LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES DEALING WITH CRISIS AS IDENTIFIED BY ADMINISTRATORS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

A Dissertation

by

MERNA J. JACOBSEN

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

August 2010

Major Subject: Educational Human Resource Development

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Approved by:

Co-Chairs of Committee,	Richard Cummins
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ABSTRACT

Leadership Strategies Dealing With Crisis as Identified by Administrators in Higher Education. (August 2010)

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Co-Chairs of Advisory Committee: Dr. Toby Egan
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This study's purpose was to glean a comprehensive list of the leadership challenges faced and strategies utilized during campus crisis and tragedy. It also sought to examine the goals of leadership at different phases of a crisis, aspects of leadership focused on, and recommended leadership practices to follow. A typology was created to identify appropriate crises. The typology classified crises as (a) institution as victim, (b) natural disaster, or (c) institution having legal liability. Fourteen interviews were conducted at eight schools. Interview transcripts were segmented into units for analysis. These data units were coded, grouped into categories, and named as themes. Once all themes were identified, overarching themes established the findings.

Eight major challenges were identified for campus leaders during crisis: (a) leading in spite of a loss of control, (b) coping with deficient, inadequate, or non-existent technical and human crisis response measures or systems, (c) evaluation of leadership decisions occurring almost simultaneously to leadership actions, (d) altering operations and relationships, (e) managing transitions within the life of the crisis, (f) communicating about the crisis, (g) dealing with multiple constituency groups, and (h) dealing with long-term effects. Ten categories of strategies were identified: (a) making safety the priority, (b) leading planning and policy development, (c) garnering resources, (d) leading intentional communications efforts, (e) clarifying the leadership infrastructure, (f) accepting responsibility for crisis leadership, (g) modifying the leadership approach, (h) framing the crisis for others, (i) leading the healing process, and (j) leading efforts to learn from the crisis.

Study findings suggested that it is not the type of crisis but the amount of devastation that determines leadership challenges and approaches. Leadership challenges evolve through predictable stages, invoking a broad range of leadership skills and concepts. During crisis, campus leaders focus on collaborative, symbolic, and logistical leadership. Sharing a common orientation during crisis is facilitative in the decision-making process. Policy development is a powerful means of bringing structure to a chaotic situation and of demonstrating an ethic of care.

Findings from this study provided not only an overview of leadership challenges and strategies during campus crisis, but insight into a variety of crisis types, and practical application strategies for university administrators.

DEDICATION

For my mother, father, and Andy

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am indebted to several academic professionals and scholars at Texas A&M University who guided my journey through graduate school. Foremost among these are the members of my committee. Dick Cummins and Toby Egan provided the perfect combination of support and structure to move me through a process that I am sure they wondered if I would ever finish! Their wisdom yielded insights into my research I would not have discovered on my own. From them I learned what it means to illuminate, rather than simply state. Stan Carpenter, through the sheer power of role modeling, elevated my ability and willingness to think critically and demand more of myself as a student and a professional. Christine Stanley is the embodiment of academic leadership at its best, capable of handling difficult conversations with grace and dignity.

I am fortunate to be surrounded by solid friends. My writing partners, Jennifer and Roemer, calmed my fears, lifted me up when I was low, and journeyed with me through the maze that is graduate school. My cheering section never faltered: Dian from Missouri, Judy and Ronna from Colorado, Susan from California, Diane from Texas, and Ruth from Oregon.

My mother and father provided the acceptance and encouragement that no first generation student could succeed without. I am, in many ways, a long way from home.

Finally, I would not be the person I am without Andy. His unconditional love, insistence on self-confidence, and willingness to persevere with me propelled me into life challenges, including completing graduate school, that I could not have mastered on my own.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Chapter I develops an introduction to this study, along with a statement of the problem and the purpose of the study. Seven research questions help to identify the focus of the study, and the chapter also provides three operational definitions used throughout this study. Chapter I concludes by describing several of the study's assumptions and limitations.

At Kent State University, what began as a social protest ended in a fatal confrontation between students and authorities. President Robert White could not know that four would be killed and nine wounded when he announced to protesters that the day's events had taken decisions out of his hands and placed them in the hands of the National Guard (Sivulich, 2000). At the University of Texas in Austin, a disturbed man barricaded himself in a campus tower, killing 17 people with a sniper rifle. Thirty-three years later the president reopened the tower as part of the continued healing process for the campus ("Honoring the victims," 1999). At the University of Wyoming a gay man was beaten and left to die on a barbed wire fence. The president of this sleepy western university is thrust into the national limelight (Monaghan, 1998).

This dissertation follows the style of the *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*.

Hurricane Andrew obliterated the campus of Miami-Dade Community College. President Roy Phillips was one of hundreds left homeless (Mangan, 1992).

Seven fraternity members are charged with involuntary manslaughter in connection with the beating death of a pledge at Southeast Missouri State University. The dead student told his girlfriend that he was determined not to allow the verbal and physical abuse of the pledge process to affect him mentally. Students reported that hazing rituals were common despite the institution's attempt to crack down on such practices (Shea, 1994). An unstable stack of bonfire logs collapsed at Texas A&M University, killing 12 students. To ensure a safe future President Ray Bowen suspended the bonfire event, challenging decades of tradition (Biemiller, 2000).

These few examples demonstrate the pervasiveness of campus catastrophic events. No university is exempt from the possibility: public and private, large and small, those untraditional and those steeped in tradition. This study was an examination of the leadership challenges and strategies inherent in campus crisis as told from the perspective of campus leaders.

Seeger, Sellnow, and Ulmer (2003) summarized the scope, depth and far reaching consequences of leadership during crisis:

> Leadership processes are closely associated with both organizational success and dramatic failures. Leaders inculcate and personify many of the organization's values and set the overall tone and direction of the organization. During a crisis, a leader often becomes the organization's public face, playing a critical role by providing information and explaining the crisis to stakeholders and the larger public. Crisis frequently requires that leaders respond to accusations of wrongdoing, justify and explain choices, and offer personal assurances that

> problems will be corrected. Leadership frequently frames the larger meaning of the crisis, which may be necessary for followers to begin the initial sense-making process that ultimately leads to coordinated, harm-reducing actions. In addition, the leader may establish an overall tone for the crisis by remaining calm, personifying authority and control, and reinforcing core values. Leadership, therefore, is one of the most important and visible organizational roles in the aftermath of a crisis. (p. 238)

It is against this level of complexity that this study was conducted.

Statement of the Problem

While crisis leadership research is generated from the corporate, political, military, and other fields, little is known about this phenomenon in the higher education context. However, higher education is not immune from the possibility of crises occurring or the resulting effect:

> Increasingly, crises are common parts of the social, psychological, political, economic, and organizational landscape of modern life. They affect more people than ever before, are more widely reported in the media, and have a wider impact on increasingly interconnected, dynamic, and complex social-technical systems. Crises are sources of profound human loss, tragedy, and agony and are also the precipitating factors in radical, and often positive social change. They are stories of shortsightedness, hubris, greed, indifference, ignorance, and stupidity. Yet they are also stories of heroes, selflessness, hope, benevolence, compassion, virtue, and renewal. Understanding the complex dynamics of crises is imperative for both researchers and practitioners as they seek to reduce the frequency of crises and the level of harm they cause. (Seeger et al., 2003, p. 3)

Mitroff, Pearson, and Harrington (1996) referred to crisis across a broad range of areas:

> A crisis can affect the very existence of an organization, a major product line, a business unit, or the like. A crisis also can damage, perhaps severely, an organization's financial performance. A crisis can also harm the health and well-being of consumers, employees, the surrounding community, and the environment itself. Finally, a crisis can destroy the public's basic trust or belief in an organization, its reputation, and its image. (p. 8)

In view of the nature of today's mass media and the complexity of the higher education environment, a crisis engages a broad spectrum of individuals ranging from victims, benign and intrusive spectators, and responsible authorities (Dilenschneider, 1990; Mitroff & Pearson, 1993). Given this widespread involvement, there remains one element at the core holding the campus together during crisis—leadership.

A crisis is a moment of truth for the university, testing the depth and breadth of its leadership capabilities. Leadership response to the intense dilemmas during crisis will impact the future of an institution as few other events can. Crisis can pose a "threat to system stability, a questioning of core assumptions and beliefs, and threats to high priority goals, including image, legitimacy, profitability, and even survival" (Seeger et al., 2003, p. 4).

Most importantly, an institution's handling of a crisis can impact students. Recounting conversations with students after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on America, Jackson (2002) observed that "in addition to turning to their parents for support, students looked to professors, the president, student affairs staff, student leaders, and campus ministers to reassure them that they will be all right" (p. 24).

Reflecting on previous crisis situations dealt with by his school, Jackson keyed in on the critical role of leadership during crisis:

> Our experiences with the civil disturbances in Los Angeles after the Rodney King verdict in 1992 and the Northridge earthquake in 1994 had both taught us and clearly demonstrated that the way we reacted as an institution to the terrorist attacks would heavily influence students' reactions to the tragedies. It would have an impact on their feelings about the university and their interactions with other students. (p. 26)

In his review of the leadership strategies utilized on his campus to address the aftermath of the attacks, Jackson identified the ultimate goal of leadership during campus crisis.

> We wanted to model what our university does best: educate students and demonstrate our care about their development and welfare. We want them to know that we still fervently believe that the reasons they came to the university are important, indeed just as important after the attacks as before them. It is a big task, but our institutions of higher education have met such challenges in the past; there is no reason to believe we cannot continue to do so. (p. 27)

Several factors contribute to the complexity of crisis leadership.

Public scrutiny. Seeger et al. (2003) contended that:

> Media coverage of crisis situations has become more aggressive and frequent, with the proliferation of news magazines and 24-hour news programs. Typically, the media seeks information about scope of harm, cause, blame, responsibility, and remedial efforts. Generally, the broader the scope of harm and the more dramatic and visual the event, the more extensive the media coverage. (p. 8)

Intense media coverage creates a public forum in which the actions of the university are scrutinized and woven into the fabric of the public psyche (Dilenschneider, 1990; Mitroff, 2001; Ogrizek & Guillery, 1999). Portrayals of victims and survivors of a crisis create a narrative structure “with victims harmed by accidents or oversight seeking compensation through a discourse of competing views of responsibility” (Seeger et al., 2003, p. 5), and those narratives are replayed in the media. Leadership decisions are stripped of privacy and accelerated to the court of public opinion. In this charged environment, the quality of leadership behavior is judged by its ability to match the magnitude of the crisis itself.

Legal implications*.* The legal fallout of a (mismanaged) crisis can impact the monetary and character standing of the institution for decades. In addition to litigation and public relations matters, legal issues act as a catalyst for internal change. Historical and daily practices are implicated. Policies and procedures are reviewed. Abilities are questioned. Leaders become at once the defenders and the critics of the institution—a quandary for the best of leaders.

Economic impact. The economic impact may range from physical structures to loss of student enrollment to effects on fundraising. Because of the lasting effects of tragedy and disaster, a campus crisis today could be an economic crisis for an extended period (Dilenschneider, 1990; Levitt, 1997; Mangan, 1992).

Institutional reputation and credibility: Lerbinger (1997) stated:

> Public confidence is at stake. During a crisis, that most valuable, yet perishable, asset—reputation—is endangered in the eyes of the company’s many stakeholders and the general public. The worth of the entire organization, and of its managers, goes through a process of swift reassessment. (p. 1)

It is not only the tangible at risk during crisis. During crisis the symbolic side of leadership swings into action to protect the reputation and credibility of the institution. During crisis, institutional and leader character are nearly synonymous. Leadership acumen is critical in establishing the institution’s place in public esteem. Mitroff (2001) spoke to the high stakes involved:

> Screw up once, and depending upon how understanding and forgiving the organization, it may be regarded as a “valuable learning experience,” assuming of course that the company is not destroyed in the process. Screw up twice, especially if it’s the same “dumb error,” and one is not likely to have the opportunity to do it again. (p. 115)

Organizational dynamics. Quality of life issues and dynamics within the organization are also influenced by leadership choices (Mitroff, 2001; Ogrizek & Guillery, 1999). The crisis can serve as a uniting or divisive force. Employee morale, group cohesion, stress levels and attitudes are significantly affected. “For managers, employees, community members, and victims, crisis often represents a profound personal loss. Careers may be threatened, livelihoods jeopardized, and health, well being, and sense of security and predictability shattered” (Seeger et al., 2003, p. 4).

In spite of the many potential threats, a crisis is also opportunity for extraordinary leadership and, sometimes, positive outcomes. Meyers (1986) described several potentially positive outcomes of crisis: heroes are made, change is accelerated, latent problems are brought forward, new strategies emerge, new warning systems are developed. If handled properly, an institution’s reputation and legitimacy may be bolstered. Examination and renewal of assumptions, procedures, resources and structures are among other positive outcomes. Resources for change are made available, and resistance to change is reduced (Seeger et al., 2003).

While much has been written and developed in the area of management of the campus during crisis (most notably recent emphasis on crisis management plans), we are lacking a comprehensive and authentic list of the challenges leaders face during campus crisis and the strategies employed in response to these challenges.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to glean a comprehensive list of the leadership challenges and dilemmas faced during a campus crisis, the strategies (both effective and ineffective) utilized, and the implications of these strategies. Additionally, this study seeks to discover if challenges and strategies differ based on the type of crisis or at different phases of a crisis. Finally, the purpose of this study is to report descriptions of challenges and strategies as told in the words of the leaders who have experienced campus crisis, complete with reflections on their leadership mistakes, factors that allowed them to be successful, and foundations that guide them in crisis leadership.

Seven questions form the basis of the study. The questions focused the research on the nature of leadership concerns and behaviors within the life of a crisis. The research questions allowed for a comparison of leadership challenges and dilemmas across three types of crisis.

Operational Definitions

1. Leadership strategies: Skills and approaches obtained through education and experience, utilized by administrators in higher education to address the dynamics of institutional crisis.

2. Campus crisis: An event, series of events, or consequences of responses to events, characterized by disruption, unpredictableness, and potentially negative outcomes that disrupts the orderly operation of the institution or its educational mission, and threatens the well being of personnel, students, property, financial resources, or reputation of the institution.

3. Administrators: Employees in institutions of higher education whose employee classification is other than faculty or classified staff.

Research Questions

1. What are the leadership challenges and dilemmas during a campus crisis?
2. What are the goals of leadership during campus crisis?
3. Do the goals vary according to the type of crisis?
4. Do the goals vary at different phases (during, immediately following, years after) of the crisis?
5. Considering the goals of leadership during crisis, what were the effective and ineffective strategies utilized?
6. What aspects of leadership do campus leaders focus on during crisis?
7. What are recommended leadership practices to follow to address institutional crisis in higher education?

Assumptions and Limitations

Three limitations related to findings and research methodology are inherent in this study. First, this study reports on selected institutions and is contextually bound, and is therefore not intended to be generalized beyond the cases studied. Second, this study was limited by conditions related to time with and access to participants. Gaining access to upper level administrators was challenging because of their demanding schedules and, in some cases, a time limit was imposed for the interview. Some participants were reluctant to discuss the crisis. Additionally, memories of the crisis had faded for some participants, while for others emotions were still very raw. Finally, the findings in this study are subject to the interpretations of the researcher.

Theoretical Framework

Recent research on the nature of temporary organizations served as a natural theoretical framework for this study. Kenis, Janowicz-Panjaitan, & Cambre (2009), described temporary organizations as an inter-organizational entity with the purpose of accomplishing a specified task within a fixed time period. Lundin & Soderholm (1995), further developed the concept of a temporary organization (to include special task forces, program committees or action groups), as characterized by four components. Foremost among these is action focused on a narrowly defined set of tasks. The task for a temporary organization is one that is an exception to the norm and is not 'being attended to by someone else in the same way at the same time' (p. 438). In other words, the task is unique. Because the task is unique, it is possible that members may not have the knowledge base to address it. The nature of the task not only legitimizes the temporary organization, but is the primary motivation for its creation and is important to the members. Time, the second element of temporary organizations, according to the authors, is not only of fixed duration, but is characterized as a sequence or by phases (p. 440). The phases inherent in the life of the temporary organization determine the appropriate actions for that period of time. Team is the third component of temporary organizations. A team is formed around the particular nature and characteristics of the task. Participation in the team has a time limit. The fourth component of the temporary organization is transition. A temporary organization is concerned with progress and accomplishment. As Lundin and Soderholm stated, “an action orientation implies that something has to be transformed or changed as a consequence of the existence of the temporary organization, and that these changes are to be achieved before the organization is terminated” (p. 442).

A campus crisis naturally calls for the formation of a temporary organization within the administrative structure. Membership in the ‘team’ depends upon the nature of the crisis and may involve people or groups moving in and out of the team at different phases of the crisis. Membership in the temporary organization may also engage campus leaders who do not, under normal circumstances, serve in the upper levels of leadership. While a broad range of leadership tasks are called for, all are central to leading the campus through the life of the crisis. This study revealed that, consistent with a temporary organization, a crisis moves through sequential phases. For this study, these phases were referred to simply as beginning, middle and end. Perhaps the most significant aspect of the temporary organization related to campus crisis, is transition. There is clearly a desire and an expectation that a crisis move from one stage to another, resulting in a visible ‘before and after.’ This study revealed that elements of a campus – culture, policies, practices - are transformed by crisis.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter provides a review of literature in four areas that served as the foundation for the study: crisis, crisis leadership, crisis communication, and crisis decision-making. The review of literature was an emergent and iterative process. The researcher began with a review of research related to the nature of crisis, and explored additional areas as data was unitized and sorted. The first section of the chapter includes definitions of crisis, along with characteristics and typologies, causes, and common descriptions of phases. The second section provides a review of crisis leadership. Fields of leadership with which leaders should concern themselves during crisis are developed. This section also explores research related to crisis leadership in the higher education context, provides implications for an emerging profile of crisis leaders, identifies ethical issues in crisis leadership, and investigates crisis leadership as related to modern leadership paradigms. The review of crisis communication literature revealed effective and ineffective communication responses to different types of crisis and framed communication as a leadership tool. Finally, the section on crisis decision-making provided valuable insight into research on the causes of poor decision-making by leaders during crisis.

Crisis Definitions, Characteristics, Causes, and Phases

A suitable place to begin our exploration of leadership during crisis is by examining the nature and definitions of crisis. The word crisis comes from the Greek *krinein*, meaning to separate. The standard dictionary definition of crisis is ‘a decisive moment or turning point,’ an ‘unstable condition,’ a ‘sudden change in course,’ and an ‘emotionally stressful event.’

Weick (1988) suggested that crises are “low probability/high consequence events that threaten the most fundamental goals of the organization. Because of their low probability, these events defy interpretations and impose severe demands on sense-making” (p. 305). During a crisis, established routines, relationships, norms and belief systems break down. This collapse of sense-making, which Weick describes as a “cosmological episode,” may lead to confused and illogical behaviors that actually cause harm and accelerate the situation.

Mitroff (2001) defined a major crisis as “something that cannot be completely contained within the walls of the organization” (p. 35). Seeger et al. (2003) defined crisis as “a specific, unexpected and non-routine organizationally based event or series of events which creates high levels of uncertainty and threat or perceived threat to an organization’s high priority goals” (p. 7). The authors characterize crisis as “an unusual event of overwhelmingly negative significance that carries a high degree of risk, harm, and opportunity for further loss” (p. 4). These authors elaborated on the nature of crisis by identifying myriad factors involved in a crisis:

> Crisis is almost always the consequence of some unanticipated, complex, and long-term interaction(s) between social, psychological, and cultural factors, on the one hand, and technical, structural, and standardized elements on the other. The complexities of these interactions are some of the most salient characteristics of organizational crisis and are becoming even more noticeable as organizational systems continue to evolve toward greater size, diversity, geographic dispersion, complexity, and technological sophistication. (p. 5)

Seeger et al. (2003) identified bifurcation as a significant characteristic of a crisis. “Bifurcation represents the flash point of disruption and change at which a system’s direction, character, and/or structure is fundamentally altered” (p. 30). These disruptions cause a breakdown in organizational equilibrium and occur when instability within the system reaches a point at which it becomes impossible for the organization to return to its previous state.

Referring to man-made crises, Pauchant and Mitroff (1992) viewed organizational crises as “normal events triggered by the complexity of the system itself and by faulty decisions as well as by the interrelationship between technological systems and the humans who attempt to manage them” (p. 20). These authors distinguished between an incident, an accident, conflict, and a crisis. An incident is a limited disruption. An accident is a systemic disruption, but one that does not affect basic assumptions and meanings. Conflict involves a disturbance of symbolic structures. A crisis is “a disruption that physically affects a system as a whole and threatens its basic assumptions, its subjective sense of self, its existential core” (p. 12). Albrecht (1996) defined crisis as “an event-specific episode that can make or break you, depending upon the size of your company, the number of people you employ, the products and services you sell, and the resources of people, assets and money you can aim at the problem” (p. 7). Lerbinger (1986) defined crisis as “an event that brings, or has the potential for bringing, a business into disrepute” (p. 1).

Campbell (1999) distinguished crisis, catastrophe and emergency. He defined crisis as “a serious, negative event that has detrimental effects on an organization” (p. 11), but asked “when does an emergency become a crisis?” He further stated that “a crisis is an adverse incident or series of events that has the potential to seriously damage an organization’s employees, operations, business, and reputation” (p. 11). He defined an emergency as “a sudden, usually unexpected occurrence that requires immediate response from either internal or external emergency services” (p. 11). A catastrophe, according to Campbell, occurs when an organization fails to control a serious incident, resulting in crisis escalation.

Mitroff (2001) defined crisis as:

> an event that affects or has the potential to affect the whole of an organization. Thus, if something affects only a small, isolated part of an organization, it may not be a major crisis. In order for a major crisis to occur, it must exact a major toll on human lives, property, financial earnings, the reputation, and the general health and well-being of an organization. (p. 34-35)

To further our examination of crisis, it is helpful to consider types of crisis, as well as characteristics, causes, and phases of crisis. Seeger et al. (2003) encouraged the use of classifications and typologies as a means of reducing confusion (particularly during the early stages of a crisis), identifying possible causes, and determining appropriate responses.

Lerbinger (1986) offered the following classifications:

- technological crises caused by human error or unforeseen side effects in equipment and processes;
- confrontational crises caused by the actions of government or social groups that oppose the policies and behavior of an organization and its employees;
- crises of malevolence caused by individuals or groups with criminal intent or malevolence toward the organization; and,
- crises of managerial failure caused by ineptitude, negligence, callousness or misconduct.

Lerbinger also discussed the tolerance levels associated with his classifications. For example, crises caused by “acts of God” versus those caused by technology or negligence are viewed differently by the public:

> When the origin of a technological disaster is unknown, the public may appear to be tolerant, although negative attitudes toward “progress,” “technology” and “science” may be reinforced. However, when human carelessness or negligence is suspected as a contributing factor, an attitude of resentment and a desire to blame someone develops. Up to a point, human error may be condoned . . . . When the level of technological and scientific knowledge is presumed adequate and the situation is not stressful, the public does not tolerate human error. (p. 11-12)

Perrow (2001) echoed Lerbinger’s findings in his analysis of high-technology systems. Perrow contended that some crises are normal in that they are “regular expressions” of high-technology systems. For example, crises are bound to happen in the airline industry given the volume of flights each day and the range of factors that can cause a flight disaster. New technologies that are complex naturally increase the probability of crisis. Mitroff (2001) offered seven categories of crisis: economic, information, physical, human resource, reputational, psychopathic acts, and natural disasters. Laye (2002) divided threats into three categories: natural disasters, human-caused events (acts of terrorism, civil disorder, kidnapping, extortion, arson), and technological accidents (structure collapse, cyber outage, dam failure, hazardous materials incidents, infrastructure failures, transportation accident). He further differentiated these classifications by distinguishing between human-caused events and events that start themselves in human-made systems. These have different characteristics and call for different preventive or mitigating actions.

