Crisis as a plague on organisation: Defoe and A Journal of the Plague Year

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Introduction

'it was never to be said of *London* that the living were not able to bury the Dead.'

(Defoe, 1722/ 2003, p. 100)

Is a crisis that can be managed through an organized response a true crisis? What of those crises that exceed the resources required to 'bury the dead'? Does a plague – a pandemic, an economic depression, an act of terrorism, the effects of climate change – effectively mean the end of management as we know it? In other words, is a crisis a plague on organizational management? Does Defoe help us discern what might be done?

Daniel Defoe's *A Journal of the Plague Year* (hereinafter *Journal)* is regarded as one of the earliest novels in the English language, part of the naissance of modern literature and therefore of the development of social thought. Published in 1722, it is strangely contemporary. It is not all that it seems. It purports to be a journal; the heading on the first page styles it 'Memoirs of the Plague' (*Journal*, p. 3*).* Indeed, the novel was assumed to be a rather derivative factual report rather than a considerable work of fiction until the 1930s (Schonhorn, 1968). Yet its author was born only five years before the calamitous events of 1665 that are described; he was not the adult narrator, that being 'H. F.', a saddler who lived in the parish of St Botolph's, Aldgate. Defoe was addressing his own contemporary audience of the early 1720s who feared a repetition of the events of 1665 as well as 'economic collapse' following the South Bubble scandal of 1720 (Flanders, 1972, p. 337). The novel plays with the boundaries of fact and fiction and in so doing provokes thought on contemporary concerns about the representation and management of crises.

In the light of modern-day pandemics (AIDS, Ebola, SARS and Zika) and

catastrophes such as Bhopal (1984), 9/11 (2001), the Indian Ocean tsunami (2004), Hurricane

Katrina (2005) and the Victoria (Australia) bushfires (2009) the *Journal* contributes to

hermeneutic frameworks appropriate to organizational responses to crises. Read in the light

of cities now being the prime sites of terror – New York in 2001, London in 2005, Mumbai in

2008; Paris in 2015, and Brussels in 2016 – it also provides an opportunity to examine the

interplay between the London of 1665 and the twenty-first century city that presents a

challenge to our current managerial and organizational capacities. We are approaching the

age of mega-cities (London is one of them) (https://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-

connections/ng-interactive/2016/mar/24/prepare-for-the-rise-of-the-megacity) and although

they present advantages such as efficiencies of scale they also present major challenges,

especially those at the lower end of the wealth scale like Lagos and Karachi with

infrastructure not always suitable for growth. In a crisis they are more likely to resemble the

London of the 1720s than of the 2010s.

Our judgement of whether a crisis can indeed be managed according to an analysis of

the *Journal* is informed by an evaluation of the crisis management activities seen in the novel

with the 'Success-Failure Continuum' of Pearson & Clair (1998, p. 68).

Use of fiction in organizational learning

It is reasonable to assume that organizations may weather change through adaptation and

resilience, and certainly resilience is an important factor (Barasa, Mbau & Gilson, 2018).

This assumption however entails another – a continuity of cultural norms and value

judgements. But what happens when change 'utterly confounds our notions of what is good

or great, what is natural or just' (Gosling, 2017, p. 35). Like Gosling we turn to fiction to

explore this situation and for the same reasons as Gosling: 'not because of the lack of

empirical evidence for economic, judicial and governmental disruption … but because

[fiction] exercises a kind of truth-seeking and hermeneutic imagination'. Defoe, like Lear to

whom Gosling refers, asks 'what we might legitimately hope at a time when the sense of

purpose and meaning that has been bequeathed to us by our culture has collapsed (Lear,

2006, p. 104, in Gosling, 2016, p. 37). The *Journal* reveals the struggle to maintain norms,

value judgements and structures of evaluation in a situation that no longer makes sense.

