses between \$2.3-\$2.5 million (Greschler, 2025). A rescue fund is organized to help neighborhood organizations secure funding for parks projects.

Crisis Information

This situation represented a preventable organizational crisis that stemmed from internal financial mismanagement and the misuse of restricted donor funds intended for specific projects. These actions violated nonprofit norms and eroded donor trust, ultimately contributing to the organization's collapse (Kukura, 2025).

Primary responsibility is with SFPA's leadership board and financial management, whose decisions directly resulted in the misuse of funds and the failure to disclose critical information or properly regulate the budget. Although leadership bore the greatest responsibility, the broader organization and its sponsored projects experienced the consequences of these actions.

Prior to this incident, SFPA had not faced public scandals of similar magnitude and was widely regarded as a trusted liaison within San Francisco's nonprofit and parks community. Nevertheless, financial management issues gradually surfaced and escalated between 2024 and 2025. The crisis proved severe and irreversible, culminating in the organization's collapse, criminal investigations, and long-term harm to its community partners (Green, 2025).

Primary Publics

SFPA employees were significantly affected, as staff members lost their jobs with little notice following the organization's closure. More than 80 community partner organizations that relied on SFPA for fiscal sponsorship lost access to funds and were forced to seek alternative support to remain active. Consequently, many groups experienced program disruptions and were required to pause or shut down operations during the crisis. City agencies and donors also faced considerable uncertainty. Departments such as the Recreation and Park Department and the Port of San Francisco questioned whether projects would receive funding or reimbursement, while major donors like the Baker Street Foundation reported feeling betrayed by the misuse of their contributions. Finally, San Francisco residents were indirectly impacted as well, since delays in park improvements, recreational infrastructure, and community projects reduced overall quality of life.

Media Response and Influence

Media coverage from outlets such as the San Francisco Chronicle, the San Francisco Standard, and Potrero View focused on SFPA's financial wrongdoing, layoffs, leadership changes, and eventual closure. Reporting emphasized the misuse of restricted funds, governance failures, and the broader community impact, particularly on partner organizations and city projects.

Organizational Crisis Response

In responding to the crisis, SFPA acknowledged financial mismanagement but framed the misuse of funds primarily as a consequence of cash-flow problems and did not immediately disclose the full extent of the restricted funds involved. Their response strategy was primarily denial since they did not directly identify the issue and decided to have the CEO resign. Following the leadership transition, SFPA engaged Jigsaw Advisors to help address its operational challenges. However, communication with stakeholders remained inconsistent and lacked proactive transparency regarding corrective actions and future funding strategies (Greschler, 2025).

Evaluation

Overall, SFPA's response was largely reactive, occurring only after investigative reporting and city audits brought the crisis to public attention. By failing to disclose the misuse of funds earlier and engage stakeholders openly, the nonprofit eroded trust and intensified harm to its community partners. Greater transparency and earlier communication could have mitigated the damage by giving sponsored organizations more time to prepare for disruptions. Although dissolving the organization ended reputational risk for SFPA itself, it shifted significant burdens onto the partners that depended on its infrastructure and contributed to strained relationships with stakeholders even after closure.

If leading crisis communications in this case, the priority would have been to clearly address the financial situation by admitting budgeting errors and outlining the flow of money between operational expenses and donor-restricted funds. Immediate public acknowledgment of wrongdoing, combined with transparent and timely communication with sponsored organizations, would have supported a smoother leadership transition. In addition, collaboration with city agencies to safeguard community programs and minimize disruptions would strengthen trust within the Community Partner Network and help protect funding streams.

Ultimately, this crisis demonstrates how financial management failures in nonprofits can produce widespread harm beyond the organization itself. Because nonprofits are mission-driven and community-oriented, SFPA's mishandling of funds and poor treatment of stakeholders fundamentally undermined its mission and relationship with San Francisco, rendering its collapse irreversible. The case serves as a cautionary example of the risks associated with inadequate financial oversight, weak leadership, and blurred boundaries between donor-restricted funding and operational expenses.

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Entertainment Crisis

Camille Phansavanh

Case Introduction

Lee Dong-min, professionally known as Cha Eun-woo, is a South Korean actor, singer, and member of the Korean boy group ASTRO. Cha is under the South Korean agency Fantagio. Through these roles, Cha has built a large network of fans, colleagues, and commercial brand partners, acting as a global ambassador for Dior and Burberry (Abraham, 2026). In January 2026, Cha faced intense public scrutiny following reports from South Korea's National Tax Service alleging that he owed more than 20 billion won, approximately \$14 million USD, in unpaid income taxes (Hankookilbo, 2026). The investigation centers on claims that a company registered under his mother's name functioned as a "paper company," allegedly allowing Cha's entertainment income to be routed through lower corporate tax rates rather than higher personal income tax brackets.

Timeline

- Early 2025: South Korea's National Tax Service conducts an audit into Cha's income and family-run company structures.
- August 2025: The National Tax Service reportedly finds irregularities in corporate structures and additional taxes owed.
- January 22, 2026: Fantagio releases a statement that the tax issue is "not finally confirmed or officially notified."
- January 26, 2026: Cha releases a personal statement apologizing for the controversy and pledges full cooperation with authorities.