Mitroff and Pearson (1993) pointed out that human-induced or human-made crisis has emerged in the latter part of the twentieth century and has the potential to rival natural disasters in scope and magnitude. Their typology of crisis families presented a matrix with one axis depicting the type of crisis (technical/economic to human/social) and the other depicting the extent of damage (normal to severe). The type axis identifies four categories: external economic attacks (extortion, boycotts, hostile takeovers), external information attacks (copyright infringement, rumors, loss of information), occupational factors (health, diseases), and psychopathology (terrorism, sabotage). The extent of damage axis ranges from normal to mega damage. One failing of traditional risk assessment, according to Mitroff (2001), is that it mainly selects only those crises that one has already experienced in the past or those with which one is familiar. The authors also offered “preventive action families” for their typology and categorized these by internal and external focus. These included audits, external information and communication, internal repair/design, and internal emotional preparation.

Coombs (1999) identified crisis types including natural disasters, malevolence, technical breakdowns, human breakdowns, challenges, mega damage, organizational misdeeds, workplace violence, and rumors. Coombs differentiated between human and technical crises, and those that originated within and outside the organization.

Meyers (1986) also offered a typology identifying nine types of crises: public perception, sudden market shift, product failure, top management succession, cash crisis, industrial relations, hostile takeover, adverse international events, and regulation/deregulation.

Charles Hermann (1963) whose work was based on international political incidents, argued that crisis has three fundamental characteristics: “(1) threatens high priority values of the organization goals, (2) presents a restricted amount of time in which a decision can be made, and (3) is unexpected or unanticipated by the organization” (p. 64).

Seeger et al. (2003) identified three causes of crisis: (a) interactive complexity and normal accident theory, (b) failures in foresight, warnings and risk perception, and (c) break-downs in decisional vigilance. Pauchant and Mitroff (1992) suggested that organizations become crisis-prone when they are highly compartmentalized, focus on narrow issues, and “fragment complex questions” while relying on restricted numbers of perspectives (p. 3-4). Smart (1985) identified the inability to completely monitor and communicate with the environment as central to the cause of most crises.

Several researchers have attempted to capture the phases of crisis. Seeger et al. (2003) described the phases of a crisis as a sequential development:

> A crisis usually begins with some dramatic and surprising trigger event signaling its onset and ends with some resolution and return to near normalcy. Trigger events signal radical breaks with previous states of existence. The crisis state continues until there is some resolution. These events then are time ordered and occur within a specific and limited time frame. The development sequence of a crisis is important to understanding its larger character. (p. 4)

These authors characterized crisis as a:

> natural state of development, grounded in the duality and paradox of deconstruction and construction, organization and disorganization, growth and decline, discord and harmony, decay and renewal, and chaos and "business as usual." This duality links the cycles and stages of system development, suggesting that one may be necessary for the other. Crisis is part of the natural organizational process, purging system elements that are outdated and inappropriate and creating new and unexpected opportunities for development and change, growth, evolution and renewal. The post-crisis organization is often better matched to its environment. (p. 7)

A summary of Seeger et al.'s work on the phases of a crisis is as follows: (a) pre-crisis conditions, (b) crisis onset (triggering event, onset of threats, accumulation of damage, creation of victims), (c) triage and containment, (d) repair and reconciliation (rebuilding, healing, and image restoration), and (e) post-crisis (return to normal operations, predictability and renewed system stability). However, regarding the post-crisis phase the authors explored the degree to which renewal actually occurs.

Cases of organizational renewal, although rare, offer four implications for post-crisis. The first focuses on issues of directionality in post-crisis discourse. Post-crisis discourse typically begins as retrospective in nature, primarily because the organization is looking back to explain and justify past acts. In contrast, the post-crisis renewal focuses on the future, on how previous limitations can be overcome, and on new opportunities that can be explored. Second, the natural role of crisis, at least in some instances, is for organizations to transform and restructure themselves in ways leading to growth and renewal. Third, a discourse of renewal emphasizes the positive possibilities in crisis over the other issues such as cause, blame, and culpability. Stories

> of support, rebuilding, and renewal, are more compelling than stories about questions of cause. Fourth, this discourse of renewal reaffirms the leader's role in enacting and framing the meaning of crisis. Clearly, crisis does not typically have this renewing effect. The literature includes dozens of examples of crises that lingered on through claims and counterclaims of cause, responsibility, and wrongdoing and through legal maneuvering over victim compensation. Although it is not clear why some crises result in decline and others result in renewal, it is likely that the nature of the organization, the nature of crisis, the nature of the response, and the immediacy of the response all play a role. (p. 152)

Inherent in this phase typology, is a final stage regarding system vulnerability. In other words, one crisis may set the stage for or trigger additional crises. This can reignite a crisis phase, reveal additional problems, prolong a crisis phase, or prevent renewal.

Mitroff and Pearson (1993) identified five phases of crisis management; (a) signal detection, (b) preparation/prevention, (c) containment/damage limitation, (d) recovery, and (e) learning. The authors contended that

> …all crises leave a repeated trail of early warning signals. The difficulty, of course, is that all organizations, even under the best of circumstances, are bombarded with signals of all kinds. The challenge is learning to separate the signals indicative of a looming crisis from the barrage of noise that is the result of day-to-day business in the information age. (p. 24)

The authors also distinguished between the mindsets of crisis-prepared organizations from those that are crisis prone. Crisis prone organizations miss or ignore signals indicating potential problems and may even exert effort to block them. The second stage in the “signal detection chain” is that once a signal is picked up, it must cross an “intensity threshold” in order to be recognized as such. The ability of leaders and others in the organization to “hear” signals that are in the danger or potential danger zone is essential. “Signals go off all the time in organizations, but because there is no one there to recognize them, record them, or attend to them, then for all practical reasons the signals are not heard” (p. 22). Because damage containment mechanisms and activities are virtually impossible to invent during the heat of a crisis, the authors advocate prior development of short and long term recovery strategies. The learning phase concerns reflection on the critical lessons that can be gleaned from a crisis. According to the authors,

> Many organizations, having successfully managed a crisis, slip into a state of euphoria, believing that they now have the expertise to overcome any future crises. Other organizations, having barely survived a crisis, may find themselves too exhausted to devote their depleted energies to revisiting the crisis and sorting out the lessons to be learned. People may be reluctant to reopen old wounds. Crisis-prepared organizations carefully examine the factors that enabled them to perform well and those that did not—without blaming others. The emphasis in crisis-prepared organizations is on improving future capabilities and fixing current problems. We call this no-fault learning. (p. 23)

Implicit in the learning stage is the understanding that doing well on one crisis is not a guarantee that the organization will do well on another. In fact, this is why an organization needs to have a central point where the lessons of the crises can be stored and disseminated widely.

An early model of crisis stages was presented by Barry Turner (1976) who investigated causes of disasters. Turner’s model offered six stages and includes the presupposition that early warning signs were present but ignored. The six stages of Turner’s Sequence of Failures in Foresight are (a) point of normal operations, (b) crisis incubation period, (c) precipitating event, (d) onset of crisis, (e) rescue and salvage, and (f) full cultural readjustment of beliefs.

A widely accepted conceptualization of the crisis stages (and not attributable to any one theorist) is the basic three phase model: pre-crisis, crisis, and post-crisis. This model allows the discreet stages proposed by theorists to be encapsulated under one of three broad headings. For example, the pre-crisis phase may include Seeger et al.’s pre-crisis conditions, Mitroff and Pearson’s signal detection and preparation/prevention stages, and Turner’s incubation period, precipitating event and crisis onset. In the pre-crisis phase the “world view” of organizational members regarding risk, safeguards for avoidance, and investment in managing potential crises are intact. These points of normalcy are challenged as the crisis phase unfolds. Deficiencies in operations, perceptions, policies and norms interact with potential threats that precipitate crisis. Believing that these standards are adequate, signs signaling an impending crisis may be ignored. This stage is characterized by extreme emotional reactions—fear, shock, anger. It is also during this phase that the extent of potential harm or damage is revealed. The disorientation and instability of this period may result in faulty decision-making or assessment of the situation. According to Seeger et al. (2003) one of the most striking features of this stage is the overwhelming sense of vulnerability presented by a crisis. These authors provided six elements of the pre-crisis phase:

- Established belief regarding risk and the probability of crisis

- Development of norms and structures of risk mitigation including crisis plans
- Decay in structures of mitigation and crisis plans
- Incubation and complex, nonlinear interaction of emerging environmental contingencies and minor system variance
- Missed warnings, failure to perceive and/or act upon crisis cues
- Trigger event, the onset of harm, recognition of crisis

In situations where a crisis was predictable but ignored, the authors offered several limitations of the warning signals:

- Weak or subtle crisis signal
- Presence of strangers as distraction
- Source of crisis signal not viewed as credible (i.e., from outside source or from whistleblower)
- Inadequate channels for communicating risk or threat
- Signal of threat embedded in routine messages
- Risk/threat messages systematically distorted
- Organizational or professional norms against communicating risks and warnings
- Risk/threat messages discounted because of inconsistency with dominant beliefs
- Signals that do not coalesce, are not compiled, or do not reach appropriate persons (p. 109).

Seeger et al.'s crisis onset, and Mitroff and Pearson's containment/damage limitation and recovery phases could all be encapsulated under the crisis phase. This phase is usually the shortest but most intense. Although in the throes of an urgent situation, members of the organization may be in denial or struggling to gather the information needed to make decisions during a period of uncertainty. The goal during this phase of the crisis is typically to contain damage and return to a state of normalcy (Seeger et al., 2003). Decision-making during this phase is done with very little information about what is occurring and no time to interpret, reflect or make meaning of the event as it unfolds. In his work regarding sense-making during crisis, Weick (1988) noted that the way an organization initially reacts to a crisis situation sets the tone for how the crisis unfolds. “To sort out a crisis as it unfolds often requires action which subsequently generates the raw material for sense-making and affects the unfolding of the crisis itself” (p. 305). “There is a delicate tradeoff between dangerous action which promotes understanding and safe inaction which produces confusion” (p. 315). Weick identified three elements related to the importance of decision-making during this phase: (a) public commitment, (b) capacity, and (c) expectation. Decisions and commitments made publicly during the crisis phase are irrevocable. If done in haste or without adequate information, these positions may have to be defended or justified later. Capacity refers to the ability of members of an organization to interpret information about the crisis. Expectation has to do with the mental frame organizational members hold regarding the crisis. For example, leaders may expect the crisis to unfold according to a predictable pattern or in similar fashion to previously experienced events. This set of expectations can help or hinder the leadership decisions in the crisis phase.

The final stage, post-crisis, is a time of intense self-analysis and investigation. During this phase, myriad activities are occurring—the hunt for blame and the proper placement of responsibility, attempts to return to normalcy, the conceptualization of a new knowledge base, the institution of new policies and procedures. Turner's rescue and salvage and cultural readjustment of beliefs phases, as well as Seeger et al.'s repair and reconciliation and post-crisis return to normal operations, predictability and renewed system stability, along with Mitroff and Pearson's recovery and learning stages fall under this category. Unlike the crisis phase, which is typically short but frantic, the post-crisis phase can last for years (Seeger et al.,2003). The post- crisis phase may also include investigations by external agencies, excuse making, apologies, and a primary focus on protecting one's reputation. An institution may find itself in a defensive posture. But this phase also has the potential to yield the new information or transformational behaviors necessary for renewal. New policies and practices emerge, as do changes to organizational culture. Seeger et al. (2003) identified three crucial stages of post-crisis: (a) salvaging legitimacy, (b) learning, and (c) healing. According to the authors, organizations may move laterally through these stages as post-crisis unfolds. They also contended that in order for an organization to fully recover from a crisis, it must move through all three stages. Salvaging legitimacy is concerned with addressing the public doubt generated toward an organization as a result of a crisis. Organizations are deemed legitimate when they "establish congruence between the social values associated or implied by their activities and the norms of acceptable behavior in the larger social system of which they are a part" (Dowling & Pfeffer, 1975, p. 122). One area leaders must concern themselves with to salvage legitimacy is affirming social responsibility. Establishing positive relationships and communicating the organization's social purpose and value are central to accomplishing this. A means through which organizations can salvage legitimacy is intentional issue management. Heath, (1997) defined this as "the strategic use of issues analysis and strategic responses to help organizations make adaptations needed to achieve harmony and foster mutual interests with the communities in which they operate” (p. 3). Seeger et al. (2003) contended that issues management is more than the response to the onslaught of questions resulting from a crisis. It is a precursor to learning and healing in that it begins to answer questions about the crisis. The final area associated with salvaging legitimacy is image restoration, which is primarily concerned with public relations and communications strategies.

The learning phase of post-crisis according to Seeger et al. (2003) consists of three critical activities—retrospective sense-making, reconsidering structure, and vicarious learning. Sense-making occurs as individuals collectively search for explanations and examine the crisis in hindsight. It is not uncommon for structures to be modified or changed if crisis analysis identifies these as contributing factors or inadequate response mechanisms. Laying blame on individual leaders may also precipitate changes to organizational structure. As personnel changes are made, the assumptions and belief systems held by these individuals is reconsidered and perhaps even viewed as suspect. This results in an “unfreezing” of organizational hierarchy and the recreation of portions of the organization. Huber (1996) characterized reconsideration of structure as “unlearning” which allows new learning to take place (p. 147). Seeger et al. (2003) stated that “ironically, organizations learn by discarding knowledge that was previously held in high regard” (p. 147).

The final stage of Seeger et al.’s (2003) post-crisis phase is healing. Four activities are associated with this phase—explanation, forgetting, remembering, and renewal. According to these authors, “Healing involves constructing a meaning for the event. In some cases, the healing process may usher in a sense of renewal for the organization. In others, it is merely relief that the crisis is over" (p. 149). Constructing explanations of the cause of the crisis provides not only a starting point for corrective action, but a means of preventing future crises. Forgetting, according to these authors, "refers to the ability to replace feelings of urgency, anxiety, and loss with positive emotions such as patience, confidence, and optimism. This process is essential, because crises deprive their victims of a sense of control over their environments. . . . Simply stated, stakeholders have a more difficult time moving beyond crisis if they remain fearful that sufficient measures have not been taken to avoid similar crises in the future" (p. 149). Remembering involves constructing a new reality or "frame" through which the crisis can be viewed without fear. Putting the crisis into perspective and creating a new reality concerning it is essential for healing. This is often accomplished by erecting memorials, holding ceremonies and identifying heroes. These symbolic gestures assist in moving through grieving and the reemergence of negative feelings associated with anniversary dates. The renewal phase is transformative in nature and fosters the emergence of positive outcomes.

Finally, in terms of phases, Seeger et al. (2003) pointed out the cyclical nature of organizational development in terms of crisis:

> The adjustments that occur in the post-crisis phase ultimately bring the organization back to pre-crisis, where risk is again assumed to be understood, contained, and largely static and where avoidance norms and procedures are viewed as adequate. The organization faces a set of conditions it considers largely normal, although this state is often described as a "new normal." At this point, a new set of threats, critical uncertainties, dynamic risks, or unobserved contingencies may emerge, go unrecognized, interact in unanticipated and

> disproportional ways, and begin leading the system into crisis. These cycles of crisis, from the stability of normalcy to the instability of a trigger event and the onset of threat, function as dynamic forces or radical system learning, adaptation, and transformation. While a crisis prompts an organization to update crisis response plans and adjust organizational beliefs and assumptions toward risk, there is no guarantee that future crises will be prevented or that the organization will be better equipped to deal with future events. While the organization may be more vigilant following a crisis, this is difficult to maintain as time passes. Being better prepared for one type of crisis does not ensure that the organization will be better prepared for crisis types they have not previously experienced. (p. 102)

Crisis Leadership

Unlike crisis management, which, according to Mitroff and Pearson (1993) is concerned with the question “How can the crisis be treated in a logical and orderly manner?”, leadership entails a broad range of concerns.

Laye (2002) identified three areas leaders should concern themselves with regarding crisis. The first is awareness of potential threats and forethought as to how to handle each threat to avoid a situation from spiraling out of control. Awareness also increases the likelihood that a crisis can be prevented. The second area of concern is decision-making. Whether part of a preplanned crisis management structure or designated by role, the responsibility for ultimate decision-making rests with leaders. The final area of concern has to do with policy development and implementation. According to Laye, “Only an executive at that level has the enterprise-wide scope and sense of timing for a global management environment that permits thoughtful policy composition" (p. 96).

Mitroff and Pearson (1993) advised leaders to begin with four fundamental questions: What is the crisis? When did it begin? Why has it occurred? and Who is affected? Each of these contains sub-questions, the answers to which are the keys to effective leadership of crisis situations. For example, in the "what" category, leaders are faced with the dilemma that no crisis presents itself with all of the information necessary to fully understand it. Leaders must therefore make critical assumptions. The authors contended that leaders must consider both worst-case and best-case scenarios. Nor does a crisis occur in isolation. A crisis may be part of a chain reaction of other crises and, handled improperly, can set off another chain reaction. The "when" question is influenced by the nature of the crisis. The sub questions in this category may implicate leaders: Did leadership have prior signs or signals of an impending crisis? When should the organization's leaders have been alerted to these signals? These questions become the same that are raised by media, stakeholders and possibly the courts as the crisis unfolds—What did you know? When did you know it? If you didn't know, why didn't you? If you knew and didn't do anything about it, why not? The "why" question goes beyond auditing of technology, process or procedures to determine the cause of a crisis. Mitroff and Pearson reminded us that people are at the heart of all that goes on in an organization. If the cause of the crisis was human-induced, what was behind it? Were employees properly trained? Did the dominant organizational culture cause people to miss the warning signs or shirk responsibilities? Finally, the question of "who" is associated with the parties who affected or were affected by the crisis. The sub-questions in this category go beyond the search for blame. Which members of the organization may have helped cause the crisis? Who ought to have detected it? Leaders must also determine who should be notified about the situation and in what manner, as well as determine who should be involved in the resolution of the crisis. The four-question approach forces leaders to engage in critical thinking and analysis. Mitroff (2001) expanded on this concept when he stated that crisis leadership “demands thinking about the unthinkable” and “is basically an exercise in creative thinking” (p. 115). According to Mitroff, leaders are not prepared to handle a major crisis unless they are able to cope with the unthinkable and do the unthinkable. This may necessitate going to the core of the organization’s identity and “flipping it on its head” to make a dramatic and visible statement. The ability and willingness on the part of organizational leaders may prevent the most critical error—selecting solutions that will create even worse problems and spiral the crisis out of control.

Another feature of Mitroff and Pearson’s work is crisis systems. Of the five systems (technology, organizational infrastructure, human factors, organizational culture, and emotions), many organizations focus on the technological causes of a crisis, without giving appropriate attention to the role of human factors and infrastructure, emotional or organization culture variables. Leaders are warned that unless you know how individual human operators and managers interact with technological systems, even well-intended crisis management plans can be misleading. The authors advised that designing technological devices or systems on the presumption that they will be operated by “ideal” humans is dangerous.

In more recent work, Mitroff (2001) presented the crisis systems as an “onion model” and added top management psychology at the core of the onion. As layers of the organization are peeled away and we get beneath its surface, we expose the key factors that drive an organization’s behaviors. The deepest parts of an organization reside in its culture and the psychology of its top management. These two layers are the most difficult to get at and, for this very reason, the most critical determinants of an organization’s performance. Organizational infrastructures that encourage open and effective channels of communication between and across the various levels and divisions of the organization are essential, as is a reward structure that supports the reporting of bad news. Equally important is an organization’s culture and its effect on crisis procedures and its vulnerability to a major crisis. According to the authors, one of the first indicators of a crisis-prone organization is the extensive use of rationalizations by its leaders. In earlier work, Mitroff and Pearson (1993) carried the notion of rationalization further and identified denial as the main enemy and barrier to be overcome. Mitroff (2001) expanded on his rationalization theme by applying classic Freudian defense mechanisms to the actions of leaders and the collective organization: denial, disavowal, idealization, grandiosity, projection, intellectualization, and compartmentalization.

Mitroff and Pearson (1993) identified another area with which leaders must contend—the growing number of stakeholder groups affected by a crisis. These include groups both internal and external to the organization and may be characterized into archetypal roles or perceptions. The most common of these are victims, heroes, rescuers, enemies, allies, protectors, or villains. Leaders must ask how they may be labeled or perceived among these archetypes and how these characterizations facilitate or inhibit crisis containment and recovery. According to Mitroff (2001):

> In almost all human-caused crises, there are only two major outcomes. You will either be perceived as a victim or cast as a villain. Once you are labeled a

> villain, it is extremely difficult, although not impossible, to shake the label. And even in the fortunate case where you are cast as a victim, it is still relatively easy to turn into a villain." (p. 83)

Recovered or repentant villains acknowledge what they did, accept full responsibility for actions, promise to correct the situation, promise never to repeat it, and, finally, ensure actions to enforce their promises. "Damningly damnable villains," as Mitroff refers to them, engage repeatedly in stonewalling or denial, such that they compound the original crisis, thereby setting off a chain reaction of additional crises in response to the initial one. Effective leaders break this cycle by assuming responsibility from the very beginning. Mitroff developed a matrix depicting his thinking about systematic thinking and acceptance of responsibility. Organizations that think and act systemically and accept responsibility are crisis-prepared. While it is not a guarantee that they will never face a crisis, it does mean that when a crisis does occur they will recover faster than those who do not think and act systematically. Those who do not think and act systemically and accept responsibility are either crisis prone or left to the whims of luck, increasing the likelihood that they will experience a major crisis, and with more devastating effects. Many organizations neither think nor act systematically but are willing to accept responsibility when a crisis does occur.

Crisis Leadership in Higher Education

Meaningful insights on crisis leadership in higher education came from reflective pieces on campus crisis. In his article *After 30 Years, We Can Still Learn From Kent State*, Sivulich (2000) reflects on the decision-making process of administrators at Kent State University in 1970 when students were shot and killed during a campus protest, the placement of blame, and the wisdom of choices made at the time. Sivulich provides insight as to why so much written on campus crisis focuses on management rather than leadership: “The epilogue of the Kent State incident remains unwritten because of disagreements regarding fundamental issues” (¶33). Kenneth Goings (1990) a freshman at Kent State in 1970 and now associate professor of history at Rhodes College echoes this struggle to capture a proper perspective on leadership during a time of crisis: “Kent State has been a compelling reminder of the need for time and distance to fully understand an event, its importance, and its place in American History” (¶4).

Mills (2004) investigated the leadership of three university presidents during campus crisis. The crises in the study included a 2001 aircraft incident involving the Oklahoma State University men’s basketball team, the collapse of a bonfire structure at Texas A&M University in 1999 and a 1970 aircraft crash at Wichita State University. Among other findings, Mills’ research yielded seven primary conclusions: (a) symbolic and instrumental leadership are equally important during crisis; (b) leadership decisions are more critical and of more consequence during a crisis than during non-crisis periods; (c) presidents need to not micromanage during crisis but rely on others to do their jobs well; (d) leaders need to “do the right thing” when it comes to responding to victims and their families; (e) symbolic leadership becomes more important after the potential for loss of life and property has passed; (f) institutional response to a crisis is largely determined by the leadership style and personality of the president, and (g) the personal toll of crisis on campus leaders is significant.