Organization studies increasingly includes the study of fiction to understand real-life

phenomena (De Cock, 2010; Rhodes and Brown, 2005; Holley, 2016; Buchanan and

Huczynski, 2017; De Cock and Land, 2005; Watt, 2000; Phillips and Knowles, 2012). What

Land and Sliwa (2009, p. 350) claim for *Robinson Crusoe* may be claimed for *Journal.*

Definitions of crisis

A crisis situation is when usual procedures are not able to handle the situation, experience is

lacking and resources are insufficient (Janes, 2010, p. 89). A 'crisis' is an 'extraordinary',

'unpredictable' and 'disruptive' event. Some organizational repercussions for failure are

obvious, such as loss of reputation, financial loss, or even loss of life.

The population of London faced these issues in the plague year in the *Journal*.

Pearson and Clair (1998, p. 62) provide a definition of organizational crisis which includes

that it is a 'low-probability, high-impact situation' where 'critical stakeholders' find it

threatening to the 'viability of the organization' as well as 'personally and socially

threatening'. There is 'ambiguity in cause, effect and means of resolution'.

However, 'low probability' may apply readily to environmental disasters such as a

tsunami or an earthquake but less so where human agency is involved. For example, the

Bhopal explosion of 1984 was preceded by signs for those who were prepared to read them

for some time. Gauges were broken, indicators were faulty and instruments were missing

(Weick, 2010) – an accident waiting to happen. Certainly with 40 tons of toxic gas escaping and the immediate deaths of 3,800 people followed by many more thousands, 'high impact' (Weick, 1988) cannot be argued with.

Was London's Great Plague of 1665 'low probability'? Not really. There had been recent plagues in Amsterdam and Naples (*Journal*, p. 31). There had, moreover, been plagues in London throughout the previous three hundred years, 'recurring with deadly frequency'. The plague of 1603 had killed 25,000 people, some 18 per cent of the population (Beaumont, 2015, p. 99; Schonhorn, 1968, p. 387). London's 'preceeding Visitation' had been in 1656 (*Journal*, p. 6). The signs of the 1665 plague coming to London were clear from the end of 1664.

In the modern age, overwhelming evidence indicates that climate change brought about by human activity will increasingly lead to global warming, changes in the atmosphere, destruction of habitat, mass extinctions, and reduction in food crop yields and therefore can be considered a looming crisis with a human cause, not at all 'low-probability'. Nevertheless greenhouse gas emissions continue to increase (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2017).

Defoe records, obviously not in contemporary language, what Pearson and Clair identify as psychological trauma as playing a large part in establishing modes of behaviour during a crisis. Victims are psychologically destabilised to such an extent that, as suggested by Janoff-Bulman and Freize (1983), 'they lose their sense of worth and control, seeing themselves instead as weak, helpless, and needy'; and two 'assumptions' that are ordinarily held are challenged: that 'bad things can't happen to me'; that 'doing the right thing will yield good things' (Pearson & Clair, 1998, p. 63). Defoe describes 'Infected' and 'dilirious' people who 'would run to the Pits […] and throw themselves in, and [..] bury themselves'

(*Journal*, p. 59) – a shocking resonance with those who jumped out of the World Trade Tower in the 9/11 attack.

Pearson and Clair's (1998) 'high impact' holds true of the Great Plague of 1665 as the weekly Bills of Mortality show. Contextualising his narrative in the Great Plague of 1665, Defoe's subject matter appears to be solely a pandemic, not applicable to organizational interests. However, Defoe's London is a 'market-place'. His 1722 account of the events of 1665 is rooted within social, economic, and psychological aspects of his own contemporary eighteenth-century world, which we also recognise (Flanders, 1972). With an understanding of what endures in human nature (Woolf, 1925), he addresses the elements of the economic depression caused by a disaster: business owners leaving the vicinity, structural unemployment, unequal consequences to rich and poor, alienation, and uncertainty (Flanders, 1972). He describes the dilemma of the vulnerable to stay and protect economic interests while risking life, or 'shut up [their] house and flee' (*Journal*, p. 10) – the need to balance the private and the public good, the loss of faith and the maintenance of superstition, and the overriding need for community.