Reputational and Operational Threats

This crisis represents an organizational misdeed resulting from Cha's personal financial practices. The controversy originated from allegations of dishonest income management and potential legal violations, which placed Cha under formal investigation. Although he later issued an apology, the allegations immediately damaged his public image. He is currently facing backlash from the general public, who once viewed him as kind and trustworthy (Choi, 2026). Commercially, the crisis threatened Cha's endorsement partners, with brands including Shinhan Bank and Abib Cosmetics reportedly pausing partnerships (Yi, 2026). Consequently, future acting projects, advertising contracts, and brand negotiations have been placed in uncertainty.

Primary Publics/Stakeholders

Several stakeholder groups were significantly impacted. Fantagio, Cha's agency, faced criticism for failing to oversee financial risk management and for distancing itself from responsibility (Hankookilbo, 2026). Cha's legal representatives later accused that the crisis was a result of financial anxiety from Cha's mother due to an instability in Fantagio's management, leading her

to make independent financial decisions (Abraham, 2026). Brand partners such as Shinhan Bank were also affected. While the company was already facing backlash for other partnerships, Shinhan faced renewed criticisms as Cha's allegations surfaced. This led many public figures to comment that businesses should be more careful about partnering with celebrities due to the lack of certainty surrounding their personal lives (Yi, 2026).

Lastly, the crisis affected fans. Previously known and loved as a "Genius Face" and genuine idol, that image was tarnished after the allegations. Portions of Cha's fanbase's perception changed, pulling back their support with a quieter approach instead.

Media and Information Channels Response

South Korean media outlets, such as *The Korea Herald* and *The Chosun Ilbo*, emphasized the severity of the alleged tax liability and the role of family-run companies. These coverages framed the case as a message of broader concerns regarding celebrity privilege and financial accountability in South Korea (Osen, 2026). International media coverage, such as *Forbes*, extended reputational damage to global audiences unfamiliar with Cha's previous public standing. Social platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and X amplified the severity of the impact on Cha's character. While some fans attempted to make jokes or paint the situation in a more trivial manner to minimize the negative impact, trending hashtags and reposted news clips intensified visibility and shortened Cha's response window to publics less familiar with his character.

Organizational Crisis Response

Fantagio's response was very succinct, acknowledging the issue but distancing itself from the crisis by emphasizing its lack of involvement. Additionally, they stressed that no finalized tax ruling had been issued and that legal procedures were ongoing (Abraham, 2026). Cha's response was more personal, despite its delay due to his military service. The SCCT strategy he used was reminding by releasing an apology that acknowledged responsibility and pledged transparency and cooperation. By asking his fans for their continued support, it prompted stakeholders' loyalty and trust. This pushed a lot of his fans and colleagues to fight for him on social media, preventing further escalation (Xportsnews, 2026). Cha's lawyers used denial to shift blame onto Fantagio, stating that Cha's mother took actions to protect Cha due to frequent changes in Fantagio's representatives (Abraham, 2026). These responses humanized Cha and his family's actions while redirecting blame away from him.

Evaluation

The crisis significantly disrupted Cha Eun-woo's public image as a disciplined and trustworthy celebrity figure. While no final legal outcome has been announced, the reputational damage was immediate, particularly in relation to brand credibility and public trust. Additionally, his brand partnerships were impacted, losing multiple clients and putting acting roles on hold. However, Cha's apology and transparent tone helped prevent further escalation, stabilizing fan sentiment

and demonstrating SCCT rebuilding strategies to help preserve long-term audience loyalty. Additionally, the denial and shift of blame onto Fantagio prompted fans to investigate Fantagio instead of Cha as an individual.

Reflecting on this incident, there are a couple of things I would implement for the future. First, I believe Cha would benefit from an established crisis communication team to issue immediate messaging. This is particularly relevant for this case as Cha's personal statement was delayed due to his active enrollment in the military, allowing the media to control the narrative. With this established team, they would be able to plan and create statements and procedures for crises where Cha is unavailable. Additionally, proactive coordination between Fantagio and Cha would prevent contradictory messaging. While Cha's lawyers were effective in shifting the blame off of Cha and onto Fantagio, it is still his current agency, which could result in a negative impact on their relationship. Lastly, following the verdict, a supervised press conference would allow Cha to address the public directly, rebuild trust, and reinforce transparency to maintain loyalty. Ultimately, while the crisis damaged Cha's image, his apology and cooperation positioned him for potential long-term recovery.

Appendix

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Disaster Crisis
Hurricane Melissa
By Megan Brown

I have chosen to focus on Hurricane Melissa that primarily impacted Jamaica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and Haiti. The hurricane had impacts on Jamaica and the Jamaican government. The hurricane made landfall in late October 2025 and was the strongest recorded hurricane to ever hit Jamaica, with sustained 185 mile per hour winds (Rafferty, 2025).