Siegel, in her 1994 work *Campuses Respond to Violent Tragedy,* detailed campus responses in nine crisis cases. The crisis phenomena included rape, murder, suicide and natural disaster. Her work was a painstakingly detailed recounting (told chronologically for each) of how individuals were notified of the crisis, what they were doing at the time of notification, and what action each took. While Siegel's work is a dissection of crisis management with a good deal of focus on crisis response teams, the author offered useful insights regarding crisis leadership. Notable among these were the importance of compassion demonstrated by campus leaders, the physical presence of leaders, and the many benefits gained by cross-functional cooperation. Part of the compassion demonstrated by leaders was being flexible with students who needed extended academic deadlines or to withdraw. The author's analysis also revealed the importance of providing support services (such as counseling) for faculty and staff, and doing outreach to deliver services. Siegel praised campus leaders who convened groups, were effective in bringing people together with a sense of community in spite of a tragedy, or set the tone for campus response. Leaders whose priority was the safety and well being of people regardless of cost or public image were also singled out as effective, as were those who effectively managed communications and the media or trained staff, which gave the sense that the institution was in control. Siegel stressed the importance of dissolving bureaucratic lines, ensuring that all personnel are prepared to respond with professionalism and concern for human distress and warned that while many staff want to help during the crisis, roles and responsibilities often are not defined or not communicated . Finally, Siegel offered tools such as “A Crisis Preparation Checklist” and constructive advice for crisis response committees.

The attack on the World Trade Center in New York City in September of 2001 launched a plethora of dialogue and training in response to crisis. In higher education, the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) hosted a conference titled “Preparing for the New Normalcy: Leading and Managing in Very

Difficult Times.” Panelists addressing the importance of moving from crisis reaction to campus leadership offered five major areas of concern for student affairs administrators: (a) adherence to vision, identity and values during crisis, (b) transcending boundaries by abandoning territorialism and fostering collaboration, (c) informing rather than inciting, (d) promoting a smooth flow of decision-making, and (e) making leadership visible. (Clement, Kitchen, Ramsey, Snyder & Zdziarski, 2002.) Others at this same conference addressed administrator vulnerability in times of crisis. Keeling, Ruggieri, and Zdziarski (2002) stressed the importance of administrative practices incorporating reflection, consultation, endurance planning, self-assessment, and strategies during crisis.

Harper, Paterson, and Zdziarski (2006) further contextualized crisis leadership in higher education by delineating stakeholder groups unique to the educational field. Foremost among these groups are students. This stakeholder group is diverse, consisting of on-campus residents, off-campus students, graduates and undergraduates, athletes, members of clubs and organizations, and student government leaders. Also unique to higher education are faculty and student affairs administrators. According to the authors, these unique stakeholder groups impact the institution’s response and ability to manage a crisis. For example, it is not uncommon for students, faculty, and staff to be involved in response efforts. The authors advised campus leaders to conduct a stakeholder analysis based on levels of involvement ranging from stakeholders whose involvement is essential in all campus crisis situations to those less essential.

The Emerging Profile of a Crisis Leader

RHR International (2001), pioneers in the field of corporate psychology, offered several considerations and new competencies to look for and develop in senior leaders. By focusing on the psychological features of traumatic events, corporate leaders are cautioned that the full effects of crisis unfold over time. In the short run, “there will be inspiration drawn from the courage of others, bereavement, sadness, loss, and other acute responses. They will give way to longer-term challenges, many of which are unpredictable,…they will likely include continuing or returning to work, but with the added challenge of dealing with anger, insecurity… conflicting opinions about how to deal with new realities in our individual and collective lives…” (p. 1). In the short run, senior leaders must be willing to rise to the occasion, providing communication and moral leadership, normalizing people’s reactions, and defining “getting back to work” as a focus on relevant, tangible projects with near-term outcomes. Among the new competencies to look for and develop in senior leaders are (a) mental agility, (b) empathy, (c) team leadership, and (d) organizational development. Consultants at RHR International also illuminate important distinctions between man-made crisis and natural crisis. “Natural disasters such as hurricanes come and go. Their impact is great but they do not leave so much anger, on-going insecurity and bewildering search for explanations in their wake. You can usually predict them and you can get away from them should you choose” (p. 1). This is contrasted with man made crisis such as the 9/11 attacks in which there is a “lingering insidious threat” and a concern for developing hardiness in people’s ability to cope.

Ethical Leadership in Crisis

Seeger et al. (2003) also explored the implications of leadership and ethics during crises, which, according to the authors, “compromise the fundamental legitimacy of the organization” (p. 220). The authors argue that almost all crises include ethical issues. A crisis situation reveals the values of an organization and puts leadership decisions regarding ethics on public display, often while sorting through competing values. This examination exposes pre-crisis value systems that may have triggered the crisis and has consequences for recovery. For example, an organization that routinely violates fundamental social values or attempts to suppress whistleblowers warning of impending crisis, impugn future leadership decisions. The authors offered five standards of ethics to which leaders must attend: (a) responsibility and responsiveness, (b) virtue ethics, (c) humanistic values and the ethics of care, (d) organizational legitimacy, and (e) truthfulness and significant choice. The authors define the first of these to be essential to crisis leadership. “Responsibility, in many ways, is the fundamental moral principle from which other more specific ethical frameworks flow. It concerns the basic relationship and attendant obligations and commitments that exist between an organization and its larger community, stakeholders, and environment” (p. 227). Virtue ethics provides a framework for understanding the relationship between pre-crisis value systems and post-crisis response. “For organizations, virtues are expressed most directly and visibly through the decisions and behaviors of top executives, particularly during times of unrest, confusion, or moral uncertainty. In this way, organizational leadership is closely associated with both virtues and crisis” (p. 228). Leadership decisions are scrutinized against standards of character—honesty, trustworthiness, generosity—and leaders are expected to act in virtuous ways. Equally important is the tone set by the ethical dimension of leadership decisions during crisis response. “Leadership during crisis is particularly important in framing the initial meaning, reducing equivocality, and setting the tone for the response. This process . . . also establishes the overall moral tone for the crisis response” (p. 229). The ethic of care represents an opportunity for leaders and organizations to move beyond themselves. “The ethics of humanism and care can be one of the most uplifting aspects of a crisis. Crisis often creates an opportunity for organizations and other groups and agencies to respond in humane and caring ways, to nurture others, and to ethically respond to human suffering (p. 231). Legitimacy has to do with the degree to which an organization’s values and actions are congruent with those of the larger social context in which they exist, and the normative evaluation of these by external groups. Legitimacy is typically featured prominently in post-crisis analysis, particularly if ethical issues are involved. Having legitimacy in pre-crisis provides a “reservoir of good will” from which organizations can draw during crisis. A lack of legitimacy not only prolongs the “hunt for blame” inherent in post-crisis, but may trigger a legitimacy crisis, which can take years to overcome. Seeger et al.’s final area of ethical concern is truthfulness and significant choice. The issue for leaders has to do with the immediacy of a crisis situation, the acknowledgement of all that is at risk during a crisis, and the lack of time to reflect and plan appropriate leadership responses. All of these factors may tempt some leaders to engage in deception when communicating with media, stakeholders and employees. Strategic ambiguity, withholding information, or outright deception all inhibit the ability of others to make informed choices or may advantage some over others. The degree to which leaders are perceived to be truthful and honest impacts the severity of a crisis. Severity is increased when leaders are perceived as being deceptive. In contrast, when leaders are perceived as being honest, open and forthright, the seriousness of the situation is reduced.

Crisis Leadership and Modern Leadership Paradigms

Seeger et al. (2003) provided a review of common approaches to leadership as they relate to crisis. The authors evaluated traits, style, contingency and symbolic theories of leadership. Their analysis yielded the following conclusions:

1. Crisis calls for leaders with traits such as high tolerance for stress, ability to remain calm (an important trait as it is infectious), ability to see situations from diverse perspectives, a sense of personal control, a sense of responsibility to stakeholders, self-confidence, ability to be agile in response to media, ability to act quickly during uncertainty, critical thinking, a well-developed sense of personal integrity, and previous experience with crisis.

2. Directive leadership or authoritarian styles are better suited to crisis situations in order to deal with an environment in which time does not allow for consensus building, lines of authority are challenged, or normal means of completing tasks are compromised. However, this does not negate the importance of leadership styles that nurture relationships. In fact, demonstrating supportiveness, empathy and concern are among the most important post-crisis leadership behaviors. The authors concluded that crisis situations are sufficiently complex that leadership styles focusing on both task and relationships are equally important.

3. Symbolic leadership is critical during crisis as it is the means through which leaders make meaning of and frame the crisis. According to the authors:

> organizations are constructed from symbolic processes. Leaders then, are strategic conductors or framers of organizational meaning. . . . Leaders play an

> important role in creating and maintaining meaning in organizations through framing of events and through the personification of meaning systems and core values. (p. 246)

This leadership role is particularly important during crisis as leaders facilitate “harm-reducing action” and select responses appropriate for the crisis:

> participants look to leaders to reduce uncertainty, clarify meaning, and provide information, comfort, support and reassurance. How a leader behaves during a crisis early in its development will have a profound impact on how the organization and its stakeholders view the event. From this perspective, it is important to examine how leaders enact a situation and its impact on the tenor of the crisis at it develops. Moreover, leaders must also be aware that their interpretations must compete with other interpretations of the crisis. The leader’s interpretation of the crisis must be compelling in the sense that it is plausible, coherent, and facilitates appropriate action. (p. 247)

In addition to the leadership approaches above, the authors also examined the functions of what leaders actually do during crisis. Their table of crisis leadership functions was divided into the three phases of crisis (pre-crisis, crisis, post-crisis) as follows:

> Functions of crisis leadership.
>
> Pre-crisis.
>
> Maintains risk vigilance
>
> Prepares and helps others prepare
>
> Establishes positive image, credibility, and reputation
>
> Develops instrumental communication channels with stakeholders

Crisis.

Initiates response/activates crisis plan

Facilitates mitigation of harm

Serves as a spokesperson

Expresses sympathy for those harmed

Frames meaning

Remains accessible and open

Facilitates information flow

Acts decisively

Coordinates/links with crisis team and other groups and agencies

Re-connects with stakeholders

Maintains decisional vigilance

Prioritizes activities and resources

Communicates (reaffirms or activates) core values

Pays symbolic attention to the crisis

Maintains appropriate flexibility

Facilitates renewal via public commitments

Post-crisis.

Offers explanations and/or apologies

Facilitates investigations

Commits to appropriate changes/signals willingness to change

Creates prospective vision

Participants in memorializing and grieving

Facilitates learning

Tells the story of the crisis. (Seeger et al., 2003, p. 250)

Finally, Seeger et al. (2003) considered chaos theory in their analysis of leadership models and theories (p. 252). The authors contended that understanding chaos theory is essential for modern leaders who lead organizations in which there are high levels of uncertainty, complexity and change. In this view “effective leadership…emphasizes contingent responses, flexibility, and accommodation while adhering to central principles of order, core values, and key relationships. Effective leadership, then, is a dynamic, accommodating, and value based process rather than a static system of controls and constraints” (p. 252). Given this, leadership in pre-crisis is essential and should focus on the development of resilient organizational processes, the development and communication of core values, and the cultivation of relationships, all of which can sustain the organization during crisis and post-crisis.

Crisis Communication

Communication during crisis is considered to be a key element of effective leadership. Publications representative of this approach are Seymour and Moore’s work *Effective Crisis Management: Worldwide Principles and Practice* (2000*),* *Communicating When Your Company is Under Siege: Surviving Public Crisis* (1999) by Pinsdorf, *and Crisis in Organizations* by Barton (2001)*.* The primary thrust presented by these authors is to manage public opinion, legal and financial liabilities, and communications. Dilenschneider (1990) identified four guidelines for organizational leaders during non-financial crisis events: (a) demonstrate compassion, (b) bring loved ones in touch with the tragedy, (c) use money constructively, and (d) keep reinforcing the relief efforts.

Coombs (1995) believed response to an organization’s publics during and following a crisis to be an underdeveloped area of crisis leadership. Coombs focused on the selection of appropriate crisis-response strategies and the importance of symbolic aspects of crisis leadership. Working from attribution theory, Coombs posits that people make judgments about the cause of a crisis and the subsequent handling of the event based upon the dimensions of locus, stability, and controllability. Locus of control may be internal or external. Stability refers to whether the cause of the crisis was always there or if it varied over time. Controllability refers to whether the organization could effect the cause of the crisis or if the cause was out of the organization’s control. Coombs contended that the crisis situation and the public’s perception of its impact is based on these three dimensions. Attributions of internal locus, controllability, and stability create the perception that the organization was responsible for the crisis. The reverse is true when the attributions are external, uncontrollable, and unstable. “The stronger the attributions of organizational responsibility, the more likely it is that the negative aspects of the crisis will damage the organization” (p. 449). Coombs offered leaders five categories of crisis-response communication strategies: (a) nonexistence strategies (denial, clarification, attack, intimidation), (b) distance strategies (excuse—including denial of intention or volition, and justification—including minimizing injury, victim deserving and misrepresentation of the crisis event), (c) ingratiation strategies (bolstering, transcendence, praising others), (d) mortification (remediation, repentance, rectification, and (e) suffering. The final piece of Coombs’ research is a framework through which leaders can match strategy selection of the crisis situation. Coombs identified four central factors of the crisis situation: crisis type, veracity of evidence, damage, and performance history. He also addressed unintentional and intentional crises. External unintentional crises are considered to be faux pas. An intentional external crisis is terrorism. An unintentional internal crisis is an accident. An intentional internal crisis is a transgression (p. 455).

Each crisis type is attributed variable degrees of organizational responsibility. Less organizational responsibility is attributed for unintentional acts. However, an organization is rarely free of all responsibility. For example, in the case of an accident that is an act of nature the public believes the organization should be prepared to cope with the event and therefore has some responsibility. For each type of crisis, Coombs offers a decision flowchart that draws leaders to one or more of the crisis response strategies. The selection is based on the evidence involved (true, false, ambiguous), the extent of the damage (major or minor), whether there were victims (and if so, their status) and whether the performance history of the organization was positive or negative. For example, an organization with a positive past history committing a transgression (with evidence to suggest that it is true) that results in major damage involving victims, would respond with mortification and ingratiation. Conversely, an organization with a negative past history committing a faux pas about which the evidence is ambiguous and involving no damage or victims would respond with clarification. While not intended to be a recipe to guarantee success, Coombs contended that use of these guidelines could increase the likelihood of success in managing public perception of an organization’s responsibility for a crisis. Coombs warns that “the crisis milieu is too complex to factor in and to control for all of the variables” (p. 471). To further emphasize his work only as a set of guidelines, he stated, “Reasons for failure include the psychological barriers (e.g. selective exposure, selective perception, and selective retention) and the existence of contrary messages being sent by the government, the media, or influential members of the community" (p. 471).

Fitzpatrick and Ruben (1995) reinforced the notion that crisis type affects the communication options available to organizations. For example, denial as a post-crisis communication strategy is not a viable option for an organization that has a good deal of responsibility for the crisis. In fact, use of denial can exacerbate the damage by reducing organizational credibility and creating the impression that something is being hidden. Accepting blame and taking corrective action are more effective when the organization has culpability.

Albrecht (1996) warned leaders against the "stonewall" approach to communication which, in his estimation, nearly always fails. The characteristics of this approach are: (a) initially deny that the problem exists, (b) when irrefutable evidence is presented that proves that the problem exists, downplay its significance, (c) agree to only replace items for people who can demonstrate extreme hardship, (d) continue running your current ad campaigns extolling the virtues of your company or product as if nothing has happened, and (e) count the short-term profits. Conversely, when an organization is accused of wrongdoing, Albrecht suggested strategies that are open, conciliatory, and corrective: (a) initiate a thorough audit to determine the truth, (b) contact those who have been wronged and ask them to meet in your facility and invite them to discuss their view of what happened compared to your view of it, (c) communicate to the press and other groups the results of your findings and your attempts to solve the problem, and (d) notify employees about possible changes that may affect them. Albrecht, relying on the work of Burchett, encouraged leaders to shape their crisis communication by following seven additional strategies. First, based on their pre-planning for crisis management, leaders should identify their primary and secondary issues and construct a set of core messages that could be communicated should the need arise. The second strategy is for leaders to divorce themselves from their own position. In other words, leaders must have the ability to look at the crisis from the perspective of people who are on the other side of the situation. This not only forces leaders to consider the validity of concerns from the viewpoint of others but prevents leaders from becoming egotistically involved in the response—a sure formula for failure. The third strategy is to resist the tempting belief in “episodic crisis.” Insisting that “it can’t happen here” or won’t because it has not in the past denies the organization an opportunity to conduct the prior planning that lowers stress and induces prevention. As Albrecht stated, “Crisis management is not about predicting the future, it’s about reacting to it in a planned, prepared, thoughtful, and aggressive manner” (p. 143). The fourth strategy has to do with how broadly leaders view their publics and how tuned in they are to their concerns during a crisis. Most organizations have multiple publics, each with different needs and core interests. Leaders are cautioned not to fight the interests of their publics, and to treat each as a separate entity. Honest, open, timely, and forthright communication is the key to establishing early stability during a crisis and later success. The fifth communication strategy advocated by Albrecht is “bridging.” Leaders should develop core messages they want to communicate during a crisis (no more than three or four) and link all communication to these. This prevents the disastrous effects of freewheeling and improvising. Prior public relations and media planning is Albrecht’s sixth strategy. Conducting a media audit (what questions might the media ask and how will you answer them) is the first line of defense. From here, leaders should ensure that during a crisis, the organization itself is the primary source of information about the organization and the situation. The final strategy is simple—don't lie! Attempts to sugarcoat, distract, or refer to the crisis with euphemisms will exacerbate the problem rather than help resolve it. Honest, fair, and ethical communication is the best way to establish a mutually respectful relationship with the press and other publics.

Mitroff (2001) added to the laundry list of do's and don'ts in crisis communication by stating, "One should never—repeat never!—give technical explanations or impersonal statistics to assuage the fears of consumers" (p. 87). Technical information is more likely to be perceived as "gobbledygook" and an attempt to hide the truth. Mitroff also warned leaders about the importance of responding to people as human beings who need emotional reassurance and resisting a message based on continual denial. Doing so is a sure recipe for losing in the court of public opinion and becoming and remaining a villain in the eyes of stakeholders and observers. He offered two lessons for leaders: (a) Always respond first and primarily to the emotional needs of others (customers, clients, suppliers, employees)—later, and only later, respond rationally by giving reasons for your actions or supporting evidence, such as numbers—and (b) respond to the emotional needs of others as they perceive them, not as you perceive them.

Mitroff's discussion of crisis communication strategies is critical because of the connection between communication and a common leadership mistake—solving the wrong problem precisely. In other words, casting a crisis only as a technical failure without recognizing the human side of the situation is a failure of leadership. He contended that leaders must be mindful of the interactions between organizations, people and technologies.

Seeger et al. (2003) warned against viewing crisis communication solely as a post-crisis event. Doing so limits communication to a “press agentry” role and limits the interactive relationship needed between the organization and its stakeholders to fully process the situation. Contemporary shifts in crisis communication include movement away from denial as a primary strategy to honest, candid and prompt responses to crisis situations. Recognizing that the post-crisis period is enhanced by on-going and intense periods of cooperation allows for rebuilding and repairing of relationships, as well as healing. In this view, crisis communication has four functions: (a) environmental scanning, (b) crisis response, (c) crisis resolution, and (d) organizational learning. Environmental scanning refers to monitoring and maintaining external relationships which includes issue management, communication about risks, sense-making, and boundary scanning (maintaining relationships with stakeholders from whom the organization needs resources). The crisis response function involves planning for and managing crises. Communication in this mode is designed for information dissemination, coordination and the reduction of uncertainty. When using the crisis resolution mode, leaders select from communication strategies and postures. This may include apology, being defensive, providing explanations, or prompting grieving and memorializing. One of the more critical elements of the crisis resolution function is reconstituting normalcy. Changes in communication patterns signal the moment to move on. Communication from familiar sources, public announcements indicating that it is time to move on, and press coverage that no longer features the crisis as a primary story are all changes in communication patterns that assist with reconstituting normalcy. Finally, communication as a function of organizational learning focuses on emerging from a crisis with an enhanced knowledge base. This includes the facilitation of dialogue, the emergence of epistemology, and the establishment of new hierarchies. Fundamental to sense-making is the opportunity for members of an organization to reflect on their own behaviors, values and beliefs in the context of the crisis. This critique allows members to examine their own historical thinking and pool the resulting collective interpretation to formulate new courses of action and value systems. Through this process, narratives of critical incidents are constructed that permeate the organization. Severe crises frequently result in an iterative relationship between dialogue and epistemology. Members interact with new stakeholders, rehearse new strategies, and incorporate new-found understanding of self, environment, and stakeholders. The result is a new knowledge base from which to function. This can have implications for the distribution of power and status in the organization. Members of the dominant organizational structure may be forced out as the policies, values and beliefs they established are challenged.

From this, Seeger et al. (2003) formulated both form and content communication recommendations for leaders. Form recommendations are concerned with what leaders should do after a crisis. Their recommendations include showing concern for victims, visiting the scene of the event, offering comfort and reassurance to those affected, leveraging resources, coordinating support, using their status to communicate that the situation is being taken seriously, and taking action to return to normalcy. Of these, visiting the scene of the event is considered a critical symbolic leadership action. Content refers to the actual response a leader provides to a crisis. Presenting a unified message, communicating quickly, and being honest and open are the foundations of sound content. The greater goal of content is to frame the meaning of a crisis and set the tone for short and long term resolution. In this sense, leaders “personify organizations, motivate followers, clarify the desired methods of operation, frame events in meaningful ways, and provide a vision of where the organization is moving" (p. 242).

Crisis Decision-Making

The research on how leaders make decisions in a time of crisis is critical because of the disruptive nature of crisis. Seeger et al. (2003) summarized the work of Pauchant and Mitroff (1992) and Turner (1976) and captured this instability:

> First, the system is fundamentally disrupted in some basic way. Operations may cease, leaving facilities closed and key personnel distracted, incapacitated, missing, or dead. Although in some cases the impact of the crisis is contained, there is often widespread disruption. Systems disrupted in this manner are less stable, vulnerable to criticism, and susceptible to further crises. Second, the basic belief structures, premises, and assumptions of members are called into question. This fundamental questioning often concerns well-established beliefs about risk and its relationship to the organization, norms for risk avoidance, and probabilities for the failure of these norms. Third, organizational members, crisis stakeholders, and the public often experience intense emotional arousal, stress, fear, anxiety, and apprehension, which may compromise their ability to make effective decisions. These responses are often maladaptive and may significantly complicate the effects of a crisis by inhibiting crisis management and response capabilities. (p. 9)

Albrecht (1996) cautions about one of the many pitfalls leaders encounter in the decision-making arena in his summary of the remarks of Anne Wright. A senior executive in the United States Postal Service who

> has spearheaded her organization’s response to violence in the workplace, she makes a thought-provoking observation that applies to any company in times of turmoil. In summary, her point is this: It’s important to recognize that during and following any significant event (not necessarily relating to violence) the victims don’t think clearly, and since the employer is as much a victim as the employee, by proxy, the organization doesn’t think well either. In other words, the company’s coping mechanism is suddenly on the fritz. What this means is that, once they’re embroiled in a significant problem, companies often make things worse for themselves, not because they mean to, but because the people at the top, who must make important decisions during and following critical incidents, can get trapped in the victim mode as well, and thus fail to respond properly. (p. 15-16)

Albrecht found that in times of crisis and stress we revert back to what we know and how we have been conditioned to respond. Gouran (1982) said that leaders isolate themselves during crisis, seriously inhibiting their ability to make decisions. Staw, Sandelands, and Dutton (1981) termed this phenomenon “threat-rigidity response.” Leaders restrict their access to information at a time when it is most needed as a reaction to a need for control, feeling overwhelmed, or the mistaken belief that doing so will help them focus on the crisis. Isolation from information sources may also be a precipitating factor leading to crisis. Leaders may be unwilling to admit a crisis is possible because of what the threat would present to their sense of personal or organizational identity. This can lead to collective rationalization that prevents leaders from detecting risk (Seeger et al., 2003). Leaders may also discount information if those reporting the information do not have credibility or the organizational culture discourages people from coming forward. According to Perrow (2001), leaders should “solicit skepticism” and “open communication channels to let nagging worry through” (p. 7). Janis (1989) argued that crises are a function of decisional failure, primarily due to the failure of leaders to adequately collect and analyze information. Pressure to conform or reach consensus contributes to this phenomenon.