Despite the warnings, management of the plague years was reactive rather than preventative. The expectation that those already in authority can and will lead seems as prevalent now as it was then. We still presume that the people most appropriate to deal with a crisis are the everyday civic or business leaders. Should we then require that competent management skills encompass competence in 'crisis management'? Management of organizations involves dealing with unexpected disruptions to 'normal' operations. However, examining events which can be termed 'crises' shows that significant changes take place in organizations both during and after a crisis. Janes (2010) suggests that the process of practical, real world crisis management takes place in three distinct stages. This seems to be a version of Mitroff's (1988) influential five-stage process. A pre-crisis management stage of

'emergency response' focuses on safety. Pre-planned actions to ensure the safety of individuals and property and to 'address the hazard' (such as containing a fire) are set in motion. The actual 'crisis management' stage focuses on 'strategic assessment and decision-making'. Priorities need to be set, resources allocated, communication established and stakeholders managed. The final, post-crisis stage, 'business continuity' focuses on 'stabilisation and restoration' of the disrupted routine.

In assessing the management of such an event, Leonard and Howitt (2010) indicate that the important dimensions of crisis management are 'command, coordination and communication'. The decision-making aspect includes prioritising resources and deciding how to coordinate different governmental actors. Hierarchical structures may change as leaders opt to decentralise or delegate authority.

In evaluating the effectiveness of crisis management, Pearson and Clair (1998) dismiss extreme categories of success/failure and point that it is not uncommon for the management of a crisis to result in a complex mixture. They propose a 'Success – Failure Continuum" which includes 'midground outcomes' as well as success and failure in a number of dimensions such as 'signal detection' 'incident containment' and 'decision making' (Pearson & Clair, 1998, p. 68). This insight, and others in current work on the management of particular modern-day disasters (Kahn, Barton, & Fellows, 2013; Leonard & Howitt, 2010; Takada, 2000; Farazmand, 2007; and Christensen, Johannessen, & Laegreid, 2012) emerge in the *Journal*.

We now turn to Janes' (2010, p. 89) three stages of 'emergency response', 'crisis management', and 'business continuity' for a systematic, chronological approach to the crisis. Our headings are The First Phase, The Main Phase and The Final Phase. In The Main Phase we consider priorities, allocation of resources, communication and stakeholders. We assess the success of the management of the plague using Pearson and Clair's (1998) examples of

crisis management success and failure. The structure of our assessment helps us cope with

the chaos of Defoe's *Journal*. The entire novel is one undivided whole which follows a clear

time-line, yet jumps from one consideration to another. This meandering reflects H. F.'s

mood and the uncontrolled situation. He begins an anecdote then gets side tracked

distractions, dramas that he witnesses, and events that he hears about, and pauses at intervals

to reflect on the Bills of Mortality and digresses on the good job being done by the municipal

authorities despite everything.

The first phase of the plague November 1664 to April 1665

In this six-month period the plague goes from 'two Men, said to be French-men, died

of the Plague in *Long Acre'* (*Journal*, p. 3) to a period of 'great Uneasiness' (*Journal*, p. 6)

when the Bills of Mortality are showing fluctuating death tolls. The Bill for the month of

January shows the highest number of deaths in a month since the previous plague of 1656. In

February, however, the Bills decrease and 'every body began to look upon the Danger as

good as over' (*Journal*, p. 6). This is followed by various alarms and 'terrible Apprehensions'

(*Journal*, p. 7) but relatively low numbers of deaths. Echoing the belief held by many in the

early years of the AIDS pandemic that it affected only the gay community (Herek & Glunt,

1988), people (and H. F. includes himself in this) seem to believe that a particular group

should be blamed. It was said to have been brought with a consignment of goods originally

from the Levant and brought from (the recent enemy) Holland. They cling to the illusion that

it is other types of people who are likely to die of the plague rather than themselves – 'it was