Timeline:

- October 23, 2025: A tropical disturbance begins to form in the central Atlantic Ocean
- October 25, 2025: Tropical Storm Melissa begins to intensify and is now categorized as a Category 1 hurricane (Rafferty, 2025)
- October 26, 2026: Hurricane Melissa grows into a Category 3 hurricane; hurricane watches and warnings are issued for Jamaica and eastern Cuba
- October 27, 2025: Hurricane Melissa reaches a Category 4 hurricane and later grows into a Category 5 hurricane (Rafferty, 2025)
- October 28, 2025: Hurricane Melissa makes landfall in Jamaica as a Category 5 hurricane and brings destructive winds, torrential landfall, severe flooding, power outages, and infrastructure demolition (Rafferty, 2025)
- October 29, 2025: Hurricane Melissa weakens but continues to move over eastern Cuba, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and the Bahamas (Rafferty, 2025)

Reputational and Operational Threats:

Reputational and operational threats from Hurricane Melissa vary, but the main crisis type was operational disruptions from a natural disaster. The morning after Hurricane Melissa made landfall, “more than 70 percent of Jamaica and eastern Cuba had been left without electricity” (Rafferty, 2025). Roofs were torn off of buildings, trees were out of the ground, and the rain brought mudslides. One week after the hurricane had made landfall in Jamaica, there was an estimated \$48 billion of damage to the region and 75 individuals had been confirmed dead (Rafferty, 2025).

The Jamaican government is not responsible for the natural disaster, but they are responsible for educating their citizens about the coming storm and how to prepare for it. The rapid formation of the hurricane can be attributed to “warm water, ample moisture, and favorable wind shear” (Keister, 2025). These factors led to the strongest hurricane on record to strike Jamaica.

Primary Publics/Stakeholders:

The main publics that were affected by Hurricane Melissa include the residents of Jamaica/the surrounding islands and the Jamaican government. The hurricane claimed dozens of lives and caused billions of dollars of damage (Rafferty, 2025). The hurricane placed the Jamaican government at the center of attention during this disaster. Other publics/stakeholders involved include the National Emergency Operations Center (NEOC), the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), the Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility (CCRIF), the United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), and the United States Disaster Response Team.

Media Response:

The traditional news media outlets including CNN, BBC, Reuters, AP, AFP, The Guardian, and more covered the hurricane including moments leading up to it, during, and after. On social media platforms like X, TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook, real-time updates were given by residents of the islands as well as outside observers. Many news sources also posted to their social media accounts on these platforms giving updates.

There were many fake AI-generated videos of Hurricane Melissa that were posted, attracting millions of views. There was a viral video of “four sharks swimming in a Jamaican hotel's pool as floodwaters allegedly brought on by Hurricane Melissa swamp the area,” (Chan, 2025), but it was AI-generated misinformation circulating social media.

Organizational Crisis Responses:

The Jamaican government activated NEOC to respond to the storm. The United States sent support to the affected communities through a regional Disaster Response Team “to assess needs and provide search and recovery assistance” (U.S. Department of State, 2025). PAHO deployed emergency medical teams/supplies to “alleviate overstretched health services and reinforce health care delivery” (PAHO, 2025). CCRIF and CERF provided funds in support for Jamaica and other Caribbean islands. In addition to funds, food, water, shelter, health assistance, aid, education, protection, and restoration/reconstruction were provided to residents of these islands from these organizations.

The Jamaican government used an accommodative crisis stance with some advocacy. They prioritized public safety, relief, and recovery and emphasized assistance and coordination with other organizations to ensure that those impacted by the disaster were accommodated. When it comes to advocacy, the Jamaican government and news sources debunked false information when necessary, clarified misinformation, and reminded residents that the hurricane was an uncontrollable disaster. The government framed Jamaica as a victim of the disaster while news sources spoke on how unprecedented and catastrophic the storm’s intensity was, using a victimage crisis strategy.

Evaluation:

The residents of Jamaica and surrounding islands responded on social media and news platforms immediately following the hurricane. No blame was to be taken and the Jamaican government did everything that they could to prepare their residents for the incoming storm. The private sector expressed fear of what is to come since almost all of their services were destroyed in the storm. The economic and operational impacts left on the Jamaican government are intense, but many countries expressed their support in getting Jamaica up and running again.

The crisis was managed effectively. Early warnings were given, coordination with publics and stakeholders occurred, and following the hurricane, restoration and reconstruction began. No ethics were affected, and all misinformation/disinformation was clarified by the Jamaican government and news sources.

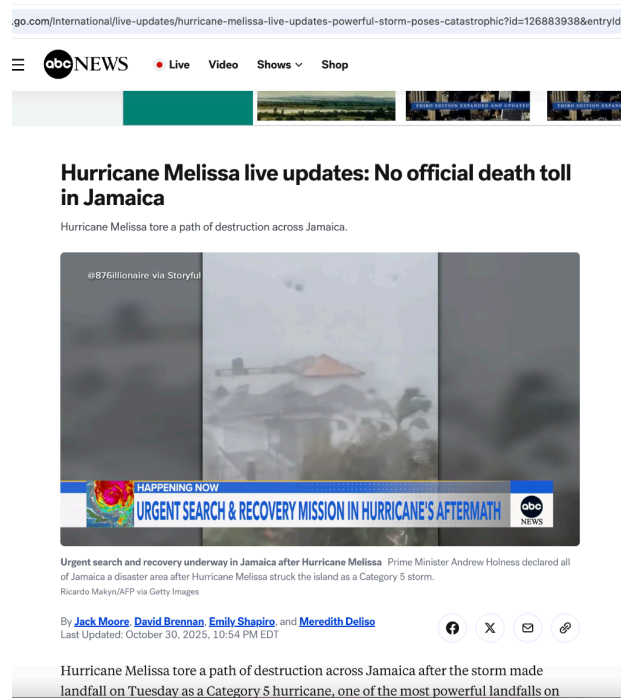
There are not any tangible outcomes from the crisis communication effort, as the situation was handled pretty smoothly.