Seeger et al. (2003) warned that while crisis is most often unexpected or surprising, one of the interesting features of most crises, is that some participant in the organization was aware of the threat but was unable or unwilling to communicate that threat. Short or restricted response time is a consequence of the need to act immediately to manage a crisis and of the close media attention that inevitably follows. Delays in response time further complicate the situation and can do harm.

Bazerman and Watkins echoed Seeger et al. in their 2004 work *Predictable Surprises*. The authors define a predictable surprise as “an event or set of events that take an individual or group by surprise, despite prior awareness of all the information necessary to anticipate the events and their consequences” (p. 1). While acknowledging that some crisis events are genuine surprises, predictable surprises occur regularly in organizations. The authors point to flawed leadership in the decision making process as the culprit.

> We believe one of the main responsibilities of leadership must be to identify and avoid predictable surprises. Most leaders recognize growing systemic weaknesses in their organizations that have the potential to flash into major crises over time. Visionary and courageous leaders avoid tragedies by both anticipating and taking steps to mitigate the damage to such threats. (p. 2)

The reason, according to the authors, is that “human judgment and decision-making deviates from rationality” (p. 73). Leaders fail to act on what they explicitly or intuitively know and “hold positive illusions that lead us to interpret events in an egocentric manner and undervalue risks” (p. 9). Information lacking “vividness” is another complicating factor. Events that occur frequently or are easily recalled have vividness. Information that is subtle does not demand the attention of leaders and is not factored into decision-making. These factors, coupled with our natural tendency to focus on the here and now rather than being conscious about the future and our desire to maintain the status quo, make conditions ripe for predictable surprises. Many leaders are willing to risk the possibility of a tragedy rather than make a significant investment in something that has a low probability of occurring. At the organizational level, eight dynamics contribute to the likelihood that a predictable crisis will occur: (a) failure to devote resources to gathering information about potential threats, (b) reluctance to disseminate information that is considered sensitive, (c) gaps in individual knowledge, (d) failure to integrate knowledge that is available but dispersed across the organization, (e) individual negligence and malfeasance, (f) responsibility that is so ambiguously defined that no one has an incentive to act until it is too late, (g) lapses in capturing lessons learned, and (h) long-term erosion of the fabric of the institutional memory due to personnel losses. The key to preventing predictable surprises, according to Bazerman and Watkins, is establishing systems for recognizing indicators and threats, prioritizing threats to force leaders to focus on the right problems, and mobilizing to effectively deal with problems. The authors advocated disciplined learning processes in which lessons are learned and retained from previous tragedies and systematic methods to prevent organizational memory loss. The ability to mobilize is thwarted by an unwillingness to give up the status quo, or fear that self-defining values will be challenged, or a sense of loss of competence (p. 210). The strategies leaders can utilize to overcome mobilization issues are persuasive communication, coalition building, structured problem-solving, and organized crisis response plans.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGIES AND CASES

The purpose of the methods utilized in this study was to elicit a comprehensive and authentic identification of leadership challenges, strategies and goals during crisis as reported by university administrators. To capture the richness of data embedded in the university and community contexts in which each crisis occurred, the researcher sought the stories of participants' experiences. Therefore, interviewing, a tool from the naturalistic research paradigm, served as the primary investigative tool. In this chapter, naturalistic inquiry is defined and described to lay the foundation of the research design. A detailed description of the methods employed for case selection and sampling follows. This chapter explains additional methods of data-gathering as well as describing the means of achieving trustworthiness, and details the five steps of data analysis. Finally, a synopsis of each crisis case included in the study provides information on the nature of the crisis, how the crisis was resolved, and the issues leaders had to address.

Naturalistic Inquiry

According to Isaac and Michael (1995): “The thrust of naturalistic inquiry is to investigate human behavior in its natural and unique contexts” (p. 218). Schwandt (2001) called naturalistic inquiry “a particular methodology that emphasizes understanding and portraying social action (i.e. the meaning, character, and nature of social life) from the point of view of social actors” (p. 173). Schwandt further stated that naturalistic inquiry “is a commitment to studying human action in some setting that is not contrived, manipulated, or artificially fashioned by the inquirer; hence, the setting is said to be ‘natural’ or ‘naturally occurring’” (p. 174).

Based on these notions, Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, and Allen (1993) deemed that “the naturalistic paradigm assumes, however, that there are multiple realities, with differences among them that cannot be resolved through rational processes or increased data” and identified “the process of observing, recording, analyzing, reflecting, dialoguing and rethinking as essential to the process” (p. 14).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) provided 14 axioms to serve as a foundation of naturalistic inquiry (also known by the terms *postpositivistic, ethnographic, phenomenological, subjective, case study, qualitative, hermeneutic, and humanistic*) (p. 7). Two foundations underlie the axioms: there is no manipulation on the part of the inquirer, and the inquirer imposes no a priori units on the outcome (p. 8). The 14 axioms are

1. Natural setting. Context is crucial to determine the meaning of data.
2. Human instrument. The researcher is the primary data-gathering tool.
3. Utilization of tacit knowledge. Felt or intuitive knowledge as well as that expressed through language is valued as much of the interaction between the researcher and the respondent occurs on this level.
4. Qualitative methods. While not used exclusively, qualitative methods are “more adaptable to dealing with multiple realities” (p. 40).
5. *Purposive* sampling. *Purposive*, rather than random or representative, sampling increases the scope or range of data that can be gathered and allows multiple realities to be investigated.
6. Inductive data analysis. Inductive analysis is better suited to the interactive nature of the researcher-respondent relationship and more likely to describe fully the setting and emerging findings.

7. Grounded theory. The researcher enters the data-gathering situation with neutrality and assumes that theory emerges from (or is grounded in) the data.

8. Emergent design. According to the authors, research design in the naturalistic paradigm is necessarily emergent to accommodate all that is possible in the multiple realities investigated and because it is not possible to predict the “patterns of mutual shaping that are likely to exist” (p. 41).

9. Negotiated outcomes. Researcher and respondent negotiate interpretations of data, honoring the notion that those who can best assign meaning to data emerging from a particular context are those who inhabit that context.

10. Case-study reporting. Utilizing thick description, case study reporting is preferred over scientific or technical reporting because it allows for richer portrayal of not only the data and the context, but investigator and respondent values, and the methodological paradigm.

11. Idiographic interpretations. Data is interpreted in terms of the particular case rather than a pre-established law or generalization.

12. Tentative application. Because of the focus on context, the researcher is hesitant to generalize or apply findings broadly to other settings.

13. Focus-determined boundaries. As with other aspects of the naturalistic paradigm, boundaries of inquiry are often emergent, based on the “mutual shaping” between investigator, respondent and context.

14. Special criteria for trustworthiness. Rather than the scientific constructs of internal and external reliability and validity, the naturalistic paradigm employs methods to establish credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability.

Research Design

Crisis case selection, case typology, and purposive sampling. Isaac and Michael (1995) stated that the goal of purposeful sampling is to "understand certain select cases in their own right" (p. 223). According to the authors, "the power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting what Patton has called information-rich cases for study in-depth—cases from which one can learn most about issues central to the purpose of the evaluation and the needs of decision makers" (p. 223). Lincoln and Guba (1985) distinguished purposeful sampling in naturalistic inquiry from conventional sampling:

> Naturalistic sampling is, then very different from conventional sampling, It is based on informational, not statistical, considerations. Its purpose is to maximize information, not facilitate generalization. Its procedures are strikingly different, too, and depend on the particular ebb and flow of information as the study is carried out rather than on a priori considerations. Finally, the criterion invoked to determine when to stop sampling is informational redundancy, not a statistical confidence level. (p. 202)

The sampling scheme for this study was based on three techniques identified by Isaac and Michael (1995): (a) maximum variation sampling, in which a range of types of cases are examined to ensure diversity, (b) critical case sampling which refers to the selection of cases that can make a point dramatically, and (c) criterion sampling, in which cases that meet predetermined criteria are selected for study. This study utilizes a crisis typology coupled with three criteria. The use of a typology not only ensures that a cross-section of crises can be investigated, but addresses one of the research questions (Do leadership goals vary according to type of crisis?). Additional criteria provide focus and boundaries for the study.

First, institutions of higher education that have experienced a crisis or tragedy within the last 10 years were identified. The 10-year time period allows ample time for reflection on campus leadership during the crisis, as well as identification of long-term lingering effects of the crisis. The 10-year time period also allows consideration of a larger sample of cases.

Second, to address one of the research questions of the study—do leadership goals vary according to the type of crisis?—three categories for classifying the cases were established: (a) crises in which the institution was a victim (such as acts of violence perpetrated by outside actors), (b) crises in which the institution was significantly impacted by a natural disaster (such as hurricanes, floods, earthquakes) and (c) crises for which the institution bore legal responsibility (such as deaths resulting from faulty or absent security measures). The use of a typology ensures the investigation into a range of crisis events or multiple realities.

Two additional criteria were considered when identifying cases. Cases which attracted national media attention were sought. This criterion increased the likelihood that written accounts of not only the crises, but leadership regarding each, would be available.

The last criterion used for case selection was the potential for or actual loss of life. This criterion allowed the separation of financial, political and reputational crises, which may be largely defined by local context. In other words, local politics or financial conditions that create a crisis on one campus may not constitute a crisis on another.

A database of crises matching the study criterion was created. Each crisis case was assigned to one of the three crisis types and demographic information regarding the crisis including date of occurrence, and institution size and type were recorded. Once crisis cases were selected for the study, the database became a working document for the researcher in which potential participants for each case were identified and a record of contact with each was recorded.

The purposive sample included primary and secondary levels of participants. The primary level included the President of the institution and members of the President's executive staff centrally involved in decision-making who had designated leadership duties during the crisis. Included in the secondary level were individuals who planned and executed crisis response activities and other formal or informal leaders who not only served in a leadership capacity but anticipated desired leadership behaviors, assessed the consequences of leadership decisions, and advised other decision-makers. These included campus administrators central to the crisis. Examples of individuals at the secondary level were academic deans, associate and assistant vice presidents, and directors of campus operations.

The tables below provide a breakdown of participation in the study. Table 1 depicts the number of participating institutions and interviews by the crisis typology. Table 2 identifies the number of participants by title. It should be noted that while a total of 14 interviews were conducted, two individuals participated in one interview.

Table 1
Number of Cases and Interviews by Study Typology

	Typology categories			
	Institution as victim	Natural disaster	Institution with legal liability	Total
Participating schools	6	1	1	8
Interviews	11	2	1	14

Table 2
Number of Interviews by Participant Title

Participant title	No. participants
University President	2
Provost or Academic Vice President	2
Vice President for Student Affairs	3
Assistant or Associate Vice President for Student Affairs	2
Dean of Students	2
Dean of Academic College or School	1
Assistant Director for Student Life or Student Affairs	2
Director of Residential Life	1

Conditions of entry. The researcher gained entry into each crisis case by contacting the President or a Vice President at the institution of occurrence. Contacts were made via phone and/ or e-mail and most often included interfacing with Administrative Assistants to the participant. These Assistants became key players in coordinating schedules and facilitating communication. Securing an interview with a key leader required adjusting to local protocol. In some cases, direct communication with the individual was immediate. But most often, a screening process was required. For this, a brief summary of the study was provided. Once the participation of an institution's

President or Vice President was confirmed, the researcher asked the individual to identify other key campus leaders for participation. These individuals were then contacted in similar fashion and interviews scheduled. The researcher traveled to two participating campuses to conduct seven interviews (three at one campus, four at another). Six interviews were conducted at the 2004 and 2005 conferences of the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA), and one interview was conducted by phone. A site visit was made to one campus after interviewing participants at the NASPA conference.

The contact and scheduling process proved to be lengthy and challenging and hinged on the cooperation of those who served as Assistants to the targeted participants. As an example, securing four interviews on one campus required no fewer than 40 phone calls and e-mails, along with documentation on the specifics of the study. Some attempts to engage participants at targeted schools failed. This challenge was attributed to two factors. First, those who are gatekeepers to upper level administrators have significant control over who has access to them, for how long, and in what manner. Establishing relationships with these individuals and providing communication that would allow them to interpret the intent and methods of the study was crucial. Second, many participants were reluctant to talk about the crisis, perhaps out of fear or because they were still in a tense emotional state or had participated in other studies and been scrutinized. Securing the participation of one upper-level administrator proved invaluable in garnering the participation of others in that it gave psychological permission for those who were hesitant to engage in the study.

The conditions of entry stipulated that the project was an overt study, with the purpose and methodologies clearly stated.

Trustworthiness. Erlandson et al. (1993) stated:

> If intellectual inquiry is to have an impact on human knowledge, either by adding to an overall body of knowledge or by solving a particular problem, it must guarantee some measure of credibility about what it has inquired, must communicate in a manner that will enable application for its intended audience, and must enable its audience to check on its findings and the inquiry process by which the findings were obtained. (p. 28)

Lincoln and Guba (1985) contended that trustworthiness is about finding a satisfactory answer to the following question: “How can an inquirer persuade his or her audiences (including self) that the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to, worth taking account of?” (p. 290). For this study, five methods were utilized to achieve trustworthiness: (a) triangulation, (b) peer debriefing, (c) member checks (in process and terminal), (d) thick description, and (e) the reflexive journal.

Triangulation. Triangulation is “verification, emendation, and extension of information obtained from other sources, human and nonhuman” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 268). In practice, triangulation “is to collect information about different events and relationships from different points of view” (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 31). The ultimate goal of triangulation, according to these authors, is convergence. The greater the convergence achieved, the greater confidence one can have in the findings. Schwandt (2001) called triangulation “a means of checking the integrity of the inferences one draws” (p. 257). For this study, triangulation occurred through the cycle of interviews, document reviews and observations. The means by which the researcher utilized triangulation and other methods to establish trustworthiness are detailed in the sections below.

Member checks. Isaac and Michael (1995) called member checks the most crucial technique in establishing credibility in naturalistic studies: “It involves the representativeness of the participants themselves from whom data were originally obtained by testing the authenticity of these data, analytic categories, interpretations, and conclusions” (p. 222). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), member checks are an opportunity for the constructions developed by the researcher to be verified by the respondent. Schwandt (2001) viewed member checks as another means through which data could be generated in that feedback from respondents is probed and examined by the researcher.

In addition to informal (in process) member checks conducted at the conclusion of each interview, terminal member checks were completed with some participants once all of the data had been analyzed and organized by themes. Selected participants were given an outline of the major categories of findings, and a copy of the transcript of their interview, along with a verbal review of the categories and themes assigned by the researcher for their interview. Participants were asked to confirm, clarify, and offer amendments to what the researcher had developed.

Peer debriefing. Lincoln and Guba (1985) called peer debriefing “a process of exposing oneself to a disinterested peer in a manner paralleling an analytic session and for the purpose of exploring aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remain only implicit within the inquirer’s mind” (p. 308).

Several individuals served as peer debriefers. Two university administrators, also doctoral students and members of a dissertation support group, provided on-going dialogue regarding methodology and findings. These conversations proved invaluable as a means for the researcher to process thoughts and make implicit thinking explicit. A senior-level university administrator was sought for periodic reviews of findings. Twenty-plus years as a leader of campus response teams, coupled with status as a senior-level administrator, made this individual an ideal peer debriefer for this study**.**

Thick description. Erlandson et al. (1993) stated that “thick description brings the reader vicariously into the context being described” (p. 33) and is essential to transferability. For this study, thick description is provided via two means. The first is a description of each crisis case for which interviews were conducted. Located at the end of this chapter, these descriptions provide a synopsis of not only the relevant facts of the crisis, but a sense for the nature of issues with which campus leaders had to deal, along with a statement of how each crisis was resolved. Secondly, in the reporting of categories and themes, the respondents are quoted directly, allowing the reader to hear the emotions, perceptions and complexities of the themes as they are reported**.**

Researcher reflexive journal. Throughout the research process, the researcher maintained a reflexive journal. Contacts, sketches of facilities and memorial sites, personal reflections on themes emerging from interviews, questions the researcher was contemplating regarding findings, and comments on each interview were recorded.

Data Collection

The goal of data collection was to elicit not just the facts and background of the crisis event, but descriptions of critical leadership events, consequences of leadership actions, and opinions and perceptions of the leadership. Because it was unlikely that entry could be made into an organization during and immediately following a crisis, interviews, along with review of documents and events served as the primary data collection tools. A comprehensive audit trail consisting of records of field contacts and reviews of background documentation were maintained. Data collection continued until a saturation of categories was evident.

Interviews. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the purpose of conducting interviews is to obtain constructions, reconstructions and projections of “persons, events, activities, organizations, feelings, motivations, claims, concerns, and other entities” (p. 268). Erlandson et al. (1993) contended that the interview in naturalistic research takes the form of a dialogue or interaction, helping the researcher understand the social, interpersonal and cultural context. Interviews served as the primary data gathering tool for this study.

Once an interview time was agreed upon, the researcher met one-on-one with the participant (with the exception of the one phone interview). The researcher kept comprehensive notes during the interview and filled in the notes immediately after each interview for a completed script. Each interview was audio taped (with the exception of one). The researcher followed a semi-structured interview format which was modified as the research progressed. Each interview was one to two hours in length. Informal member checks were conducted at the end of each interview. For this, the researcher provided a verbal summary of her initial impression of the themes of the interview for confirmation with the participant. An informed consent was obtained prior to each interview. This form specified the purpose of the study, how data resulting from the research would be used, the rights of the participants, and an indication of the risk level to participants. Interviewees were also asked to sign a consent form to be audio taped.

Observation. The researcher conducted site visits to three of the participating schools. Visiting the scene of the tragedies allowed the researcher to observe the nature of memorials created to honor the dead, treatment of the site of the crisis, campus culture, and the nature of interaction between people and the environment where the crisis occurred. These observations also allowed the researcher to contextualize participant stories and gain greater understanding of the impact of the crisis on the school and surrounding community. A greater appreciation was gained into the symbolic and connotative meanings behind not only significant events related to the crisis, but the leadership decisions made in response.

Records and documents. Review of documents and artifacts provided not only background information, but contextual knowledge and verification of the constructions revealed by respondents in interviews. Accounts of the crisis as reported in local newspapers, television reports, and higher education publications such as *The Chronicle of Higher Education* were reviewed. Personal reflections and retrospectives on some of the crises written by campus leaders were also read. These typically appeared in non-academic newsletters or as feature pieces in academic journals. These pieces were most often reflective in nature, chronicling the details of the crisis, identifying lessons learned and offering tips for leaders based on practitioner wisdom. In one case, the researched reviewed a videotape produced by the university where the crisis had occurred.

Data Analysis

An interpretational approach (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996) to data analysis was used to find constructs, themes and patterns. Five steps were followed: (a) segmenting the data into units of analysis from the tape transcriptions, (b) developing categories as they emerged directly from the data (a grounded theory approach) (c) coding each segment, (d) grouping category segments, and (e) developing conclusions.

Unitizing data. The interview audio tapes were transcribed into computer files. Each transcript was then broken into units of data. An analysis unit or segment, according to Gall et al. (1996), is “a section of text that contains one item of information and that is comprehensible even if read outside the context in which it is embedded (p. 563). These units were then numbered and given a code. Data were then printed on 3 x 5 index cards. Three colors of cards were used to correspond to the type of crisis (white for institution as victim, blue for natural disaster, yellow for institution with legal liability). Two thousand three (2,003) cards or units of data were gleaned from 291 pages of transcript.

Coding. Schwandt (2001) defined coding as “a procedure that disaggregates the data, breaks it down into manageable segments, and identifies or names those segments” (p. 26). Each data card was assigned a code that allowed it to be traced to its original source, provided information pertinent to the study, and ensured the anonymity of the participant. The sample code “1/304/V” designates interview number / month and year of interview / typology type.

Grouping, categorizing and naming themes. The researcher studied each data card or unit and placed each in a pile with cards of similar data. The process of grouping the units of data was emergent. Piles were created based on the content of the data card. If the content of a data card was not already represented by an existing pile, a new pile was started. These groupings represented categories (defined by Gall et al. (1996) as a certain type of phenomenon) of data that were named accordingly. As data units of similar content were grouped, a “rule” for inclusion was developed for each. Subcategories (themes) naturally emerged within the categories. These were named as well. The process of constant comparison (Gall et al., 1996) in which grouping, categorizing and naming is ongoing occurred over several months during which the researcher continually studied and refined the data.

A data management document was created that listed each category and theme along with the number of data cards per participant for that category. This method of data management allowed for an additional layer of analysis in that it provided a means by which prominent themes could be identified and patterns could be discerned. The researcher was able to identify themes discussed only by specific types of participants (such as university presidents) and similarities and differences in themes by the crisis typology. The data management document was utilized in the peer debriefings as well as the member checks.

The Crisis Cases

Debris fallout from terrorist attack on building. On September 11, 2001, two planes struck twin skyscrapers a few blocks from an urban community college in the northeast. Campus leaders had no time to come to grips with their own disbelief at what had occurred. Evacuating a building being pummeled by enormous chunks of falling debris into an environment that was not much safer was the first of many events that would scatter the student body. The terrorist attack placed the school in the midst of an international incident. First responders commandeered their building to serve as a command center for the area, campus leaders engaged in ferocious competition for recovery resources, and staff scrambled to meet their President's edict to reopen in spite of their belief that they never would. But to their astonishment, they did reopen within a month of the attack. Reopening did not come easily. Student development space was sacrificed for the sake of replacing lost classrooms. Faculty were asked to teach in noisy classrooms where temperature control was impossible and a noxious odor made the faculty union wonder if the air they were breathing was safe. The emotional toll on the still very raw scars of the event were aggravated daily as faculty and students watched the hauling of huge chucks of debris past classroom windows. Students had to make a significant investment to return to school. Transportation systems were shut down, communications from the school were limited and low tech, and navigating the city was near impossible. But the President not only met the October reopen date, but fulfilled his promise of a December graduation. Study Classification: Institution as victim.