[…] found that this Frenchman who died […]' – and they are encouraged to see that deaths

occur in another part of the city than their own: '[W]e began to hope, that as it was chiefly

among the People at the End of the Town, it might go no further' (*Journal*, *p. 7).* H. F.

makes no mention at all of the intervention of the civic authorities or any kind of leadership

or communication of a civil plan. There is no direction despite the mounting death toll at this time and the 'true Account' in the possession of the Government. 'Several Counsels were held about Ways to prevent its coming over […]' (*Journal*, p. 3) but nothing of that seems to be communicated to the people. There is no sign of Leonard and Howitt's (2010) command or coordination. What is seen, however, is an individualised sensemaking. Unfortunately such attempts to simplify a situation usually contribute to its complexity (Weick, 2010).

The main phase of the plague May to end of September 1665

The high death tolls begin in May. From abiding hopes that the disease would be confined to a few deaths at one end of the city, '[they found that] the Plague was really spread every way, and that many died of it every Day' (*Journal*, p. 7). Defoe depicts a great bustle of people leaving the city, primarily those who could afford to, that is, 'the richer sort of people, especially the Nobility and Gentry', 'people of the better Sort', with the streets full of people and 'Waggons and Carts […] Coaches […] Men on Horseback' (*Journal*, p. 9). His brother leaves with his family, telling H. F. that he has heard that 'the best preparation for the Plague was to run away from it' (*Journal*, p. 11). H. F. finds this 'Hurry' very sad, it continues all through May and June and even after that. He himself is in a quandary: he cannot decide whether to stay or flee, to prioritise his 'Business and Shop' and 'all [his] Effects in the World' or 'the Preservation of [his] Life' (*Journal*, p.10). H.F. - after six pages of cogitation - decides to stay.

At this point, the 'Emergency Response' stage of crisis management has finally been reached, with the safety of people and property very much the focus. We see many features of Janes' first stage of 'Emergency response' (2010, p. 90), where personal safety is key, with 'site evacuation and security' being available to the wealthier members of the population. There is still none of Leonard and Howitt's (2010) 'Command and Coordination'. Even the

'Hurry' (*Journal*, p. 9) is not directed by any authority figure. As Leonard and Howitt (2010) observe, authority hierarchies are disrupted in a time of crisis.

At last, 'about June', 'the Lord Mayor of London, and the Court of Aldermen' begin to coordinate activities (*Journal*, p. 37). From the first decision made, H. F. rarely fails to flatteringly commend them, for his audience in 1722 were aware of the Great Plague of Marseilles in the previous year and there were fears of a repetition of 1665 (Schonhorn, 1968). 'I shall have frequent Occasion to speak of the Prudence of the Magistrates, their Charity, their Vigilance for the Poor, and for preserving good Order; furnishing Provisions, and the like […]' (*Journal*, p. 37). An early decision made is for the municipal authorities to remain in the city to keep order (*Journal*, p. 177). 'Constables and Church-wardens' are also required to stay in the city.

We now consider themes in The Main Phase.

Priorities

Priorities of management in 'wartime' are not always the same as those of 'peacetime' (Janes, 2010, p. 92). In London 1665, limiting the progress of the plague is the most important priority. Yet the formal 'Orders of my Lord Mayor's' are effective from 1 July – rather belated considering the first deaths had occurred in November. 'An Act for the charitable Relief and ordering of Persons infected with the Plague', passed in the plague of 1603, is invoked to 'shut up Houses'. H. F. initially says, 'it was with good Success, for […] the Plague ceased in those Streets' (*Journal*, p. 37). Despite the success 'this Part of the History of the Plague is very melancholy' (*Journal*, p. 37) with those who are shut up with the sick committing 'Violences' to the watchmen who act as their 'Jaylor', even killing 'not less than eighteen or twenty of them'. H. F. excuses the law with the pre-Utilitarian ethic that 'it was a publick Good that justified the private Mischief' (*Journal*, pp. 48 & 52). The

subversion of the usual hierarchies in a time of crisis, as noted by Leonard and Howitt (2010), is again seen here as people make their own strategic decisions. There were families who, 'foreseeing the Approach of the Distemper', gathered sufficient provisions and shut themselves up of their own volition, with some success (*Journal*, pp. 54-5).