In the court of law, there are no legal findings or cases since it was an act of nature. For the court of public opinion, leadership and organizations were praised for their responses to the disaster. While there was some criticism, it was mainly praise, as this disaster affected the lives of all, not just some.

If I were to lead a crisis response team during this disaster, I would ensure that all residents of the island have been informed and are prepared for the incoming storm. I would post updates on social media platforms and communicate with news sources to get as much information to the public as possible.

Moving forward, the Jamaican government can train local first responders in disaster management and what to prioritize if the island is hit by another storm like this. In addition, I would update my contacts to all parts of the island to ensure that quick communication can happen that will reach all residents.

Appendix



Deliso, M., Moore, J., Brennan, D., & Shapiro, E. (2025)



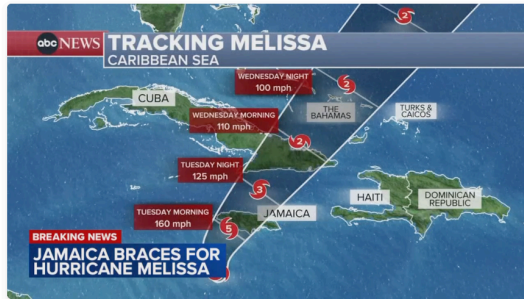
Chan, K., & Sobhan, T. (2025)

HURRICANE

Hurricane Melissa bears down on Jamaica, threatens to be the island's strongest recorded storm

The National Hurricane Center expects Hurricane Melissa to make landfall in Jamaica on Tuesday morning

By JOHN MYERS JR. and DÁNICA COTO 
Monday, October 27, 2025



Hurricane Melissa has intensified into a Category 5 storm as it draws closer to Jamaica. Landfall is expected Monday night into Tuesday.

Hurricane Melissa intensified into a Category 5 storm Monday as it drew closer to

Myers, J., & Coto, D. (2025)

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Sports Crisis

Sherrone Moore and The University of Michigan



Case Introduction

The chosen organization for my individual case study is the University of Michigan Football program, a member of the Big Ten Conference. Michigan entered the 2024 season following an undefeated 2023-24 campaign that ended with a national championship victory over Washington. Shortly after, Sherrone Moore was named the program's 21st head coach on January 26, 2024, becoming the first African American head coach in Michigan football history. A member of Michigan's staff since 2018, Moore signed a five-year contract in September 2024 with a base annual salary of \$5.5 million (Kalland, 2025).

Despite high expectations, the 2024 season proved turbulent. Michigan finished 9-3, including a 27-9 loss to rival Ohio State on November 29, its first loss to the Buckeyes since 2019. That game marked Moore's final appearance as head coach. Less than two weeks later, on December 10, Moore was fired for cause due to an inappropriate relationship with a staff member, ending a brief tenure (Bahns et al., 2025).

Reports indicated the relationship spanned multiple years and first surfaced following an anonymous tip in October 2024. The university hired an outside law firm to investigate but was initially unable to substantiate the claim. The woman ended the relationship on Dec. 8. Two days later, the staff member reported the relationship to university officials and provided evidence, prompting a new internal investigation. That same day, Athletic Director Warde Manuel dismissed Moore for violating university policy and contract terms.

Following his dismissal, Moore allegedly entered the woman's apartment and made threatening statements, prompting police involvement. He was detained, evaluated at a local hospital, and later booked into the Washtenaw County Jail. The university publicly announced Moore's firing on December 10, followed by a statement from University President Domenico Grasso¹ on December 11 emphasizing accountability and cooperation. Moore appeared in court on December 12 on felony and misdemeanor charges, with bond set at \$25,000. A further university update was issued on December 17 outlining steps to move forward as the investigation continued (Feldman et al., 2025).

Reputational and Operational Threats

This crisis falls primarily into two crisis types: organizational misdeed and unexpected loss of leadership. The inappropriate relationship violated university policy and ethical standards, particularly given the power imbalance between a head coach and a staff member. Moore's

dismissal for cause confirmed misconduct and created immediate leadership instability as the program prepared for the 2025 Cheez-It Citrus Bowl.

Initial responsibility lies with the University of Michigan for failing to prevent or identify the misconduct sooner, especially given Moore's position of authority and the university's inability to substantiate the initial report. However, Moore bears responsibility for the reputation and legal consequences, as his actions violated established university policies and laws. While Michigan had not faced an identical situation, similar cases across college athletics highlight ongoing challenges related to power dynamics and workplace relationships. Overall, the crisis caused significant reputational and operational damage to the university and severe legal consequences for Moore, who now faces felony charges.

Primary Publics/Stakeholders

As a nationally prominent program fresh off a national championship, the crisis affected several key publics. Alumni and donors, who maintain strong emotional and financial ties to Michigan football, largely attributed responsibility to Moore rather than the institution (Bahns et al., 2025). University leadership initially retained credibility but faced partial responsibility due to oversight failures, prompting swift action and messaging centered on integrity and accountability.