Residence hall fire. On a cold winter morning a fire raged through a freshman residence hall at a four-year institution in the northeast. Three students died in the fire and more than 50 others were treated for injuries. Several students initially ignored the fire alarm that came on the heels of several prior false alarms, dismissed as pranks and practical jokes. While campus leaders tended to the safety and emotional needs of staff, students, and families, the media descended on the campus with questions regarding fire safety practices and procedures. Ensuing investigations revealed that the residence hall was not equipped with life saving sprinklers. The University President took corrective action before the final investigation was complete. The fire prompted nation wide surveys regarding fire safety in residence halls, legislation requiring state institutions to install sprinkler systems, and debates in the US Congress about the most effective precautions to save lives during a residence hall fire. Study Classification: Institution with legal liability

Fatal shooting of three professors. A student, armed with four pistols and a perverted determination to settle accounts, roamed the building that housed the academic program he was failing. He found one professor, whose course he had failed, sitting at her desk. She raised her hand in a futile attempt at self defense as he fired the first shot. Having killed her, he proceeded to the room where his classmates were in the middle of a test he should have been taking. There he taunted the two professors teaching the course before killing them and taking his own life. Recognizing that an overwhelming state of hyper vigilance gripped their campus, leaders at this large four-year public institution in the southwest vowed to make their campus forever safe. Working with consultants and an unprecedented shared governance model, leaders sought to formalize policies and procedures to prevent violent behavior. They engaged a broad spectrum of faculty and student affairs staff to answer questions such as: Is it possible to distinguish between merely rude behavior and that which can become violent? What interventions are effective in stopping violent behavior before it turns deadly? What policies can an institution implement? Can faculty and staff be trained to identify the early warning signs of behavior that will escalate to violence? Study Classification: Institution as victim.

Serial killer off campus. Fall semester had barely begun when the bodies of two college students—later to be determined victims of a serial killer—were discovered. Campus leaders at this four-year institution in the south found themselves dealing with a crisis that not only threatened the lives of students, but violated the psychological safety of the campus. In an environment described by some as “fear that was palpable,” campus leaders watched as hundreds of students packed up and went home. The President told parents and students, “there is no 100 per-cent safe environment in America or at any university.” While waiting for resolution—or additional killings—campus leaders launched educational campaigns designed to help students make good choices about their personal safety, extended academic deadlines to allow students and their parents to determine if they would remain enrolled, and struggled to help the university community make sense of senseless acts. Campus life, during the agonizing time between bodies being found (five in all), was, as one student said, like “playing the lottery.” Memorials honoring slain students, and extraordinary safety precautions, including students arming themselves with guns, baseball bats and mace, told leaders that this crisis was not only about the loss of life, but the loss of individual and institutional innocence. The serial killer was apprehended the following Spring semester. Study Classification: Institution as victim.

Missing student*.* Two weeks after a female student enrolled at a mid-size four-year institution in the west went missing, an individual with a history of illegal sexual contact with and attempted kidnapping of female adults, was arrested. In spite of the perpetrator being in custody and massive searches involving more than 1,300 volunteers, the victim’s body was not found for five months. During that time, students and staff joined in the search efforts, held vigils, and kept hope alive. With multiple law enforcement agencies coordinating response efforts for a victim that was an off-campus adult, university leaders found themselves wondering who owned the crisis, and what, if any, leadership role they had. In the end, they knew the crisis was their own. Campus leaders served in a support role for law enforcement and provided services for the family of the missing student. Study Classification: Institution as victim.

Hostage situation in residence hall. At approximately 9:00 a.m. on a spring morning at a mid-size four-year institution in the west, an individual entered a residence hall and took four female students hostage. One of the captives was the perpetrator’s ex-girlfriend. As the crisis unfolded, campus leaders learned that the hostage taker had murdered two individuals the night before. During the ordeal, the perpetrator shot and wounded his ex-girlfriend. The situation concluded when the hostage taker stood in the residence hall window, allowing police snipers to kill him. During the crisis, campus offices were flooded with frantic calls from parents wondering if it was their daughter being held at gun point. In the aftermath, leaders made the welfare of the hostages and their families their first concern amid unflattering portrayals of the school in the media and internal trepidation about the impact on enrollment and retention. Study Classification: Institution as victim.

Hurricane. A category-five hurricane, with winds approaching 150 miles per hour, swept through the south, nearly obliterating a four-year mid-size institution. Having evacuated most students and staff, and sheltered those left behind, campus leaders could only ride out the storm. They would later learn that all of their pre-crisis planning could not protect them from what was to come. When the squall had passed, campus leaders faced massive devastation to campus buildings and infrastructure, and seemingly insurmountable safety and logistical issues that left them wondering if they could reopen. The extended suspension of the academic calendar, coupled with protracted negotiations to secure the array of necessary finances, services and resources, consumed leaders whose focus was, necessarily, safety. When students and staff (many of whom lost their homes) were allowed to return, it was to a campus that was forever altered. It was evident that the rebuilding process would not be a matter of weeks or months, but years. Study Classification: Natural disaster

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

This chapter reports findings from interviews conducted with study participants. Findings are reported in three sections: crisis stages, fields of crisis leadership, and leader's reflections and analysis of crisis leadership performance. The first two sections—crisis stages and fields of crisis leadership—are organized around leadership challenges and strategies as reported by study participants. A framework depicting the meta-themes derived from a synthesis of all the leadership challenges and strategies reported is used to organize and illuminate the major findings of the study. Also in the first two sections, tables are used to identify findings as they relate to the crisis typology used for this study (natural disasters, institution as victim, institution with legal liability). In the third section—leaders' reflections and analysis of crisis leadership—findings are reported under several categories that provide insight into study participants' analysis of their own leadership performance during crisis. This chapter concludes with a summary in which themes reported by at least fifty percent of study participants are provided. Throughout this chapter, a summary of comments made by participants is provided, and, in many cases, study participants are quoted directly, recounting critical events within a given crisis. This provides the reader a picture of not only the complex context in which campus administrators were making leadership decisions but the complexity of the challenges themselves.

Meta-Theme Framework of Crisis Leadership Challenges and Strategies

To assist in the examination of findings, and to focus the findings on the primary research questions for this study, meta-themes were derived by synthesizing all leadership challenges and strategies reported. The meta-theme framework is utilized for the sections on crisis stages and fields of crisis leadership. The eight meta-themes follow.

1. Leading in spite of a loss of control: themes identifying logistical and psychological elements of the crisis for which leaders had little or no control, or were reliant on others for assistance; uncertainty about what to do.

2. Coping with deficient, inadequate, or non-existent technical and human crisis response measures or systems: themes identifying inadequacies in technical and human response systems including equipment, plans, and human resources.

3. Assessing and evaluating leadership decisions occurring almost simultaneously with leadership actions: themes identifying challenges associated with being in the national spotlight which allowed leadership decisions and actions to be judged almost simultaneously to them being made.

4. Altering operations and relationships: themes identifying changes in operations required as a result of the crisis such as interrupting the academic calendar, creating temporary policies or staff configurations; forming relationships between individuals and groups not previously required.

5. Managing transitions within the life of the crisis: themes identifying intentional or unintentional actions that moved the crisis from one stage to the next.

6. Communicating about the crisis: themes identifying challenges in communicating what happened, how the crisis was being managed, and responding to the communications needs of constituency groups; communications plans and media management.

7. Dealing with the complexities of multiple constituency groups: themes identifying the issues, characteristics and needs of myriad constituency groups.

8. Dealing with the long term effects of the crisis: themes identifying lingering effects of the crisis, events that prolonged the crisis, and treatment of the crisis in institutional memory.

Similarly, 10 meta-themes associated with leadership strategies were derived from a synthesis of all strategies reported. These are:

1. Making safety the leadership priority: themes identifying both physical and psychological safety issues; the role of safety in decision-making.

2. Leading planning and policy development: themes identifying areas in which planning and policy development were needed, along with the means by which campus leaders proceeded.

3. Garnering necessary resources: themes identifying the nature of resources needed and the means by which leaders acquire these.

4. Leading intentional communication efforts: themes identifying the content of communications, methods by which leaders communicated with others, and the commitments and orientations leaders had toward communications.

5. Clarifying the leadership infrastructure; themes identifying ways in which leaders organized or reorganized the leadership structure and decision-making process.

6. Accepting responsibility for crisis leadership; themes identifying issues related to critical leadership moments and decisions.

7. Modifying the leadership approach as needed: themes identifying how leaders modified their leadership style and approach as required, and the types of leadership styles practiced.

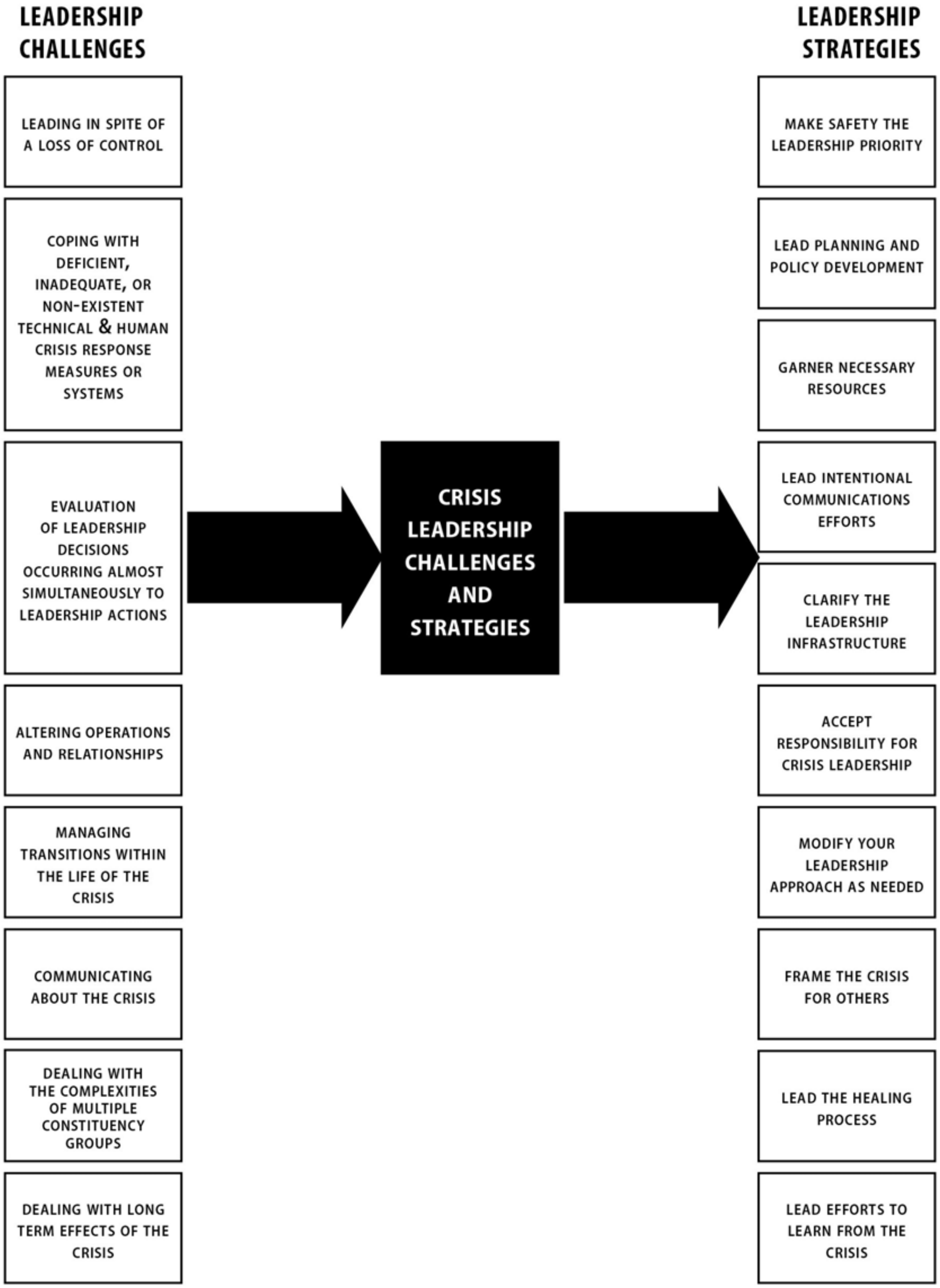
8. Framing the crisis for others: themes identifying methods by which leaders invoked a proper perspective of the crisis; the role of this perspective in decision-making, self-analysis, relationship formation, and institutional memory.

9. Leading the healing process: themes identifying means by which leaders formalized the healing process.

10. Leading efforts to learn from the crisis: themes identifying post-crisis leadership strategies formalizing means through which learning from the crisis could occur.

Figure 1 depicts the meta-theme framework of challenges and strategies.

Figure 1 Meta-theme Framework of Challenges and Strategies


LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES
LEADING IN SPITE OF A LOSS OF CONTROL
COPING WITH DEFICIENT, INADEQUATE, OR NON-EXISTENT TECHNICAL & HUMAN CRISIS RESPONSE MEASURES OR SYSTEMS
EVALUATION OF LEADERSHIP DECISIONS OCCURRING ALMOST SIMULTANEOUSLY TO LEADERSHIP ACTIONS
ALTERING OPERATIONS AND RELATIONSHIPS
MANAGING TRANSITIONS WITHIN THE LIFE OF THE CRISIS
COMMUNICATING ABOUT THE CRISIS
DEALING WITH THE COMPLEXITIES OF MULTIPLE CONSTITUENCY GROUPS
DEALING WITH LONG TERM EFFECTS OF THE CRISIS
CRISIS LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES
LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES
MAKE SAFETY THE LEADERSHIP PRIORITY
LEAD PLANNING AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT
GARNER NECESSARY RESOURCES
LEAD INTENTIONAL COMMUNICATIONS EFFORTS
CLARIFY THE LEADERSHIP INFRASTRUCTURE
ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY FOR CRISIS LEADERSHIP
MODIFY YOUR LEADERSHIP APPROACH AS NEEDED
FRAME THE CRISIS FOR OTHERS
LEAD THE HEALING PROCESS
LEAD EFFORTS TO LEARN FROM THE CRISIS

Crisis Stages

This section will begin with a description of the stages of crisis as reported by study participants, followed by leaders' challenges and strategies at each stage.

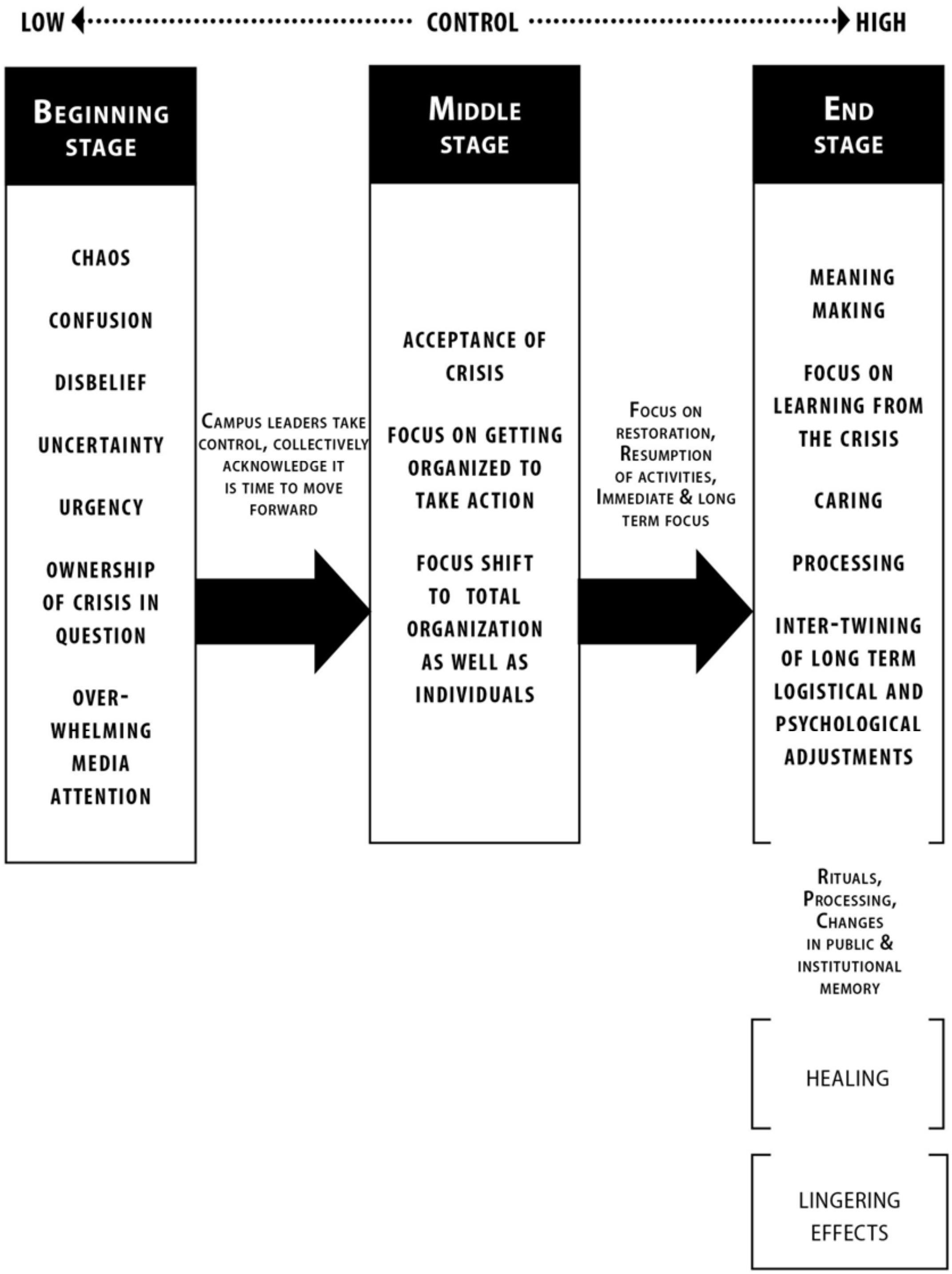
To begin the exploration of challenges and strategies inherent in crisis leadership, participants provided descriptions of the stages. Some descriptions reflected what campus leaders were experiencing from onset to resolution. For example, the stages in one description were alarm, coping, adaptation, self-analysis, and lingering effects. Another description included an account of what leaders did prior to and after the crisis. In this case, the typology was: pre-planning, planning, crisis, and post-crisis assessment. Another description combined both experiences and actions of leaders with the following stages: pre-planning, planning, crisis, initial assessment, recovery, relief, and moving on. Another approach to describing stages reflected levels of intensity. Hyper-acute, acute, and chronic was one such description; another was learning of the crisis, chaos, organized chaos, restoration, healing, meaning-making and stabilization.

Finally, a third description provided stages that were to be conceptualized as being executed repeatedly as a cycle throughout the crisis, rather than in a linear fashion from beginning to end. The components of the cycle were planning, assessment, analysis, and action plans.

Particular attention was given to the beginning stage of the crisis, with several study participants describing reactions to this phase that included horror, shock, and disbelief. The length of the beginning stage was also a focus, ranging from six hours to two weeks.

Figure 2 depicts the stages of crisis (beginning, middle, end for the purposes of this study), the characteristics of each, and transition cues that signal movement from one stage to the next.

Figure 2 Stages of Crisis with Transition Cues and Characteristics


LOW
CONTROL
HIGH
BEGINNING STAGE
CHAOS
CONFUSION
DISBELIEF
UNCERTAINTY
URGENCY
OWNERSHIP OF CRISIS IN QUESTION
OVER-WHELMING MEDIA ATTENTION
CAMPUS LEADERS TAKE CONTROL, COLLECTIVELY ACKNOWLEDGE IT IS TIME TO MOVE FORWARD
MIDDLE STAGE
ACCEPTANCE OF CRISIS
FOCUS ON GETTING ORGANIZED TO TAKE ACTION
FOCUS SHIFT TO TOTAL ORGANIZATION AS WELL AS INDIVIDUALS
FOCUS ON RESTORATION, RESUMPTION OF ACTIVITIES, IMMEDIATE & LONG TERM FOCUS
END STAGE
MEANING MAKING
FOCUS ON LEARNING FROM THE CRISIS
CARING
PROCESSING
INTER-TWINING OF LONG TERM LOGISTICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ADJUSTMENTS
RITUALS, PROCESSING, CHANGES IN PUBLIC & INSTITUTIONAL MEMORY
HEALING
LINGERING EFFECTS

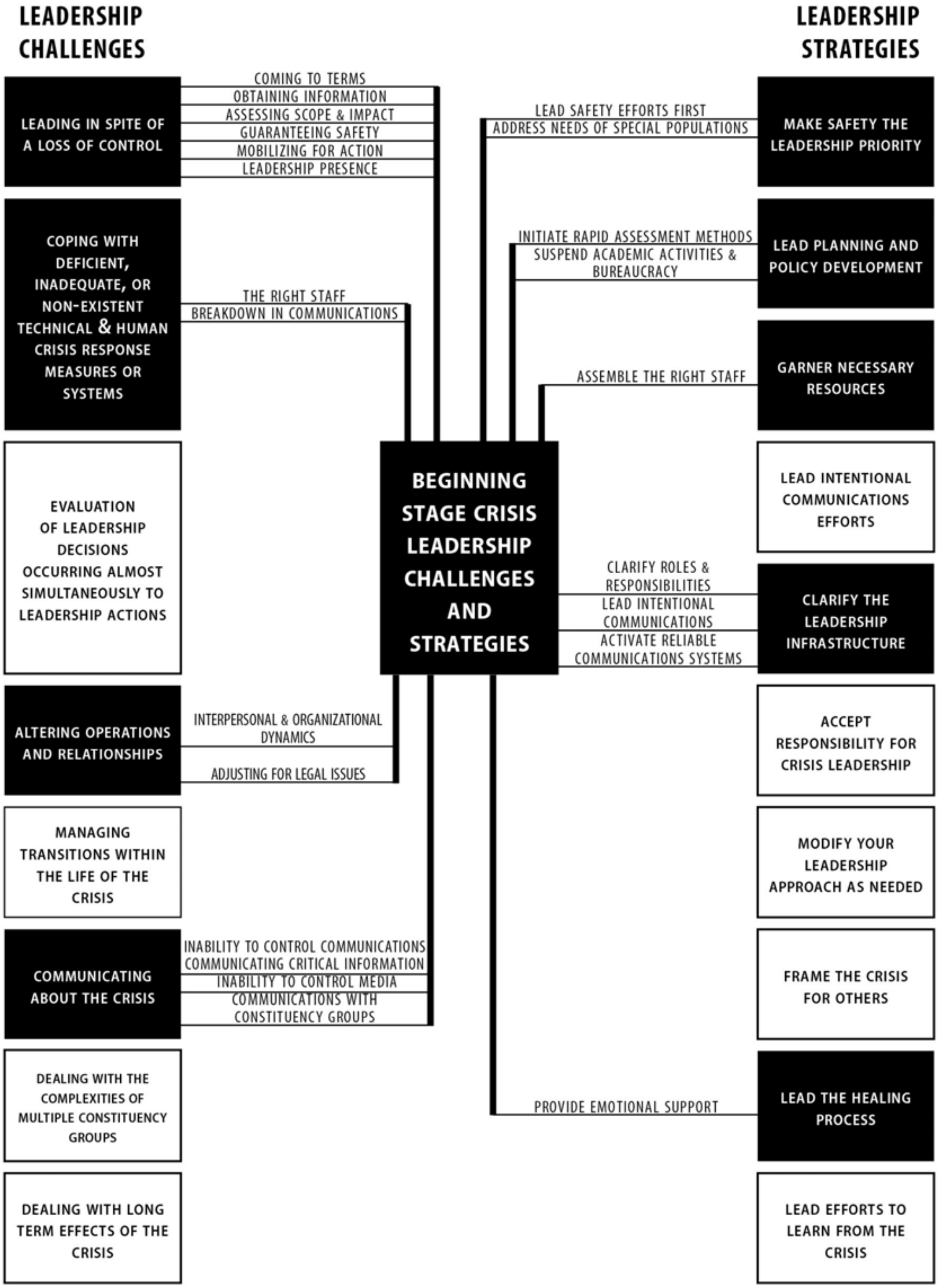
The Beginning Stage: Characteristics

Participants described the beginning stages of crisis as entailing human, logistical, and informational challenges. Chaos and confusion were amplified by sudden onset for crisis types for which there was no warning, followed by horror in the event of deaths or injuries. The early stages of crisis development typically included overwhelming media coverage, and equally overwhelming calls from concerned parents. Most often, first response agencies were mobilized and, in some cases, took over the campus. While campus leaders struggled to determine what they should tend to and how, they were rendered somewhat helpless as the magnitude and details of the crisis unfolded. As one participant said, “God knows who had control during all this time. It was just the incident itself” (3/304/V).