An important priority which becomes a leitmotif, is to bury the dead every night (*Journal*, *p*. 23). It is taken up by H. F. as a principle of successful crisis management: '[N]otwithstanding the infinite Number of People which dy'd' they were always buried every night 'so that it was never to be said of *London,* that the living were not able to bury the dead' (*Journal*, p. 100). Sadly for H. F.'s project of reassuring his contemporary audience the living were not always able to bury the dead.

Allocation of Resources

In times of crisis 'strategic assessment and decision-making' includes the innovative allocation of scarce resources (Janes, 2010, p. 90). The first seven of the July Orders of the municipal authorities concern the appointing of newly devised types of worker in a sort of plague industry. The evacuation of people of 'the better Sort' (*Journal*, p. 9) led to widespread unemployment among the poor. It also created a workforce to fill posts such as 'Examiners' to monitor and report the whereabouts of the sick in each parish, pairs of 'Watchmen' to guard each 'sick House' on day and night shifts (*Journal*, p. 39) and of the posts of burier.

It was also important to ensure that people had enough to eat. The maintenance of the price of bread, H. F. says, is unheard of in a plague-stricken city, yet it is achieved in London in 1665. The *Journal* shows people working together sharing both money and resources (*Journal*, p. 122). "It happened that they had not an equal share of Money (…) he was content that what Money they had should all go into one publick Stock, on Condition that whatever

any one of them could gain more than another, it should, without any grudging, be all added

to the same publick Stock." (*Journal*, p.122).

Despite H. F.'s protestations that the crisis is well managed by the authorities, its

successes seem to derive equally from the suspension of normal hierarchies (Janes, 2010;

Leonard & Howitt, 2010) and the popular interpretation of the necessary allocation of

resources.

Communication

Janes (2010, p. 90) advocates the provision of information to achieve awareness, confidence

and desired outcomes. However, just as in 2005 in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina,

'Under crisis conditions, good information is often in short supply and rumour is freely

available' (Janes, 2010, p. 92). Communication reported by H. F. is not confined to what

might aid management of the crisis within London but extends to the rumours about the city's

predicament that spread to overseas trading partners and competitors. The rumours contained

in Defoe's leitmotif that in London the living are unable to bury the dead are very difficult to

scotch. Rumour turns the small group of people carrying one gun and with one horse into a

large group of armed horsemen (*Journal*, p.76).

The clearest communication reported and reproduced by H. F. is the regular Bills of

Mortality which punctuate his chaotic narrative structure. He uses them as objective measures

of the progress of the plague – and yet he is unsure whether or not they are true. In May, nine

out of 53 burials in one parish are recorded as plague victims but further enquiry reveals

twenty more (*Journal*, p. 8). At the beginning of September, during the 'worst Days', H. F.'s

opinion is that over a thousand a week were buried, yet the Bills claimed fewer (*Journal*, p.

99).

Leonard and Howitt (2010) report that improved communication technologies since the 1980s led to increased centralisation of fire-fighting control but they contend that decentralisation of control has a great deal to recommend it. Comparing with his own contemporary world of the 1720s, Defoe's narrator points out that, 'We had no such thing as printed News Papers in those Days' (*Journal*, p. 3). The only knowledge worth having is what neighbours tell you as everything else becomes difficult to differentiate between anecdotal evidence and fact (*Journal*, p. 161). What is clear in our world is that communication technologies do not secure accurate reporting or protect against vested interests – one need only google 'democracy hacked'.