Players and staff experienced significant operational disruption and emotional strain following the sudden leadership change during bowl-game preparations. In response, athletic director Warde Manuel appointed Biff Poggi as interim head coach, prioritizing player well-being and transparent communication regarding bowl participation. Sports journalists and national media served as agenda-setters, shaping perception by emphasizing both Moore's misconduct and the university's response (Adelson, 2025).

Media Response

Traditional news media such as ESPN, The Athletic, USA Today shaped public understanding through ongoing updates and analysis. Reporting also examined broader implications, including Moore's coaching future and the role of race in public perception.

Social media platforms including Instagram, X, and TikTok amplified the crisis. Images of Moore's court appearance went viral², while speculation and unverified details spread rapidly, contributing to misinformation and heightened scrutiny (Sanchez, 2025).

Organizational Crisis Response

The University of Michigan adopted a largely accommodative crisis stance, prioritizing accountability over defensiveness. Under Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT), the university employed apology, corrective action, and justification strategies. Moore's dismissal for cause served as the primary corrective action, while leadership statements emphasized institutional values and contractual obligations.

These strategies were communicated through official press releases and the university's "Messages to the Community" webpage. Two primary statements were issued: a written announcement titled "Moving Forward with Integrity" and a video message³ from President Grasso outlining next steps and reaffirming accountability (Grasso, 2025). Athletic director Warde Manuel also released a statement reinforcing the university's zero-tolerance policy⁴. Notably, Michigan avoided posting these messages on social media, signaling a strategic effort to limit amplification and maintain message control.

Evaluation

Primary publics largely placed responsibility on Moore rather than the university. Coverage reflected disappointment and anger toward Moore, while sympathy centered on players and staff impacted by the disruption. Financial consequences for the university were limited; Moore's dismissal for cause allowed Michigan to avoid paying the remainder of his contract, and investigation costs were estimated at approximately \$62,000 (Atwood, 2026).

The crisis was managed partially effectively and ethically. While the university's initial response represented a failure in early prevention, its actions improved once credible evidence emerged. Michigan acted decisively, communicated transparently, and allowed legal processes to proceed. Tangible outcomes of the crisis communications effort included Moore's dismissal, institutional distancing from misconduct, and stabilization of public trust. Legally, the case remains unresolved, with Moore awaiting further court proceedings (Feldman et al., 2025). In the court of public opinion, however, Moore was largely deemed responsible, while the university was viewed as flawed but ultimately accountable.

Looking back, a more thorough initial investigation could have reduced the crisis's severity. Moving forward, Michigan should strengthen crisis readiness through mandatory training on power dynamics and clearer reporting protocols to improve organizational preparedness and ensure a situation like this does not occur again.

Sports Crisis Appendix

- A1.) University of Michigan – Office of the President, [Letter from President Grasso](#)
- A2.) Instagram Post, [Image of Court Appearance](#)
- A3.) YouTube, [Video from President Grasso](#)
- A4.) X Post, [Statement from Athletic Director Warde Manuel](#)

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Political Crisis

Operation Metro Surge: The Controversy in Minnesota Makenzie Fox

Introduction: In December of 2025, the Department of Homeland Security announced “Operation Metro Surge,” deploying large numbers of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents to the Minneapolis, Minnesota area in an effort to combat illegal immigration. The operation has sparked national controversy after the volume of arrests, deportations, and the killing of two protestors within two months. In January 2026, Renee Good and Alex Pretti were fatally shot by ICE agents in Minnesota, leading citizens and the federal government to argue over the justification and the consequences.

Timeline:

January 20th, 2024:

- President Donald Trump is reelected as the 47th President of the United States after promising a crackdown on immigration during his campaign.

December 1st, 2025:

- Department of Homeland Security announces Operation Metro Surge in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

December 8th, 2025

- President Trump announces the crackdown on immigration is due to recent fraud allegations with the Minnesota government and Somalians.

January 7th, 2026

- Renee Nicole Good is fatally shot by ICE agents during a protest in Minneapolis. The death sparks an outrage from citizens and lawmakers around the country, leading to an increase in protests of ICE.

January 14th, 2026

- President Trump announces ICE has arrested over 2,500 criminals or illegal immigrants in Minnesota since beginning Operation Metro Surge.

January 23rd, 2026

- “ICE Out of Minnesota: Day of Truth and Freedom” protest and strike is held in Downtown Minneapolis.

January 24th, 2026

- Alex Pretti, an ICU nurse, is fatally shot by ICE agents during a protest in Minneapolis. For the second death in less than three weeks, protests and unrest increased around the country. Many lawmakers call for the firing of DHS Secretary Kristi Noem.

January 26th, 2026

- Border Patrol “commander at large” Gregory Bovino is stripped of title and relocated out of Minnesota. “Border Czar” Tom Homan takes his place to lead Operation Metro Surge.

February 4th, 2026

- Homan authorizes the removal of 700 federal agents from Minnesota.

Crisis Information:

Crisis Type: Malevolence and Misinformation.

Malevolence occurs when there is malicious or extreme intent. Misinformation occurs when someone gives false or inaccurate information. Due to the media coverage, many opinions, mass sharing of videos, and more, this leads to misinformation spread, harming the credibility. Operation Metro Surge is *extreme*, one of President Trump’s biggest promises during the campaign and tying in a malevolence crisis.