Disbelief was also characteristic of the early stages of crisis development when the situation involved significant violence or senseless acts. Such was the case at a school where a student entered a classroom and shot and killed three faculty members before turning the gun on himself: “I think the initial phase was disbelief and shock—that something like this would actually happen on your campus” (8/804/V). Another school, dealing with an unimaginable crisis, took disbelief even further when surrounded by collapsing buildings: “In our particular situation, which was 9/11, the circumstances were very unique. The planes hit the towers. The first part was questioning the knowledge that the incident occurred” (10/305/V).

The most profound characteristic of the beginning phase of the crisis was simply not knowing what one should do: “The alarm goes off, and everybody is scurrying around, and we’re all trying to be responsive and attentive and trying to think through the various issues that we need to be alerted to” (5/804/V). These themes are developed more fully in the following section. Figure 3 depicts challenges and strategies associated with the beginning stage of crisis.

Figure 3 Beginning Stage Leadership Challenges and Strategies


LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES
LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES
LEADING IN SPITE OF A LOSS OF CONTROL
COMING TO TERMS
OBTAINING INFORMATION
ASSESSING SCOPE & IMPACT
GUARANTEEING SAFETY
MOBILIZING FOR ACTION
LEADERSHIP PRESENCE
COPING WITH DEFICIENT, INADEQUATE, OR NON-EXISTENT TECHNICAL & HUMAN CRISIS RESPONSE MEASURES OR SYSTEMS
THE RIGHT STAFF
BREAKDOWN IN COMMUNICATIONS
EVALUATION OF LEADERSHIP DECISIONS OCCURRING ALMOST SIMULTANEOUSLY TO LEADERSHIP ACTIONS
ALTERING OPERATIONS AND RELATIONSHIPS
INTERPERSONAL & ORGANIZATIONAL DYNAMICS
ADJUSTING FOR LEGAL ISSUES
MANAGING TRANSITIONS WITHIN THE LIFE OF THE CRISIS
COMMUNICATING ABOUT THE CRISIS
INABILITY TO CONTROL COMMUNICATIONS
COMMUNICATING CRITICAL INFORMATION
INABILITY TO CONTROL MEDIA
COMMUNICATIONS WITH CONSTITUENCY GROUPS
DEALING WITH THE COMPLEXITIES OF MULTIPLE CONSTITUENCY GROUPS
DEALING WITH LONG TERM EFFECTS OF THE CRISIS
BEGINNING STAGE CRISIS LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES
LEAD SAFETY EFFORTS FIRST
ADDRESS NEEDS OF SPECIAL POPULATIONS
MAKE SAFETY THE LEADERSHIP PRIORITY
INITIATE RAPID ASSESSMENT METHODS
SUSPEND ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES & BUREAUCRACY
LEAD PLANNING AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT
ASSEMBLE THE RIGHT STAFF
GARNER NECESSARY RESOURCES
LEAD INTENTIONAL COMMUNICATIONS EFFORTS
CLARIFY ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES
LEAD INTENTIONAL COMMUNICATIONS
ACTIVATE RELIABLE COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEMS
CLARIFY THE LEADERSHIP INFRASTRUCTURE
ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY FOR CRISIS LEADERSHIP
MODIFY YOUR LEADERSHIP APPROACH AS NEEDED
FRAME THE CRISIS FOR OTHERS
PROVIDE EMOTIONAL SUPPORT
LEAD THE HEALING PROCESS
LEAD EFFORTS TO LEARN FROM THE CRISIS

The Beginning Stage: Leadership Challenges

Four meta-themes associated with leadership challenges were prominent in the beginning stage of crisis. These were (a) leading in spite of a loss of control, (b) coping with deficient, inadequate, or non-existent technical or human response systems, (c) communicating about the crisis, and (d) altering operations and relationships.

Leading in spite of a loss of control.

Coming to terms. Getting oneself personally oriented to deal with a crisis required leaders to first come to terms with information they had never expected to hear (10/305/V; 3/304/V). Leaders described not only expressions of fear, horror, and panic (4/304/V), but questioning whether the incident was even occurring (10/305/V). Regardless of the reaction to disturbing information, participants recognized that they had to come to terms with it in order to move on: “We were shocked. Oh my gosh! What do we do now?” (14/305/ND).

Obtaining valid, complete information. A starting place for coming to terms could be found in information. The first challenge to obtaining valid and complete information began with the chaotic means through which campus leaders learned of the crisis. The sudden onset of crisis deprived leaders of the control over information to which they were accustomed (1/304/V; 2/304/V; 3/304/V; 5/804/V; 9/804/V; 11/305/LL; 14/305/ND):

> And, in fact, most of the information that we started to receive was because parents started calling us in the Dean of Students office because they were seeing things on television, and soon they were seeing live things on television about it. (1/304/V)

Learning of the onset of the crisis was just the first example of how leaders would be reliant on others to obtain information in the beginning phase (5/804/V; 14/305/ND). Once leaders began to work through shock and disbelief toward a response, fact-finding proved to be difficult (8/804/V; 6/804/V). In most instances, external first responders were in control of the crisis and the information about it. Leaders could only wait to learn the details (4/304/V). “We weren’t even getting information out of the building for four hours or so” (7/804/V).

The inability to do systematic fact finding in an unexpected, rapidly evolving, volatile situation was complicated by conflicting and incomplete information (14/305/ND; 13/305/V). For some it concerned information about perpetrators. One school had several anxious minutes while speculating about whether or not a perpetrator was carrying a bomb: “And he had a knapsack. And so we didn’t know quite what was in that” (5/804/V). For others it was confusion between first responders and victims (5/804/V).

> They could hear the police coming into the building—tearing down doors, shooting shotguns to blow out locks. So they could hear gun shots. So there was a real stress level on the inside. People were afraid to get out of there because they might run out into a shooter. They didn’t know the shooter was dead. (7/804/V)

Confusion resulting from conflicting information was the most commonly discussed theme by study participants as related to the beginning stage. This theme was addressed in 11 of 14 interviews. Lack of or conflicting information impeded leaders’ ability to respond: “We knew we had dozens of people whisked off in ambulances to multiple hospitals. We didn’t know which hospitals. So we had many distressed people" (11/305/LL). In addition to responding to victims, most leaders were being looked to as a source of information for those who had a need to know: "The main goal, and I'm looking at it from the student affairs office angle because the phones didn't stop ringing, and that was mainly getting out information to parents, to the public who called, and to the media" (2/304/V). The most anguishing wait for information concerned loss of life: "We didn't learn that we had fatalities until, probably, I'd say about 7:00 a.m. when the fire department had finally gotten up on to the floor" (11/305/LL).

Regardless of the type of information or the means by which leaders received it, one thing was clear: accurate information was essential for leaders and a lack of it was the most pressing challenge in the early stages of a crisis: "There wasn't enough information we could get. There wasn't enough clarification of the volume of the information we needed to put our arms around. Things were really out of control in the first few hours" (11/305/LL).

Assessing scope and impact. Getting accurate information quickly was the essential ingredient to all other leadership tasks, the first of which was assessing the scope and impact of the crisis. Leaders sought to determine the magnitude of the event (was this a major or minor event?), identify who was affected, understand the implications of the crisis, and begin to formulate the nature and scale of response that would be required (11/305/LL; 14/305/ND).

For some, the assessment began by taking stock of the damage to the physical plant. One leader recalled her first report on damage resulting from a hurricane:

> I remember the phone call that came in from our top facilities officer who remained on campus—the Director of Facilities. And he called and he said that

> it's really bad. He said that we're going to be closed for weeks. I said how much damage? He said just add a lot of zeroes. I said are you kidding? (14/305/ND)

This leader was keenly aware that the face of their campus was forever changed and reminders of the disaster would be with them daily: "We had a lot of trees on campus. Pretty good canopy on campus. Not any more" (14/305/ND).

For others, the assessment focused on injuries and the loss of life: "and obviously, once we knew we had fatalities, the world as we knew it was a very different place" (11/305/LL). At one school, the confirmation of fatalities resulting from a fire in a residence hall signaled campus leaders that the situation was going to be more horrible than they could imagine: "At this point, the scope of the situation was apparent that this was a major event, not a small little fire in a garbage room" (11/305/LL). Assessing the situation for these leaders became even more horrific: "We really didn't know who was alive, who wasn't, where they were, who was in the hospital. Which hospital? Things that you would expect that you should know" (11/305/LL). Campus leaders at this school had one more disturbing element to deal with: "It was even more complicated because we had no idea who some of the victims were because of the condition they were in" (11/305/LL).

Guaranteeing safety. "But your first priority is safety. That's all I thought about at that particular point" (8/804/V). Certainly the first concern for a campus leader during crisis is the safety of students and staff. Study participants identified four challenges related to safety in the beginning stages of the crisis: (a) facilitating safe and effective evacuations from dangerous areas (2/304/V; 10/305/V), (b) addressing the safety needs of special student populations, (c) accommodating displaced individuals, and (d) negotiating a difficult physical environment (14/305/ND). As one participant stated, the goal of leadership at this stage is “getting people in a safe environment physically, emotionally, and psychologically” (8/804/V). Another stated that safety concerns drove the immediate agenda for campus leaders: “You know, it was clear that as an executive team, we needed to make some decisions pretty quickly. We needed to secure the campus” (11/305/LL).

For a school in the vicinity of the World Trade Center during the September 11, 2001, attack in New York City, an improper evacuation could have put students and staff in danger:

> People that were in the building that was closer sort of knew what was going on. They had to get the hell out. But for many others that were in other areas, they didn’t know. It was crucial to tell people to exit going north because if people went south, they would be going right into the ground zero area. And unfortunately, it was the crisis of the moment because the buildings were falling apart. It’s not something you expect people to do in a very calm way—to try to exit. A lot of people just made a mad dash to get the heck out. (10/305/V)

At one school the issue was not evacuating people off campus, but warning staff away from a dangerous situation. In the process of doing so, they became aware of their shortcomings in their crisis response plan:

> So we started calling—we had a call tree—we started calling. The problem was that not many people had gotten here yet. So the tree was broken. Call trees are based on the fact that everybody is present. And this happened right as people were coming to work. Many people weren’t, so we were trying to get the word out initially for everybody to get out. (7/804/V)

While preparing to evacuate the campus prior to a hurricane, one campus realized that their crisis response plan did not take into account one special student population who had no place to go:

> Another dilemma was some students who are the international population who had no where to go and there was not a plan that was ever thought through for the international students and the international program side. Well, if we have international students on campus where might they go since we live in an area of the country where there is a possibility that there will be a hurricane? And that was very difficult. Another dilemma was that members of the team couldn’t speak a different language. And we didn’t have some of the international staff in the shelter. We had so many of the international student population—about 210 students—who were in the shelter. (12/305/ND)

Another school realized that unless they were able to immediately accommodate several students displaced by a residence hall fire, their next safety concern would be hypothermia.

> It was so dark. It was bitterly cold. There were people running everywhere at the building that was affected that accommodates 700 students. So we need to, you know, get another building open for people to go into because people were, you know, as one might imagine, in various stages of dress in the bitter cold. (11/305/LL)

Mobilizing for action. Campus leaders faced human, logistical, and informational challenges as they mobilized for action (11/305/LL; 8/804/V). For many, it began with fundamentals: “So it was pretty chaotic and the dilemmas were multiple. The dilemma is how do you find out what you need to know? How do you even begin to put your arms around the multitude of issues that you need to deal with?" (11/305/LL). The basic issues of getting a handle on what has happened, determining what needs to be done and who is going to do it was complicated for most:

> So I think initially the dilemmas were really, ready to begin. You know, what do you do first? How do you get the resources that you need orchestrated? Where do you even start the to-do list? The to-do list is all over the place. (11/305/LL)

Another leader recalled similar difficulty: "We were all involved in this sort of alarm phase and then I remember that we were trying to figure out how to respond to both the students and the faculty" (5/804/V). One school realized that their crisis response plan was out-of-date, and, at another campus, leaders were faced with overwhelming dilemmas: "And the question is, once the towers started falling what to do?" (10/305/V).

But for another school the leadership dilemma was one that called into question the institution's authority, role, and relationships with community, students, and families. When a student went missing, campus leaders were asking the question, "who owns this crisis?" They began by considering the facts of the case—she was an off-campus student and over 21 years old. In addition, the missing person's case automatically triggered the involvement of law enforcement agencies that clearly took command of the investigation and subsequent searches. But the answer to the question of whether the institution owned the crisis was clear for one campus leader:

> Making a determination about some people saying it's not a campus case. Yeah, but she's our student. No matter where it is. Hugely impactful. And yes she is 21. But until you know, it's your student and you respond. So doing the right thing for the right reason. (13/305/V)

The issue of who owns the crisis, particularly in the initial phases, was reported by several participants as a sorting out of roles and relationships between the university and external agencies (8/804/V). But for one President, it was clear who was in charge: "There has to be a clear recognition of a command structure and in crisis, the police are in charge, not the President" (9/804/V).

Managing people became a significant challenge amidst the confusion of the early stages of the crisis. Ascertaining where people were ("We had 700 students scattered at 4:30 in the morning with not a clue where they all went" (11/305/LL)), rounding up staff, connecting roommates, and directing affected students and staff were the goals of leaders dealing with a residence hall fire:

> So some of it was just getting people to a place that was warm and directing them there and getting them some clothing and blankets because people were really out there in their skivvies trying to ascertain who was where. (11/305/LL)

This administrator was struck by the need to focus on students when witnessing what they were doing to cope:

> There were some people who took some pieces of cloth off the tables and that allowed me to focus more on what were really student issues, which there was not a shortage of those to be sure. We had students with no clothes. We had no clothes. (11/305/LL)

For a school dealing with a hurricane, managing people meant helping students understand what was happening so they could make good decisions and cooperate:

> The storm hit and we had students who wanted to leave immediately. They didn't understand that they were in a shelter. Didn't understand the ramifications. And we had students from the outside who knew that we had some of the

> creature comforts and amenities and needs being met. They were making their way to campus however possible. So we had several meetings with our emergency ops team that we really said "How are we first going to make it to campus? What are we going to do with the shelter? What are we going to do to prevent people from coming back on campus?" (12/305/ND)

A related issue to maintaining control had to do with continuing to deliver essential programs and services in spite of the disruption of the crisis, even in the early phases. This was particularly true when the crisis was limited in scope. "I think some of the stuff continues. I think the dilemma of maintaining the delivery of the essentials that we need to deal with" (11/305/LL).

Locating leadership presence. Amidst the chaos of the beginning stages of the crisis, campus leaders were faced with a practical challenge that had symbolic significance—the physical location of leaders:

> Other dilemmas for us, certainly for me especially, was where was the best place for me to be? Knowing exactly which of those things I needed to put my energy and time into. That was tough. How do you decide? I don't know. You just do whatever you do. (11/305/LL)

This issue reveals the awareness leaders had of the messages communicated by their physical presence. Leaders dealing with a missing student were intentional about their placement:

> Two locations. Because one instance is where she lived—her apartment — where her friends and another former sorority member wanted a presence. So the leadership issue is when people are troubled you are physically and emotionally present. (13/305/V)

But in situations where the crisis involved danger, the decision as to where leaders should be became more complex. Both the President and Vice President for Student Affairs chose to be at the residence hall with police while a hostage situation was unfolding—a controversial decision and one the President was never completely certain was right:

> Now, the police were there, and people from the dormitory had called the police and we understood there was a hostage, actually that there were a number of hostages, and somebody was armed. So at that point, I thought I better get over there, not knowing what I could do when I got there but at least I would be there. So I went over at that point. (3/304/V)

While bracing for a hurricane, other leaders weighed their own safety against their sense of responsibility: “And the Vice President left town and I felt I needed to be close to town because I had to be back on campus. So that was one issue. I stayed in the area” (14/305/ND). After the hurricane subsided, these same individuals found themselves asking, “Where are all of our leaders?” (14/305/ND) and began the task of not only assessing the damage done to campus but taking inventory of the physical location of campus leaders.

Coping with deficient, inadequate, or non-existent technical and human crisis response systems.

Assembling the right staff. In the beginning phase, campus leaders focused on mobilizing appropriate staff and orienting them to the crisis. This proved to be difficult for crises for which there was no warning, or scattered staff (4/304/V; 11/305/LL). Another issue had to do with staff who were concerned for their own safety. While professionals in the emergency response field may be clear about their charge in such situations, university staff are not. On one campus, leaders found themselves dealing with young residential life staff caught between fulfilling their professional obligations and securing their own safety:

> What we ran into prior to closing with our staff was so many problems with just wanting to leave and really fighting with our Associate Director because our staff wanted to leave so much and didn't want to do their work. Didn't realize what Residence Life was all about. (12/305/ND)

The importance of having staff on the scene that could comprehend their role and possessed the personal maturity and qualities to deal with the crisis became increasingly important for many leaders: "One of the clear dilemmas was acknowledging that it wasn't about having hands to do things, it was also a matter of experienced hands to do things" (11/305/LL). Having the right staff in the right role proved to be difficult: "And I had maintenance staff who weren't prepared, that hadn't been trained to take over the role of the residence life staff. But they were willing to stay. So it was really chaotic" (12/305/ND).

Skills were not the only staff issue leaders were concerned with. One leader was concerned about the psychological health of the staff:

> How do you maintain control and composure? It's not easy to see your burned students being carted off. So dealing with staff that really were unable to respond. Because some of my staff were putting students out who were burning in front of them with fire extinguishers. (11/305/LL)

Caring for staff and being sensitive to their stress while still depending on them to perform duties was a significant dilemma for some:

> In the first phases of all of this another dilemma was knowing that the staff needed rest; needed to weep, just to weep. And I didn't need them weeping. I needed them working. So you know, the dilemma of trying to be compassionate for them and yet at the same time recognizing "come out of it!" How do you balance that in a way you mean? (11/305/LL)

Dealing with a breakdown in technical communications systems. It was not uncommon for school telephone lines to be overwhelmed by the sheer volume of calls (7/804/V). Campus leaders at one school realized they did not have the technology needed:

> So that was a problem. If we would have had a PA system, then we could make an announcement to tell people, you know, please exit north. So we really had to rely on safety to get people out. Just know in general, as the fire fighters were coming, what was going on. (10/305/V)

Altering operations and relationships.

Interpersonal and organizational dynamics among leaders. Two challenges reported concerned dynamics among campus administrators during the early stages of the crisis. One concerned dynamics between campus leaders and the school's governing Board (14/305/ND). While left primarily to the President, other administrators were essential in providing information necessary for the Board to make decisions. This was especially true where the physical plant had been significantly impacted:

> I can tell you one of the dilemmas I had was there was some conversation with the Board that we could figure out a way to let the students stay. In my mind there was never that possibility because the residence halls took such a beating. (12/305/ND)

This comment speaks to the dynamic of front line staff with a more intimate knowledge of the crisis bringing information forward to influence decision making. Dynamics with the governing board for another school involved explanations, justifications and persuasion:

> The other issue was in terms of working with our central office, because we're part of the City University of the New York system and we had to continuously work with them in terms of explaining to them how we saw ourselves getting back in, because most of the people didn't think we were going to get back in. (10/305/V)

The second area of dynamics among campus administrators had to do with determining who was in charge (12/305/ND) and sorting out roles and functions:

> And also for us, we needed to, even on the executive team, we kind of knew we were in charge of the team. But at the same time, which of us has different strengths and weaknesses, and what are the dynamics of the executive team also kind of get played out. (11/305/LL)

Adjusting for legal issues. While legal issues most often did not present themselves until the aftermath of the crisis, in the case of a missing student, campus administrators were faced with an immediate and urgent legal issue. This involved requests from law enforcement for access to computer information regarding the missing student, a challenge to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) governing student privacy (13/305/V).

Communicating about the crisis.

Communicating critical information. Communications were a significant challenge in the early stages of crisis. As one leader said, “We were never in control of communications in the alarm phase. Never. We really weren't" (5/804/V). Communicating critical information was connected to the immediate need to restore safety to the campus and involved coordinated efforts between university officials and emergency response teams. "And the police said, 'no, we just want them to lock the doors. Lock down.' So we tried to get that word to them and eventually people were calling and asking when they could come out" (7/804/V).

Inability to control communications. Others were acutely aware that communication about the crisis was out of their hands and moving faster than they could control:

> Well, in this instance, students teach us a lot of stuff. They've already taken care of some of that by calling the family, by calling the police. And our own crisis team was really responding to issues that the father, mother and students wanted handled. (13/305/V)

Communicating with constituency groups. Communication was essential for connecting with constituency groups and conducting the initial assessments of the scope and impact of the crisis:

> The real difficult thing for me and [name deleted] was the understanding that we had gathered most of the students but not all, and we knew there were some being gathered on the street and we couldn't get word to them to come to where we were. . . . And all the family members of the [college name deleted] faculty wanted to know who died because they heard on the news that someone had died, and they didn't know if it was their spouse or family member. (7/804/V)

This issue took on even greater dimensions for campus leaders at another school who became acutely aware of their role in providing communication systems when a hurricane hit the community:

> And we have a radio station on campus—ended up being the last radio station on the air in the community and first back on live. So, what is your role in the community, not just your role in your little campus community. Particularly important for a college that is part of a smaller community. (14/305/ND)

Being hampered by inadequate communication proved frustrating for leaders who are used to taking action rather than being rendered helpless: “You know, we have this instance of awareness and communicating what happened and that actually took hours” (9/804/V).

Inability to control the media. The media created several dilemmas in the early stages of the crisis. The first dilemma pitted campus leaders against media in a struggle to protect students and parents.

> The dilemma also is how do we keep our students safe from the onslaught of, I mean, I don't know what your experience is with the media, but I'll tell you , I've always been uncomfortable with them as somebody watching the news. Somebody just lost their daughter and you want to ask them how they feel about it? Their callousness was just overwhelming. (11/305/LL)

Intense media coverage also thwarted the attempts of campus leaders to control how and what was communicated to the public.:

> But I'll have to tell you that in every aspect of the alarm phase we were preempted. We meaning the institution by the outside media. And some of that happened because the students, who were actually in the situation at the time of the shooting, were using their cell phones to call, you know, loved ones and so the story got out way ahead of anything we communicated. (5/804/V)

Recognizing the significance of how and what is communicated about the crisis posed an even greater dilemma for those responsible for making formal statements to the media in the early stage.

Table 3 summarizes the leadership challenges in the beginning stage of crisis by the number of participants addressing the theme and the crisis type.