Stakeholder management

Identifying key stakeholder interests influences decisions made and action taken (Janes, 2010). Who are the stakeholders in a crisis? The range of stakeholders in the plague indicates the complex of competing interests which are impossible to align to the satisfaction of all. These include victims and their families, those who fear becoming victims, doctors, 'the authorities' (in whatever form), those who fear the next 'outbreak', and those on the periphery whose lives are affected by for example being unable to enter a stricken city to carry out their everyday business. The poor become stakeholders by, as already noted, being given new jobs.

We might also add to the stakeholders those who benefit through opportunistic crime. H. F. sadly reports that after his brother has left London he is in the habit of checking his house, although he would be surprised (it would be 'something wonderful to tell') if anyone would have 'Hearts so hardened in the midst of such a Calamity, as to rob and steal (*Journal*, p. 17). As this is a work of fiction, of course the foreshadowed event does happen. H. F.

meets a group of women leaving his brother's warehouse wearing and carrying hats from his

stock.

Defoe also records 'disaster capitalism' (Klein, 2008, p. 6). In the early days of the

plague, quacks and astrologers flourish with remedies and promising predictions. However,

they also faced the risk of exposure and ensuing flight or ruin, as well as the same risks as the

'patients'. This is evident as the quacks and astrologers rapidly disappear.

More distant beneficiaries of the Plague are the 'the *Flemings'* and the Dutch who are

able to take advantage of the country's weak trade position during the disaster. They take

over Britain's overseas markets and buy goods in parts of England which are untouched by

the plague and sell them in Spain and Italy as their own.

We now turn to the last months of the plague in accordance with Janes' (2010) final

crisis management stage of 'business continuity' (p. 90).

The final days of the plague

'The last week in *September*, the plague being come to its crisis, its fury began to

assuage' (*Journal*, p. 215). Although there was a decrease in deaths, 'the Plague was still at a

frightful Height' (*Journal*, p. 215). Nevertheless, people threw caution to the wind and 'not

only went boldly into Company with those who had Tumours and Carbuncles upon them

(…), but eat and drink with them, nay into their Houses to visit them' (*Journal*, p. 216). This

recklessness of the people is heavily criticised by H. F. 'The Physicians oppos'd this

thoughtless Humour of the People with all their Might' (*Journal*, p. 217). He shows great

frustration at the people's refusal to restrain their behaviour. The general population is clearly

reverting to 'business as usual': 'they open'd Shops, went about Streets, did Business'

(*Journal*, p. 218) but the tone of the novel lifts as 'in a short while, Things began to return to

their own Channel' (*Journal*, p. 219). Jane's (2010, p. 89) 'business as usual' is evident: 'It

must be acknowledg'd that the general Practice of the People was just as it was before, and very little Difference was to be seen' (*Journal*, p. 220). H. F. reports that many claimed the morals of the people declined, but he is quick to point out that he would not claim so much.

The rules set up in London are described in detail as attempts were made to control the plague. But when London begins to recover, the plague spreads elsewhere. The overall picture we gain of the regulations is that they were neither effective at the height of the plague nor in the immediate aftermath. Poverty continued and yet people became less generous after having survived such an ordeal and concerned themselves with their own and their family's well-being 'after all was over' (*Journal*, p. 221), although need was in many cases greater. As then so now - donations during times of crisis such as hurricanes and tsunamis soon dwindle once the catastrophe is over. The land given over to burial pits was naturally extensive and H. F. recounts how these sites were built on, converted to gardens and cemeteries, and generally put to everyday use. The extent and quantity rule out making any memorial of them. The doctors and clergy who returned having left during the plague now faced abusive accusation notices on their doors. (*Journal*, pp. 224 - 225).

Despite H. F.'s well-intentioned critique of the management of the plague, in Defoe's account the inevitability of the outbreak and its death toll is emphasised. The hand of God is held responsible for the plague and also for deciding to lift the affliction (*Journal*, p. 234). This is used as an explanation for the ineffectiveness of medicine and management and H. F. finishes the novel with various references to the good of God. We return to our opening questions.

Conclusion

Defoe challenges the very idea of managing a crisis: 'The best Physick against the Plague is to run away from it' (*Journal,* p. 190).