Crisis History: ICE was established in 2003 after the terrorist attacks on 9/11 in 2001. Known to be controversial, ICE and immigration crackdown has faced backlash many times before. In 2025, 32 people died in ICE detention centers under the Trump administration. Many blamed these deaths on poor conditions such as unsanitary living, lack of food, and inadequate medical care. The organization is prone to controversy with the political debate of immigration surrounding it.

Crisis Responsibility: There is a fine line of shared responsibility in this crisis. One share of responsibility falls on DHS. They are the enactors here, planning and executing the Operation. One share of responsibility falls on the Trump administrators. President Trump oversees the federal operation and on many accounts has encouraged the actions of DHS/ICE. Another share of responsibility falls on the illegal immigrants in the country. One could argue since they are the target of the operation due to their immigration and citizenship status, they share responsibility in the operation.

Reputational and Operational Threats:

After the incidents in Minnesota, approval ratings of ICE went down significantly. 65% of Americans think that the actions of ICE have “gone too far,” a stark difference from 54% in just six months prior in June 2025. (Marist 2026) The Minnesota events immediately sparked controversy and backlash. Widespread protests from around the country, the disruption of law enforcement processes, legal challenges, and more arose. Activists and community leaders have encouraged citizens to fight back against ICE and federal agents. The incident quickly turned to a call on civil rights.

Primary Publics and Stakeholders:

There are several key stakeholders in this crisis. The first group impacted is DHS and ICE. Through the events in Minneapolis, there have been rises in protests against the involvement of ICE. The head of the operation was removed and replaced by “border czar” Tom Homan, pulling many agents from the operation. The next group impacted is the Trump

Administration. DHS is under President Trump and Secretary Noem is a member of his cabinet. Anything related to his cabinet or the federal government reflects on his administration. Another group impacted is the people of Minnesota and the Minnesota government on local and state levels. The Minnesota government has encouraged citizens to stay safe when interacting with federal officials. The Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison, along with the city of Minneapolis, filed a lawsuit against the Department of Homeland Security, declaring the actions of the federal government were unconstitutional.

Media Response:

The incidents of Minnesota immediately caught the attention of social media. Videos of the two killings, as well as content surrounding ICE agents and protests circled significantly, catching the eye of national mainstream news media. Many influencers and activists on social media began sharing tips on how to act around ICE, how to stay safe, and what rights they are entitled to. The swirling videos of the two deaths caused many at home to analyze and come to their own conclusions of the events. This led to discourse online, arguing over whether any of the circumstances were justified. In national media, outlets such as Fox News stood by President Trump and ICE, claiming the events were acts of self defense and justified. Outlets such as the New York Times or CNN reported on the severity of the circumstances, calling on the federal government to rework their policies on immigration enforcement and violence. Operation Metro Surge was covered greatly in all forms of media, with ABC News reporting 82% of Americans saw the video of Renee Good being shot.

Organization Response:

Despite relieving Gregory Bovino, the first leader of Operation Metro Surge, of his responsibilities and relocating him elsewhere, the Trump administration and DHS replaced him with “border czar” Tom Homan. The administration and the organization stand firm in their pursuit of criminal illegal immigrants. Secretary Kristi Noem responded to the fatal shooting of Renee Good, calling Good’s actions “an act of domestic terrorism.” Noem stood by federal agents and encouraged them to keep doing their assigned job. While many lawmakers and citizens called for the removal of Secretary Noem, President Trump stated many times that he will not fire her. Tom Homan did announce that 700 federal agents would be removed from the state of Minnesota, still keeping the number of agents close to 2,000. The Trump administration and Republicans are continuing with a justification approach to the crisis.

Evaluation:

In conclusion, the events of Operation Metro Surge consistently sparked controversy over immigration and the actions of DHS. There have been several communications approaches to the situation, with republicans supporting the President’s administration and with liberals directly opposing it while encouraging other options. The Trump administration is handling the situation fairly well on some ends, such as encouraging proper investigation and continuing his promise to the republican base of cracking down on illegal immigration. On other ends, the administration could handle some aspects better. Many are calling on him to remove Secretary Noem and rework the assignments of ICE. Many citizens say that they will not back down from fighting

ICE until this happens, which may lead to more fatalities in the future. Democrats are consistently pushing their message across the nation, with protests, strikes, and walkouts. Operation Metro Surge is far from over.

Political Crisis Appendix:

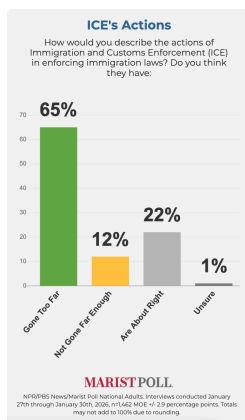
A.1: Electoral College Results

2024 Electoral College Results

Check back for the Certificates of Vote from the 2024 election. They will be posted as they become available.