Table 3

Beginning Stage: Challenges by Number of Participants Reporting and Typology Classification

Challenges	No. participants addressing theme N = 14	Typology categories addressed by theme		
		Victim	Natural disaster	Legal liability
Leading in spite of loss of control				
Coming to terms	6	X	X	X
Obtaining information	12	X	X	X
Assessing scope & impact	3	X	X	X
Guaranteeing safety	5	X	X	X
Mobilizing for action	7	X	X	X
Leadership presence	5	X	X	X
Coping with deficient response systems				
Assembling the right staff	3	X	X	X
Dealing with breakdown in communications	2	X		
Altering operations & relationships				
Interpersonal & organizational dynamics	2		X	X
Adjusting for legal issues	2	X		
Communicating about the crisis	9	X	X	
Communicating critical information	2	X		
Inability to control communications	3	X	X	X
Communicating with constituency groups				
Inability to control media	3			X

The Beginning Stage: Leadership Strategies

Six meta-themes associated with leadership strategies were prominent in the beginning stage of crisis. These were (a) leading planning and policy development, (b) making safety the leadership priority, (c) clarifying the leadership infrastructure, (d) leading intentional communications efforts, (e) leading the healing process, and (f) garnering necessary resources.

Leading planning and policy development.

Initiating rapid assessment methods. A variety of strategies were employed to assess the crisis in the beginning stage, some of which focused on fact-finding (8/804/V), and others on understanding scope and impact (11/305/LL). Three schools identified using a central meeting place where staff and students could gather. This allowed them to identify who was missing, gather facts, and communicate essential information (9/804/V; 5/804/V; 7/804/V). One school began by identifying pockets of people about whom they were concerned: “For us, it was the initial assessment phase. How are our people? How are our neighbors? How are the students in the shelter?” (14/305/ND). Another utilized a similar strategy by identifying concentric circles: “What needs to be done right now for those people who were directly effected? Peripherally effected? Indirectly affected?” (2/304/V).

Suspending academic activities and bureaucracy. It was apparent for leaders at several of the participating schools that suspending academic activities and bureaucracy allowed students and staff to emotionally regroup. It also provided relief from an already tense situation, and allowed students to reconnect with parents. Specific strategies included canceling classes, delaying the start of a semester, extending academic due dates, and postponing regularly scheduled events (4/304/V; 3/304/V; 2/304/V): “We didn’t want things like well, we’re missing drop/add deadline or the deadline to pay fees. Those kinds of things. We didn’t want those pressures which exist already” (4/304/V).

Making safety the leadership priority.

Leading safety efforts first. For three schools, conducting safe evacuations was the first of their safety efforts. One school made getting students out of the path of an impending hurricane a priority in light of the fact that airports were closed, and roads were clogged with traffic in an area with only one way in and one way out (14/305/ND). Another incorporated specific instructions about how and where to exit the campus in their announcements to evacuate. Another cleared neighboring residence halls and the area surrounding a dormitory where the swat team was negotiating a hostage situation (2/304/V).

The campus dealing with the devastation of a hurricane made a policy decision not to allow people on campus in the aftermath, both to limit the number of people in the campus shelter and to prevent possible complications from people trying to negotiate the chaotic physical environment (14/305/ND; 12/305/ND). Leaders dealing with a fire established an alternative facility to house displaced students (11/305/LL).

The campus dealing with a serial killer addressed the safety issue by educating students to take responsibility. Their goal was “not to keep the students at a very high level of fear but really help them think about strategies they could employ in their own personal lives” (4/304/V). Strategies utilized in this case included encouraging single women to temporarily move in together, use of buddy systems, encouraging connecting with parents or guardians to re-establish a level of comfort (particularly when determining whether or not they wanted to return to the school), handing out whistles, keeping all lights on campus on, setting up bunk beds in residence hall lounges for off campus students who were panicked (4/304/V).

Addressing safety needs of special populations. A school dealing with a natural disaster that required evacuation not just from the campus, but the extended region, held meetings with groups of international students to problem solve issues related to their evacuation (14/305/ND; 12/305/ND).

Clarifying the leadership infrastructure.

Clarifying roles and responsibilities. Participants identified several strategies related to internal and external players designed to clarify the leadership infrastructure. Those dealing with first response personnel or expanded law enforcement officials established a clear chain of command that allowed emergency personnel to do what was needed by deferring to them (8/804/V; 9/804/V). This involved establishing strong relationships with key external groups. One campus initiated meetings with emergency operations personnel. A corollary strategy to deferring to emergency personnel was defining the institution's role and function while others were in charge (13/305/V). Clarification of the leadership infrastructure also involved working the institutional governing board to provide information necessary for them to make appropriate decisions (10/305/V; 12/305/ND; 14/305/ND). On one campus the question of who was in charge was an agenda item on the executive team's meeting agenda: "The team discussed during the presentation, literally, who's in charge and to follow that leader. Really determine where the leadership was" (12/305/ND).

Leading intentional communications efforts.

Activating reliable communications systems. Strategies to activate reliable communication systems ranged from logistical strategies in the event that current systems would be not be operational to communicating with constituency groups.

In anticipation of an impending hurricane, one school included communications in their preplanning: “The lines of communication. How would the communication happen and when?” (12/305/ND). This same school planned for alternative means of communicating, such as the use of radios in anticipation of phone lines being knocked out (14/305/ND). One school felt the best and most reliable method of communication was to bring everyone together in one location (5/804/V): “But it’s really critical to get everybody together so the police and the students and all the relevant players including people who understand your physical facilities because there can be issues related to communications or power or whatever that are germane” (9/804/V).

A campus gripped in fear while a serial killer was on the loose implemented multiple communications strategies that began with a daily briefing for the executive leadership team. This campus also developed a one-page sheet containing information about services available to students (such as counseling services) which were faxed to sites for distribution. This strategy was coupled with identifying critical areas where specific types of work was being done:

> Then one of the secretaries would sit and program in all the numbers of the fax machines and then send out all these faxes to the pertinent offices as well as off campus sites, crisis hotline centers, and various locations where all the work was being kind of teamed with different efforts. So that was really the way we were able to communicate out. (4/304/V)

This same campus initiated a strategy for handling rumors, which was to refer all rumors to a county crisis hotline (4/304/V).

Establishing communications protocols included deploying alternative technical systems such as radios (14/305/ND), establishing a means of relaying information from a crisis scene to the general public (2/304/V), and determining how and when communication would happen (12/305/ND). Two schools identified different institutional entities to communicate with different constituency groups. Public relations personnel were assigned to getting information out to the media and other external groups. The responsibility of communicating with parents was delegated to student affairs personnel (3/304/V; 2/304/V).

Leading the healing process.

Providing emotional support. A stock means of supporting those in need was providing counseling (1/304/V; 2/304/V; 5/804/V; 6/804/V; 14/305/ND; 13/305/V; 7/804/V). Activating on-campus support personnel was reported as the primary and initial response to formalizing the healing process:

> Immediately the counseling staff went to work. I mean, they worked around the clock for a long period of time—several days—making sure that if students needed to talk about the situation, who were suffering from any shock or emotional trauma, had the help and assistance. (2/304/V)

One campus provided support by preventing traumatized students from becoming isolated:

> And we try to corral these youngsters. We did not want them to go off to their separate residence halls and crouch in fear. So we gather them in the alumni building . . . to try to at least keep them bonded together. (9/804/V)

Leaders on this campus provided support for faculty by providing open forums for discussion. This not only was a means of relieving stress, but became an important method of containing negative reactions to the crisis: “The stress levels were so high.

To be able to create a forum where you can have that kind of expression. Not to let it rule the day and not let it get out of control was important" (7/804/V).

Garnering necessary resources.

Assembling the right staff. Several strategies for assembling the right staff were reported. First was identifying key players and getting them in crisis response mode (4/304/V; 11/305/LL). Another was reassigning staff as needed. (As previously stated, one campus used maintenance staff to replace residence life staff (12/305/ND)). Contacting colleagues at other universities to arrange for human resources was another strategy (4/304/V; 11/305/LL). The preplanning phase for those dealing with a hurricane allowed leaders to identify which staff were essential and had to be on the job and which could be released to tend to their homes and family (13/305/ND). Another strategy related to assembling the right staff was intentional conversations and decisions to place senior leadership at strategic locations (2/304/V; 11/305/LL).

Table 4 summarizes the strategies utilized by campus leaders in the beginning stage of the crisis the number of participants addressing the theme and the crisis type..

Table 4
Beginning Stage: Strategies by Number of Participants Reporting and Typology Classification

Strategies	No. participants addressing theme N = 14	Typology categories Addressed by theme		
		Victim	Natural disaster	Legal liability
Leading planning & policy development				
Initiating rapid assessment methods	4	X	X	X
Suspending academic activities & bureaucracy	3	X		
Making safety the priority				
Leading safety efforts first	5	X	X	X
Addressing safety needs of special populations	2		X	
Clarifying leadership infrastructure				
Clarifying roles & responsibilities	8	X	X	X
Leading intentional communications				
Activating reliable communications system	8	X	X	
Leading the healing process				
Providing emotional support	8	X	X	
Garnering resources				
Assembling the right staff	1			X

The Middle Stage: Characteristics

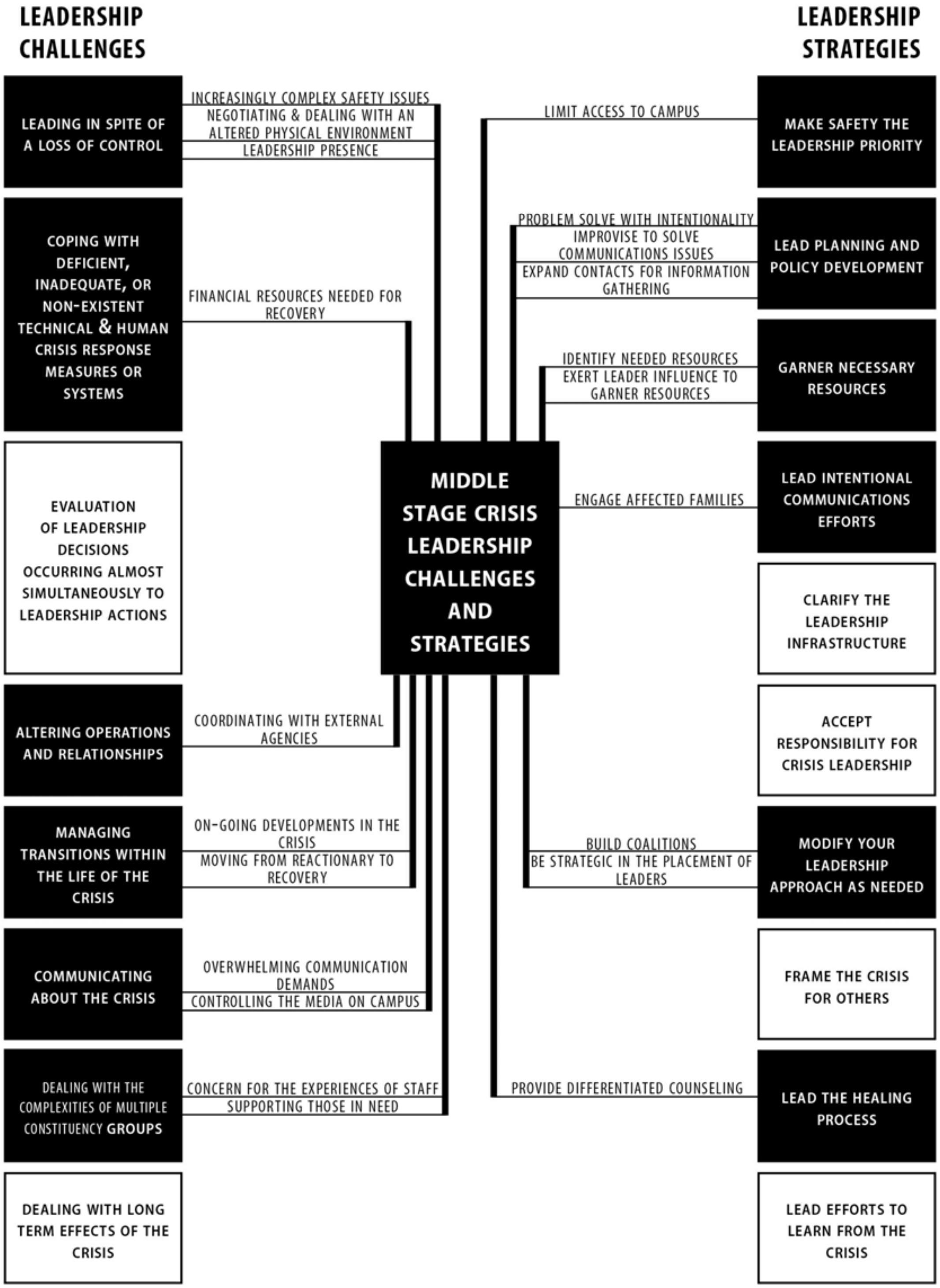
While the length and characteristics of the beginning stage varied with the nature of the crisis, participants were able to identify signals that indicated that the crisis was moving to a new phase. For some, it was the moment campus leadership became visible: “By that point, the president of the university and the vice president for student affairs started taking control” (2/304/V). For others, it was the collective acknowledgement that it was time to move forward: “But then it was, you know, we really needed to start to plan the business of moving forward from where we were to regaining some control of the campus and the environment” (11/305/LL).

Whatever the subtle or overt signals manifested to indicate movement away from the chaos of the beginning stage of the crisis, the second or middle stage introduced yet another set of challenges for campus leaders. If the initial stage was characterized by shock and disbelief, the middle stage confronted leaders with the undeniable truth about what had happened and propelled them into action.

The shift to action involved an array of areas to which campus leaders had to tend. For campuses in which the crisis involved cessation of classes campus wide, this stage focused on not only the resumption of the academic calendar, but tending to the emotional, financial, policy, and logistical efforts to make that happen. It also meant dealing with emerging issues resulting from the crisis. The implication of this is that while the chaotic period may have been over, the crisis was not. This shift to thinking about the organization in total while still caring for individuals affected by the crisis was a hallmark of this stage. In this section we will explore the specific leadership challenges related to these characteristics.

Figure 4 depicts the leadership challenges and strategies utilized by campus leaders in the middle stage of the crisis.

Figure 4 Middle Stage Leadership Challenges and Strategies


LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES
LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES
LEADING IN SPITE OF A LOSS OF CONTROL
INCREASINGLY COMPLEX SAFETY ISSUES
NEGOTIATING & DEALING WITH AN ALTERED PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT
LEADERSHIP PRESENCE
LIMIT ACCESS TO CAMPUS
MAKE SAFETY THE LEADERSHIP PRIORITY
COPING WITH DEFICIENT, INADEQUATE, OR NON-EXISTENT TECHNICAL & HUMAN CRISIS RESPONSE MEASURES OR SYSTEMS
FINANCIAL RESOURCES NEEDED FOR RECOVERY
PROBLEM SOLVE WITH INTENTIONALITY
IMPROVISE TO SOLVE COMMUNICATIONS ISSUES
EXPAND CONTACTS FOR INFORMATION GATHERING
LEAD PLANNING AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT
IDENTIFY NEEDED RESOURCES
EXERT LEADER INFLUENCE TO GARNER RESOURCES
GARNER NECESSARY RESOURCES
EVALUATION OF LEADERSHIP DECISIONS OCCURRING ALMOST SIMULTANEOUSLY TO LEADERSHIP ACTIONS
MIDDLE STAGE CRISIS LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES
ENGAGE AFFECTED FAMILIES
LEAD INTENTIONAL COMMUNICATIONS EFFORTS
CLARIFY THE LEADERSHIP INFRASTRUCTURE
ALTERING OPERATIONS AND RELATIONSHIPS
COORDINATING WITH EXTERNAL AGENCIES
ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY FOR CRISIS LEADERSHIP
MANAGING TRANSITIONS WITHIN THE LIFE OF THE CRISIS
ON-GOING DEVELOPMENTS IN THE CRISIS
MOVING FROM REACTIONARY TO RECOVERY
BUILD COALITIONS
BE STRATEGIC IN THE PLACEMENT OF LEADERS
MODIFY YOUR LEADERSHIP APPROACH AS NEEDED
COMMUNICATING ABOUT THE CRISIS
OVERWHELMING COMMUNICATION DEMANDS
CONTROLLING THE MEDIA ON CAMPUS
FRAME THE CRISIS FOR OTHERS
DEALING WITH THE COMPLEXITIES OF MULTIPLE CONSTITUENCY GROUPS
CONCERN FOR THE EXPERIENCES OF STAFF
SUPPORTING THOSE IN NEED
PROVIDE DIFFERENTIATED COUNSELING
LEAD THE HEALING PROCESS
DEALING WITH LONG TERM EFFECTS OF THE CRISIS
LEAD EFFORTS TO LEARN FROM THE CRISIS

The Middle Stage: Leadership Challenges

Six meta-themes associated with leadership challenges were prominent in the middle stage of the crisis. These were (a) leading in spite of a loss of control, (b) coping with deficient, inadequate, or non-existent technical and human response systems, (c) communicating about the crisis, (d) dealing with the complexities of multiple constituency groups, (e) altering operations and relationships, and (f) managing transitions within the life of the crisis.

Leading in spite of a loss of control.

Increasingly complex safety issues. While safety was an immediate concern in the beginning phase, it took on additional dimensions in the middle stage. Safety concerns had to be balanced against wanting to please and care for students:

> What I had observed, I think, was this is what we can do for the students because we want to be able to care for them, but, yet, there also comes a time when we have got to make this university safe again. (12/305/ND)

Safety was also connected to the ability to move to the next stage in the development of the crisis. One participant described the middle phase as the "struggle to restore normal safety and transition to healing" (11/305/LL).

Negotiating and dealing with an altered physical environment. Leaders identified several challenges related to negotiating and reclaiming a physical environment that had been significantly altered by the crisis.

When students and staff had to negotiate a physical environment that had been dangerously altered by the crisis event, safety issues escalated:

> We had to get them [the students] out of the area. These were the folks that had to travel. Pensacola Airport was closed. To get to Tallahassee it was at least a

> six-hour trip—should have been three. There was one way in and one way out of Pensacola. (14/305/ND)

The inability to negotiate the physical environment also impeded campus leaders' ability to respond. After a hurricane, staff at one school were trapped in their homes:

> It was several hours before we could even leave our home. When the storm was about—really, couldn't travel that mid-afternoon on Wednesday to about mid-afternoon on Thursday. Post-storm you've got to check the stability of the bridges. As you know the [highway] 10 bridge was destroyed. So the roads were impassable. Campus drives were impassable. Parking lots were impassable. (14/305/ND)

Two schools—one coping with the devastation resulting from a massive hurricane, and, the other, falling debris from the attack on the World Trade Center in New York City—faced such extensive damage that the first challenge was confronting a frightening possibility: "There was a question in terms of not when we were going to get back in but whether or not we were going to get back in" (10/305/V).

Additional challenges unfolded once the decision to reopen was made. Some prevented students and staff from returning to campus. These included negotiating roads that were not only dangerous but imposed a horrific commute on staff (14/305/ND; 12/305/ND). In New York City, the damage extended beyond the campus, crippling student access to the school.

> When Ground Zero occurred, it literally destroyed all of the normal ways the students came back to college. Shut down the train systems and the normal

> train stops that the students would take were shut off from them. So they had to find an alternative route to come to college. So that was crucial, too. (10/305/V)

Closed train stations were not the only barrier: “Unfortunately, the World Trade Center was a landmark the students used. ‘Walk toward the World Trade Center and turn whatever.’ So that was critical for us. Because it was a mark of proximity” (10/305/V).

Acquiring facilities to replace those lost to the crisis was another challenge. One school lost 30 classrooms, and another had to utilize off campus locations to house 700 students displaced by a residence hall fire (10/305/V; 11/305/LL). Making temporary facilities comfortable was yet another challenge (10/305/V), as was determining a timeline for the massive amount of repairs that had to be completed:

> The preservation of facilities housing research materials was an urgent need. The other piece that was interesting, particularly from an academic stand point, that we didn’t think about is that we have laboratories and some of our labs had lab animals in them and research. We had student research in refrigerators from microbiology and those kinds of things that if the generators didn’t work in those buildings, they would lose years of work. (14/305/ND)

For another school there was some space that could not be reclaimed. Having lost programming space for students, leaders realized the limitation it placed on students’ interaction with the environment:

> We took away student space. They didn’t have space. When we did the classrooms, we didn’t have space for activities because everything they have ever done was in the lobby second floor area and we put classrooms there. Now, if you have classrooms in there, they can never make noise, and students

> will have, they do not have noise so there’s no fun happening. So they had to live with that until about last semester. (10/505/V)

A final challenge for those dealing with massive destruction was dealing with the psychological impact of living with an altered environment. Feeling helpless (14/305/ND) and longing for a return to normalcy characterized the emotional side of the physical environment:

> You wanted your community, you wanted your campus to look normal again. And we still struggle with that. You drive down the road and the McDonalds signs are blown out. And I question how come our national companies are not making that a priority? I don’t know the answer. One of these days I’m going to ask. Because it was Taco Bell, McDonalds, and it looks run down. (14/305/ND)

Leadership presence. The question of where campus leaders should physically be continued to be a dilemma for leaders dealing with crises involving loss of life or multiple people hospitalized (3/304/V):

> Knowing where it made the most sense for me as the Vice President to be. Was it with the families of the deceased? Was it at the hospital visiting the people who were in there for extended times? For a while we had some students we weren’t sure were going to make it. Did it make more sense for me to be with staff who were in the hospital? To me it was how do I be every place I think I need to be and do I do all those things I need to do and deciding which one at which point. (11/305/LL)

Coping with deficient, inadequate, or non-existent technical and human response systems.

Financial resources needed for recovery. A school dealing with the fallout resulting from a hurricane also faced massive financial issues. First was the collapse of the financial infrastructure:

> Financial services—that group would meet. What were the financial impacts? Payroll. We were closed during payroll. The majority of our folks have electronic payroll. Wait a minute. Are banks accepting EFTs? Particularly the local banks that have no power? And, if your bank is down that means your mortgage probably can't get taken out. What about the folks that have to physically pick up a paycheck? We set up a satellite place for them to do that. . . . Other financial issues. Procurement. How do we procure services when credit cards won't work in the community? (14/305/ND)

Leaders there had to render a policy decision on a second financial challenge which was the question of whether refunds would be granted to students who wanted to withdraw. Ultimately the decision was made that refunds would not be granted for a school closure due to an act of nature (14/305/ND).

The third and fourth financial challenges had to do with repairs to the physical infrastructure. Faced with unimaginable repair costs, financial leadership became critical as leaders recognized the future implications of failure in this area:

> Right now we have not had any changes in our budget. But if we don't get the reimbursement we have requested to the state—4.9 million dollars—a gap, meaning that it's probably not reimbursable. It's lost tuition that's not reimbursable. It's repayments of financial aide or whatever those aspects of that 4.9 million, so if we can't get that, we have to pay for it. Those are the sort of dilemmas now. It's the financing. (14/305/ND)

Communicating about the crisis.

Overwhelming communications demands in an altered environment. Two communications dilemmas presented themselves in the middle stage. The first was simply responding to the barrage of people who needed information. This included students, faculty, parents, and the media (11/305/LL; 1/304/V). This was complicated for schools in which faculty, staff, and students had scattered or were away from the institution for an extended period (10/305/V; 14/305/ND).