Pearson and Clair (1998, p. 68) offer a tool for assessing levels of success or failure in organizational crisis management from the perspectives of various stakeholders. They reject a black and white success or failure stance and advocate a continuum which includes 'Failure Outcomes', 'Midground Outcomes', and 'Success'. The tool measures criteria in seven 'Crisis Concerns' which are all relevant to the management of the Great Plague:

'Signal detection.' In the early days of the plague, there is plenty of rumour but no indication of the authorities providing direction with an 'Emergency Response' (Janes, 2010, p. 90). All the warning signs are ignored. This is a 'Failure Outcome' category.

'Incident containment.' Confining the plague to London is never stated as an aim in *Journal*. However, as the plague spreads Magistrates seek to restrict contact between the London population and incomers from towns that were known to be infected. Again, a 'Failure Outcome' since 'the crisis escapes beyond the boundaries […]'.

'Business resumption.' Here is a 'Midground Outcome' with 'Areas of operation most affected by crisis are closed temporarily'. Once the danger is confirmed, business owners leave London and return when it is over.

'Effects on learning.' This appears to be a 'Failure Outcome', as the 'organization' is set to make the same mistakes again. That 1665 was London's last plague of note is due more to the Great Fire of 1666 destroying rodents' habitats than to the judgement of any revised policies and procedures as a result of lessons learnt.

'Effects on reputation.' This may be counted a 'Midground Outcome'. People fear a repetition but they do not seem to alter their habits to prevent it. Defoe promotes skilful management to encourage his contemporaries but does not make any particular mention of their loss of reputation in 1665.

'Resource availability.' This is another 'Midground Outcome' as the 'Organization scrambles by on own and others' ad hoc assistance'. Those left jobless by departed employers

get recruited into new plague-industry jobs. During the crisis, people shared money and resources but on their own initiative.

'Decision making.' This falls under a 'Failure Outcome' as decisions are 'Slow in coming because of the internal conflicts' of the authorities trying to keep the population in ignorance for the first few months.

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According to Pearson and Clair's (1998) model crisis management in the Great Plague is shown as mostly in the category of 'Failure Outcomes'. Despite Defoe's wish to maintain calm in the face of a possible new plague in the 1720s, the *Journal* presents a depressing picture of the human ability to manage a crisis. It shows the poor as unable to learn a lesson and avoid contact (*Journal*, p. 201) and criticizes people for not making provisions despite plenty of warning (*Journal*, p. 74). The narrator recommends more planning, hoarding and preparation (*Journal,* p. 72), but then comments that this would not have helped anyway and in general he blames the victims (Journal, pp. 99 & 234). Defoe shows the errors made by the civic authorities in not being sufficiently aware of the coming plague and in persisting with the implementation of regulations that were seen to be ineffective.

Viewing the Great Plague of 1665 through Janes' (2010) three-stage crisis management process illuminates gaps in some of these models and illustrates some of the claims. We would argue in contradistinction to Janes' timeline that Defoe's account of the plague demonstrates that establishment and maintenance of priorities, of allocation of resources, communication and managing *all* stakeholders are paramount in *all* stages of crisis management from the first indications to the re-establishment of 'normal' procedures. Both Janes (2010) and Leonard and Howitt (2010) emphasise the importance of 'coordination and communication' as overarching interdependencies. In the plague, the effectiveness of the

various levels of coordination including individuals, neighbourhoods, and the civic

authorities are a crucial factor in the management of the crisis. Leonard and Howitt's (2010)

subversion of usual hierarchies is often seen as individuals are managing the crisis

themselves.

We may conclude that not only does an analysis of Defoe's *Journal* enrich our

understanding of selected crisis management models but these models enhance our

appreciation of the novel and its un-managed crisis. The study illustrates Gosling's 'truth-

telling and hermeneutic imagination'.

Notes

All quotations from the *Journal* are from the Penguin 2003 edition. They are all 'sic' as to

spelling, capitalisation, punctuation and italicisation.

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