President	Donald J. Trump [R]		
Main Opponent	Kamala D. Harris [D]		
Electoral Vote	Winner: 312	Main Opponent: 226	Total/Majority: 538/270
Vice President	JD Vance [R]		
V.P. Opponent	Tim Walz [D]		

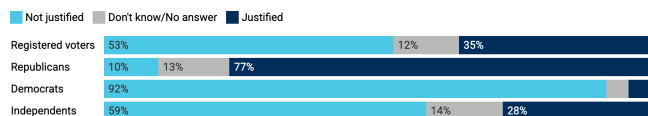
A.2: ICE Approval Ratings



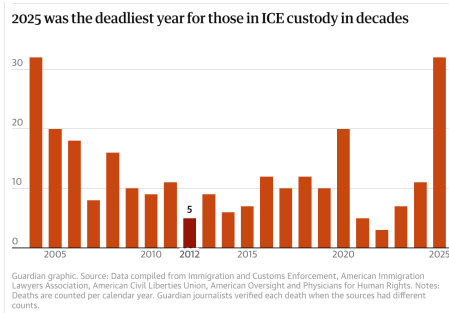
A.3: Quinnipiac Poll of Justification of ICE

Quinnipiac poll finds 53% of voters saying Good's shooting was not justified

Q: As far as you are aware, do you think this shooting was justified, or not justified?



A.4: ICE custody deaths



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Fashion Crisis

Sydney Sweeney and American Eagle Ad Campaign

Amelia Sexton

Case Introduction:

In the Summer of 2025 ^{A1}, American Eagle launched an advertising campaign to promote their iconic denim, headlined by famous actress Sydney Sweeney.^{A1} The central message was “Sydney Sweeney has great jeans” (American Eagle, 2025). The campaign featured a video of Sweeney saying, “Genes are passed down from parents to offspring, often determining traits like hair color, personality, and even eye color. My jeans are blue,” (Restrepo et al., 2025). Shortly after, the entirety of the campaign went viral and faced an immense amount of backlash, as many people mistook the message as “Sydney Sweeney has great genes,” not jeans. The company’s poor choice of wording caused many people to believe that the ad campaign was subtly promoting eugenics, selective breeding to improve genetic composition (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). By August, American Eagle issued a statement negating the eugenics claim, saying, “Sydney Sweeney has great jeans is and always was about the jeans. Her jeans. Her story.” (Restrepo et al., 2025). ^{A2}

Reputation and Organizational Threats:

This type of crisis primarily depicts a scandal and organizational misdeed (Coombs, 2023, p.73). The campaign sparked intense moral outrage as AE took a known risk mentioning such a highly sensitive social theme. Thousands of people bashed the company’s lack of cultural sensitivity, negatively impacting the brand’s reputation. ^{A3} The brand itself is held responsible for the incident, as its in-house creative team is responsible for the production of such ads. While this crisis is unlike most other crises the company has faced, it left unresolved bitterness towards the company from many, and is not the first in the industry.

Primary Publics and Stakeholders:

The primary publics affected by this advertising campaign were external stakeholders, mainly those of Gen Z and AE's general demographic. Social activists also emerged and offered conflicting viewpoints, focusing on the political aspect of the campaign, claiming that the company was targeting a specific political group. In an article for CNN, brand strategist Cheryl Overton spoke on this nature of the campaign, saying that the campaign felt "intentional" and "pointed," suggesting that if AE was targeting the far-right, they should realize that "folks are educated... and willing to call brands out" (Andrew, et al., 2025). Internally, AE remained quiet, suggesting that employees were advised not to speak on the matter. Sydney Sweeney, a key subject in the matter and well-known social media influencer, originally did not speak about the ad to keep her personal brand separate from her work, saying, "I'm against hate."^{A4}

Media Response:

Traditional news media and social media both responded almost immediately as the advertising campaign began to roll. Social media exploded first, with people commenting on American Eagle's social media platforms, scrutinizing their work. Because of American Eagle's global reach and variety of customers, the controversy of this ad and the hearsay associated with it spread rapidly. TikTok, Instagram, and X spewed criticism over the ad, increasing its publicity even more.^{A3} Traditional media and newspapers like NPR, New York Times, CNN, People, BBC, and more all covered different perspectives of the crisis.^{A5}

Organizational Crisis Response:

American Eagle took an accommodating stance in response to the backlash and crisis following their campaign with Sydney Sweeney. The company issued a formal statement; however, they never apologized nor took any blame.^{A2} They adopted a dual response strategy of denial and diminishment, employing excuses and justifications to mitigate the perceived severity of the crisis. They also used a strategy to bolster their reputation, reminding the public that all the funds raised from this campaign would go to Crisis Text Line, a mental health and support charity (Sebastian, 2025). In executing their response, American Eagle leveraged social media as their main messaging hub to frame the controversy as a simple misunderstanding rather than issuing a formal apology.

Evaluation:

The campaign initially triggered immediate backlash across the media, with critics scrutinizing American Eagle for a lack of cultural sensitivity and a failure of oversight during the execution of the campaign. Influencers, celebrities, and the public blasted the company through social media posts and critical comments, even more so after AE failed to take responsibility for the harm they caused in their statement. CMO Craig Brommers had no regrets, saying that "every single marketing metric" went up after the controversial campaign rolled out in July (Hicks,

2025). According to Hicks's article, American Eagle experienced an increase in revenue and an additional 790,000 new followers. The company's overall reputation took the biggest hit as criticisms and accusations saturated the internet, with AE's foot traffic in stores decreasing by 9% (Murray, 2025).

I think that this crisis was managed ethically, but not effectively. American Eagle's ad offended thousands across the world, and yet, they never apologized nor took any responsibility. Many interpreted the brand's refusal to apologize as a lack of concern, while others argued that the company got exactly what they wanted out of the campaign (Danziger, 2025). Despite the toll on the company's reputation, the viral attention from the crisis caused an uproar in sales and revenue for the brand. The controversy acted as free fuel for the campaign, drawing people to AE's website and social media channels, showing that their approach to managing this crisis may have been effective after all.

Ultimately, the verdict from the court of public opinion was split, with some convicting AE guilty of insensitivity and others rewarding the company with more business and seeing no issue. I would take a similar approach in handling this crisis, however, I would issue an apology. Regardless of the true intent behind the campaign, the harm it caused could have been easily avoided if AE had considered its audience and potential messaging implications.

Moving forward, it is vital for American Eagle to engage in multilevel efficacy and strengthen their dynamics by paying careful attention to their messaging and implementing rigorous cultural vetting processes. They must shift their mindset from defending their brand to admitting that they may be at fault sometimes, even if it is unintentional. American Eagle has the means and the necessary skills to handle crises effectively, but they must start considering how their messaging might affect others, even if it is not blatant to them.

Appendix

AT: American Eagle Advertising Crisis Timeline – Canva by Amelia Sexton



A1: The AE Jeans Billboard

<https://www.nytimes.com/2025/09/05/business/american-eagle-sydney-sweeney-ad-earnings.html>



A2: AE's Response on Instagram

https://www.instagram.com/p/DM0tMjaTBll/?utm_source=ig_embed&ig_rid=e373bddb-4cef-4601-9181-7b18f1b7218d



A3: Public Responses to AE Ad On Instagram

https://www.instagram.com/p/DM0tMjaTBll/?utm_source=ig_embed&ig_rid=e373bddb-4cef-4601-9181-7b18f1b7218d



A4: Sydney Sweeney's Response <https://www.instagram.com/p/DR7mRmyAB6H/?hl=en>

A5: Media's Response

-<https://www.npr.org/2025/08/01/nx-s1-5487286/sydney-sweeney-american-eagle-explained-why-controversy-racist-eugenics-trump-bathwater-ad-klein-statement>



-<https://www.nytimes.com/2025/09/05/business/american-eagle-sydney-sweeney-ad-earnings.html>

American Eagle Sales Fall Slightly After Sydney Sweeney Ad

The second quarter ended nine days after the ad was released, leaving little time to see the full impact of the campaign.

-<https://www.cnn.com/2025/08/02/entertainment/sydney-sweeney-american-eagle-ad-dunkin-drama-cec>



-<https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cddm7z3p2vlo>

American Eagle shares soar as Sydney Sweeney ads seen driving sales

<https://people.com/sydney-sweeney-shares-emotional-response-to-american-eagle-jeans-campaign-exclusive-11863206>

Exclusive

Sydney Sweeney Shares Emotional Response to Controversial American Eagle Jeans Ad: 'I'm Against Hate' (Exclusive)

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<https://thisislca.com/insight/lessons-from-sydney-sweeneys-american-eagle-campaign>

Group Takeaways

While analyzing the variety of crisis communication case studies, we discovered that each crisis is different and there is no one way to solve a crisis. However, we also discovered various similarities across the board. Leadership, preparation, and transparency are all tactics that we discovered have the biggest impact on crisis communication. This assignment taught us

One of the biggest takeaways from the case studies was that communication from leadership roles in crisis plays a pivotal role in the outcome. The public may base their perception off of the actions of those in leadership, and if those individuals are not aligned with an organization, the public may view them as untrustworthy. Leadership also affects roles throughout an organization, leading to missteps in communication strategies. At the end of the day, the leadership is likely the most forward-facing entity to the public, so leadership can determine if the crisis stabilizes or falls.

Another important aspect of crisis communications is the attention to detail and potential implications is crucial. So many crises occur when there are significant details and potential risks that are not factored into a communications plan. Being proactive and planning ahead of time makes a difference in the details that might seem small, but have a great impact. Having multiple crisis plans that can be altered for each circumstance can ensure all aspects are covered.

A crucial detail to pay attention to when making your communication plan is to pay attention to the stakeholders involved. We paid attention to the impact of strategies that had a clear stakeholder group that they were catering towards, versus when they were addressing all stakeholders through one message. While the plans had various outcomes, when the strategy had a clearer idea of who their stakeholders were, they often led to better results.

News outlets and social media posts also shape the outcome of a crisis and control how much information gets to the public. Mass media may also increase misinformation, expediting the severity of crises. In high profile cases, specifically cases with public figures, crises can become exponentially bigger and affect more stakeholders. This garners more media attention, spreading faster. It is important for organizations to control their narratives in the media and stay strong in their position and approach.

Finally, we discovered that even though a crisis communication plan may seem strong, it might not always work. In some cases, the brand reputation may take a hit, but sales and revenue still continue to increase. Long-term reputational damage is always a possibility, and there is not necessarily a quick-fix for every crisis. Many may take several steps and long periods of time to repair the damage and get back on the right foot.