The second communications dilemma concerned the logistics of communicating in an environment that was significantly altered by the crisis. No place was this more dramatic than in New York City after the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center:

> We looked at where we were located. In Manhattan, in general, people are used to 1st, 2nd, 3rd, or 4th Avenues, or they're used to 42nd, 43rd, 45th or whatever Streets. But where we're located, we didn't have that. We had names. So the students were totally lost. (10/305/V)

Controlling media on campus*.* Media presence was a constant for most major campus crises. In the middle stage of crisis development, many campus leaders found themselves trying to manage free-roaming media personnel "sticking microphones in students' faces" (4/304/V).

Dealing with the complexities of multiple constituency groups.

Supporting those in need*.* Assessing the physical and financial impacts of the crisis was not the only concern of campus leaders. They also had to assess the psychological and emotional needs of students and staff. The scope of assistance included people who were directly, peripherally and indirectly affected (2/304/V). This included working with the family members of students and staff who had been traumatized, injured or killed. (At the school dealing with a shooter, this included the estranged wife and two children of the killer).

Providing support was complicated by differing degrees of impact. One leader found it necessary to administer support based on a segmentation of the affected students:

> I think one of the other dilemmas for me was trying to sort out which groups needed what kinds of support because they were really very different. As I reflected on one of the more unique leadership dilemmas, you know, usually when you're doing something you do everything the same for all students. We never worked that way. The intensity of need and timing is more challenging because the segmentation was so much more critical. (11/305/LL)

Concern for the experiences of staff. One of the characteristics of the middle stage of crisis is realizing what will be required to deal with it, including staff. Critical to the success of recovery efforts were staff members with physical and emotional stamina. Leaders became acutely aware of the experiences staff were having and the toll it was taking. The physical stamina required to deal with a major crisis resulted in staff that were over worked and sleep deprived:

> Our Director of Environmental Health and Safety. I mean, he was working non-stop around the clock. He was living on a cot in his office. I finally had to send him home. A second weekend and I said, "You have not been home. You have got to go home." But when he went home there was more work. So, personal stress. (14/305/ND)

In this case, staff had no stress-free sanctuary as both their work and home environments had sustained hurricane damage. Many staff members not only lost their homes but were displaced from their work environments: “I think other dilemmas, we had a lot of folks move into different offices. Student Affairs took the biggest hit. Our audit department is in a trailer . . . still!” (14/305/ND). These leaders were also aware of the psychological impact on staff:

> How do you come back to what may be an office that doesn’t look like the office when you left? One of the things we did in pre-planning is that you put plastic over everything. So you had to have time to put your office back in order. Plastic put away. So those kinds of things. (14/305/ND)

Another challenge was recognizing the toll the crisis took on their own families:

> I obviously continued to have a dilemma myself of how do I explain to my children why I am not home for three, four, five, six, seven days. I don’t think I spent a full day at home for over three weeks. So for me, some of the meaning was for my kids, not so much my husband, to know what was going on. (11/305/LL)

A third dilemma related to staff emerged as leaders realized the implications of not having enough staff to do what needed to be done: “I think dilemmas, I would say personnel. Meaning a lot of times even at a mid-size institution, one person making sure that you have someone who could be back-up” (14/305/ND).

Altering operations and relationships.

Coordinating with external agencies. Relationships and interaction with external agencies became a crucial feature of the middle stage. For some, the relationship was intimate: “We not only had to evacuate the building, but it was taken over as a command center by the Port Authority, by the fire fighters, and by the police” (10/305/V). But for others, it was a crucial link to re-opening a closed campus:

> Because for the most part, with the power down, if you don’t have cash, you can’t exchange. So we had to have in place, and we did, several relationships with vendors in the community. How do we get vendors and contractors on campus? Our Director of Facilities actually drove to the home of one of the vendors saying, “I’ve been trying t o call you.” So the way you do business is very different. (14/305/ND)

For leaders dealing with a missing student case, coordinating with external agencies was intertwined with speculation about how the case would be resolved, and juggling the involvement of multiple players:

> Another one—dilemma—was then planning on what would happen if we found her not alive. Two trains of thought on that. Because, of course, Governors in two states are involved and law enforcement from two states. The FBI was involved in 24 hours. So, state, local, federal agencies and how would we help this humongous event unfold if they found the body. Not, you know, if she would be found alive or not. (13/305/V)

Managing transitions within the life of the crisis.

Moving from reaction to recovery. For most, the transition from the reactionary phase of crisis onset into a more controlled and measured recovery phase was neither easy nor clearly delineated. Leaders identified four challenges.

The first was articulating a realistic timeline for moving things forward. One participant described it as an incremental process: “So I guess the whole relief/recovery was, okay, so what are the issues at hand? Then lets think about a day. Then lets think out a week. Let’s think out the semester. Let’s think out the year” (14/305/ND). Another captured the frustration of not being able to move out of the reactionary phase quickly enough: “It seemed like that week and a half, two weeks, however long it was, we were just constantly in the immediate reaction, reaction, reaction kind of thing” (4/304/V).

A second challenge related to recovery was identifying the nature of relief services needed and the magnitude of these (14/305/ND). This was tied to the third challenge which was devising a plan to reopen school, the campus, or buildings (12/305/ND). This may have involved establishing power and communications, making the area safe, and creating a game plan for bringing staff and students back to campus (10/305/V; 14/305/ND). The speed with which this was accomplished depended on the extent of the damage and the nature of the crisis. For example, the ability of the Department of Residential Life to provide housing drove the timeline for a school dealing with the devastation of a hurricane (12/305/ND). For another school, part of the game plan had to include “trying to help people deal with the gambit of emotions, from anger to the grief to the sense of helplessness about the sense of vulnerability” (5/804/V).

Moving from reaction to recovery also required a shift in leadership thinking that incorporated not only the logistical aspects of recovery, but an understanding of the relationship between logistical recovery, psychological recovery, and visible progress: “I think relief, recovery and moving on are sort of intertwined because there are aspects of your recovery that will be completed as you are moving on” (14/305/ND).

Ongoing developments in the crisis. For some, the middle stage meant that the crisis had risen to a climax and de-escalated. For others, the crisis was still unfolding. For a school dealing with a hostage situation, emerging information about the hostage taker heightened the intensity of the situation.

> It took one more escalation and that was subsequent from that—just a few minutes—they got information who the person was that was holding the young women hostage and that this person had killed somebody the night before, two people I believe, it was the night before in some place in southwestern Colorado. So all of the sudden you realize that this was somebody you have to take seriously, that he would in fact kill. He had nothing to lose at that point. (3/304/V)

This information confirmed that the administrators' original diagnosis about what had happened was wrong: It was not an accidental shooting but escalating violence. Although new information continued to unfold about the hostage situation and shooting at this school, the crisis moved to resolution in a relatively short period of time. Such was not the case for a school dealing with a serial killer where there were time lapses between bodies being found (4/304/V), nor for a school waiting for the impending resolution to a missing student case ("One of the dilemmas was so what if we don't find her alive?" (13/305/V)).

Table 5 summarizes the leadership challenges associated with the middle stage of crisis the number of participants addressing the theme and the crisis type.

Table 5

Middle Stage: Challenges by Number of Participants Reporting and Typology Classification

Challenges	No. participants addressing theme N = 14	Typology categories addressed by theme		
		Victim	Natural disaster	Legal liability
Leading in spite of loss of control				
Increasingly complex safety issues				
Negotiating & dealing with an altered physical environment	12	X	X	X
Leadership presence	2	X		X
Coping with deficient response systems				
Financial resources needed for recovery	4	X	X	
Communicating about the crisis	4	X	X	X
Overwhelming communication demands	5	X	X	X
Controlling the media on campus	1	X		
Dealing with multiple constituency groups				
Concern for the experiences of staff	3		X	X
Supporting those in need	9	X	X	X
Altering operations & relationships				
Coordinating with external agencies	3	X	X	
Managing transitions				
Ongoing developments in the crisis	6	X	X	X
Moving from reaction to recovery	5	X	X	

The Middle Stage: Leadership Strategies

Six meta-themes associated with leadership strategies were prominent in the middle stage of the crisis. These were (a) garnering necessary resources, (b) making safety the leadership priority, (c) leading planning and policy development, (d) leading intentional communications efforts, (e) modifying leadership approaches and style as needed, and (f) leading the healing process.

Garnering necessary resources.

Identifying needed resources*.* "It's probably the relief phase. What are the relief services that need to be brought in given the devastation that happened in our community? As far as our campus, what kind of relief do we need, the utility infrastructure being struck as badly as it was?" (14/305/ND).

Identifying needed resources was based primarily on the amount of devastation to the physical plant or the number of victims involved. Knowledge of how federal relief agencies operated allowed one leader to put strategies into place before disaster hit:

> I understood FEMA [Federal Emergency Management Agency] from working at [agency name deleted] and going through a couple of different instances similar to this. We needed to have cameras ready so that the minute we came on to the campus we were taking photographs of our places. (12/305/ND)

In cases of mass destruction, leaders employed any tactic necessary to restore campus operations: "We were bartering. We were calling everybody. We were trying to negotiate to get fuel, diesel. Because if our generators went down we were going to have bigger problems than we already had" (14/305/ND).

Exerting leader influence to garner resources. The primary focus of strategies utilized to garner resources was to provide financial assistance for student victims in need. One strategy was working professional networks and contacts:

> One of the young women needed to get money and it so happened that I knew somebody in the Victims' Assistance Office, the D.A.s [District Attorney's] office, and we were able to call and get some information more quickly than perhaps

> she would have otherwise got in the information. Those contacts helped. (1/304/V)

One school worked with state and federal agencies to secure grants for students. The development foundation of this same school mobilized to raise funds for students who had lost their jobs as a result of the crisis. Money was not the only thing given to the school: “Gift-giving. We did get money. There were donations from financial [agencies] but also just nation wide. It was unbelievable. Colleges sent money. They sent computers. They made donations of all sorts because of what we had gone through” (10/305/V).

Tuition reimbursements were a third strategy utilized. While some schools chose not to grant reimbursements, those who did varied in how liberally these were given. The position of one school was to accommodate every request for as long as they were presented, while another granted reimbursements only to those who had been severely traumatized (10/305/V; 1/304/V; 2/304/V).

Students were not the only ones for whom leaders garnered resources. In the aftermath of a campus shooting, leaders at one campus mounted an ambitious effort to identify and prevent future violence, an effort that would require campus wide staff and faculty training: “I went to the budget and finance committee and got the money to be able to do this” (5/804/V).

Leading planning and policy development.

Problem-solving with intent. Problem-solving involved practical issues such as establishing realistic timelines for recovery tasks to be completed (12/305/ND; 14/305/ND), as well as making a psychological and intellectual shift from reaction to intentionality (5/804/V; 10/305/V).

> I'd say a potential label for that period after the alarm was sort of that problem-solving phase. Because we really did tackle it from that perspective. Wanting to identify where the gaps were and what would be the strategies. Who did we have to work with? And how many people had to be engaged in it? (5/804/V)

Improvising to solve communications issues*.* Schools dealing with devastation to the physical infrastructure, including communications systems, found it necessary to improvise to solve communications issues: "So how do you take simple things like the communication aspect and say, 'you know what? Go to the subway. Hold up the recognizable logo and let them walk towards you to give them the pamphlet'" (10/305/V).

Expanding contacts for information-gathering*.* One strategy utilized to ensure good planning and decision-making was to consult a variety of sources: "We made some tremendous efforts to meet with all facets of the University after the storm to really find out what needed to be done in preparation to make sure that the students returned" (12/305/ND).

Leading intentional communications efforts.

Engaging affected families*.* Strategies to engage affected families focused on three areas. The first was to inform families what had occurred: "I think that [the president] called and talked to the parents, made arrangements for the parents of the students to come on campus as quickly as possible, made arrangements for housing, this kind of thing" (2/304/V). A second strategy was to establish a means by which the university could have constant contact with family members. This was typically done by designating a point person whose job it was to make arrangements and maintain communication (3/304/V; 4/304/V; 2/304/V; 1/304/V). A third strategy was to protect family members from the media as they attended memorials and other events: “We had them (the families) sequestered off into a separate area up close but away from the media, to protect them” (4/304/V).

Modifying leadership approaches and style as necessary.

Building coalitions. Schools dealing with crises that extended beyond the psychological or physical boundaries of the campus found it necessary to work in tandem with the surrounding community: “It affected the entire city. So helping with that discussion and that government about what other services were needed” (13/305/V).

Be strategic in the placement of leaders. As crisis events de-escalated, campus leaders strategized about the most logical placement of campus leaders:

> Once they verified all the facts that were known at that point, by this time [name deleted] joined us, the vice president for student affairs, and [the director of communications] had followed the police escort to the hospital with the young woman and so we stay around to, I suppose, to just make sure that everything was O.K. where we were at the dormitory. (3/304/V)

Leading the healing process.

Providing differentiated counseling. As the impact of the crisis unfolded and became understood, leaders were able to differentiate counseling support based on emergent needs. Some separated group classifications (students, faculty or staff) (13/305/V; 6/804/V). Another based it on degree of trauma experienced: “And the next phase, I don’t know what I would call it, was what needs to be done right now for those people who were directly affected, peripherally affected, indirectly affected” (2/304/V). In addition to individual and group counseling, one school utilized open forums as a means of dealing with emotions. For one leader, providing emotional support was as much about attitude as it was about service, “and anything that anyone asked us that we could make it easier for them, we needed to do from our point of view” (6/804/V).

Leading safety efforts first.

Limiting access to campus. Some schools found it necessary to limit access to and navigation of the campus. One institution imposed an unusual and sometimes unpopular means of ensuring the safety of the student body: “Oh, there were curfews. If you didn’t get home by dark, you were stuck wherever you were” (14/305/ND).

Table 6 summarizes the strategies utilized by campus leaders in the middle stage of crisis by the number of participants addressing the theme and the crisis type.

Table 6
Middle Stage: Strategies by Number of Participants Reporting and Typology Classification

Strategies	No. participants addressing theme N = 14	Typology categories addressed by theme		
		Victim	Natural disaster	Legal liability
Garnering resources				
Identifying needed resources	3	X	X	
Exerting leader influence to garner resources	3	X		
Leading planning & policy development				
Problem-solving with intent	4	X	X	
Improvising to solve communications issues	2	X		
Expanding contacts for information-gathering	1		X	
Leading intentional communications efforts				
Engaging affected families	3	X		
Modifying approach/style				
Building coalitions	2	X	X	
Be strategic in the placement of leaders	1	X		
Leading the healing process				
Providing differentiated counseling	6	X		
Making safety a priority				
Limiting access to campus	1		X	

The End Stage

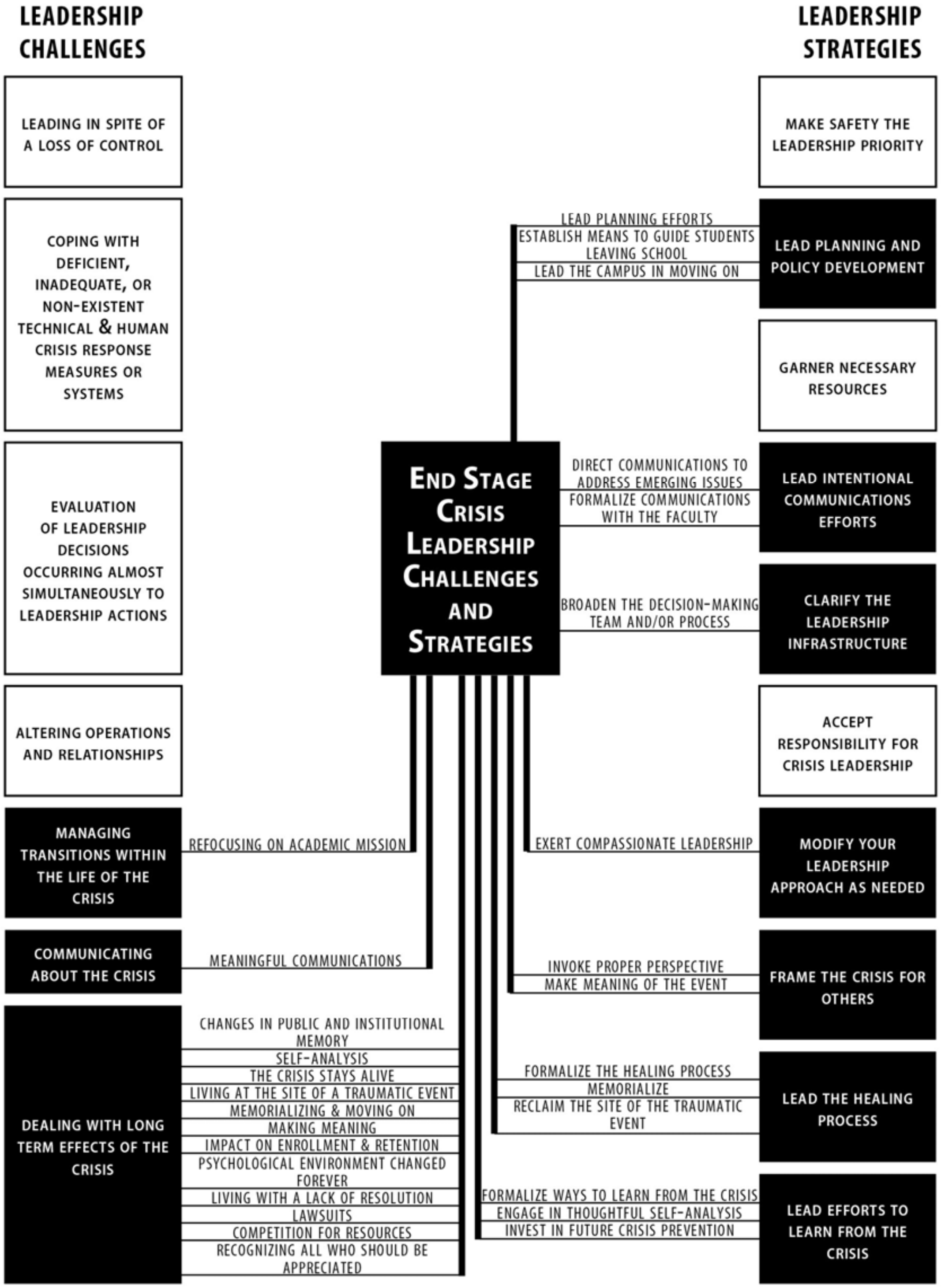
Analysis of the ending stage of the crisis as described by participants revealed stages within the stage. In addition to general dilemmas associated with the ending phase of crisis, we will explore those specifically identified with the two sub-stages: healing and lingering effects.

The End Stage: Characteristics

It is difficult to say which phase of the crisis is more complex, but the ending phase may be unique because it involves both the immediate and long term.

This stage involved a focus on restorative actions that would result in stabilization of that which had been disrupted. While relief and recovery efforts as described in stage two were still underway, this phase widened the scope of these efforts to include long-term care for people or adjustment to an altered physical plant. The most prominent feature of this stage was the shift in leadership focus. Participants described their efforts to put the event into context in order to make meaning of it, learn from it, tell the institution’s story related to it, and move forward. The uniqueness of the ending stage is the inter-twining of logistical and psychological issues on which leaders had to focus. This phase was also dominated by a drive to resume or maintain continuity of the academic calendar. Because of the emphasis on the long term psychological impact of the crisis, several participants characterized it as a processing or caring phase. Figure 5 depicts the leadership challenges and strategies associated with the end stage of crisis.

Figure 5 End Stage Challenges and Strategies


LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES
LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES
LEADING IN SPITE OF A LOSS OF CONTROL
COPING WITH DEFICIENT, INADEQUATE, OR NON-EXISTENT TECHNICAL & HUMAN CRISIS RESPONSE MEASURES OR SYSTEMS
EVALUATION OF LEADERSHIP DECISIONS OCCURRING ALMOST SIMULTANEOUSLY TO LEADERSHIP ACTIONS
ALTERING OPERATIONS AND RELATIONSHIPS
MANAGING TRANSITIONS WITHIN THE LIFE OF THE CRISIS
REFOCUSING ON ACADEMIC MISSION
COMMUNICATING ABOUT THE CRISIS
MEANINGFUL COMMUNICATIONS
DEALING WITH LONG TERM EFFECTS OF THE CRISIS
CHANGES IN PUBLIC AND INSTITUTIONAL MEMORY
SELF-ANALYSIS
THE CRISIS STAYS ALIVE
LIVING AT THE SITE OF A TRAUMATIC EVENT
MEMORIALIZING & MOVING ON
MAKING MEANING
IMPACT ON ENROLLMENT & RETENTION
PSYCHOLOGICAL ENVIRONMENT CHANGED FOREVER
LIVING WITH A LACK OF RESOLUTION
LAWSUITS
COMPETITION FOR RESOURCES
RECOGNIZING ALL WHO SHOULD BE APPRECIATED
END STAGE CRISIS LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES
MAKE SAFETY THE LEADERSHIP PRIORITY
LEAD PLANNING EFFORTS
ESTABLISH MEANS TO GUIDE STUDENTS LEAVING SCHOOL
LEAD THE CAMPUS IN MOVING ON
LEAD PLANNING AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT
GARNER NECESSARY RESOURCES
DIRECT COMMUNICATIONS TO ADDRESS EMERGING ISSUES
FORMALIZE COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE FACULTY
LEAD INTENTIONAL COMMUNICATIONS EFFORTS
BROADEN THE DECISION-MAKING TEAM AND/OR PROCESS
CLARIFY THE LEADERSHIP INFRASTRUCTURE
ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY FOR CRISIS LEADERSHIP
EXERT COMPASSIONATE LEADERSHIP
MODIFY YOUR LEADERSHIP APPROACH AS NEEDED
INVOKE PROPER PERSPECTIVE
MAKE MEANING OF THE EVENT
FRAME THE CRISIS FOR OTHERS
FORMALIZE THE HEALING PROCESS
MEMORIALIZE
RECLAIM THE SITE OF THE TRAUMATIC EVENT
LEAD THE HEALING PROCESS
FORMALIZE WAYS TO LEARN FROM THE CRISIS
ENGAGE IN THOUGHTFUL SELF-ANALYSIS
INVEST IN FUTURE CRISIS PREVENTION
LEAD EFFORTS TO LEARN FROM THE CRISIS

The End Stage: Leadership Challenges

Three meta-themes associated with leadership challenges were prominent in the end stage of crisis. These were (a) communicating about the crisis, (b) managing transitions within the life of the crisis, and (c) dealing with long-term effects.

Communicating about the crisis.

Communicating meaningfully. Communications in the ending phase dealt with conveying intentions, facilitating on-going issues associated with the crisis, and telling the institution's story (14/305/ND; 10/305/V; 4/304/V). This required campus leaders to become more directed and thoughtful about communicating larger issues in environments where there was still a good deal of emotion (5/804/V).

Managing transitions within the life of the crisis.

Refocusing on the academic mission. For crises that were limited in scope and affected only a few people, the academic program went on uninterrupted. But crises that resulted in extensive physical or psychological damage presented a number of dilemmas for campus leaders. In these cases, a clear indicator of crisis recovery was the public commitment made by leadership to resume or maintain the continuity of the academic calendar (4/304/V; 8/804/V): "One of the key things we said early on was students will graduate. We will have a graduation December 13th" (13/305/ND). Publicly announcing the intent to stay or re-open had both logistical and symbolic power. It focused work activity on a common goal and provided a foundation for decision-making. Comments such as "How can we keep our campus open so that we can educate our students? That's what we do" (13/305/ND) and "You know, we still have to deliver an academic program" (11/305/LL) indicated a return to a focus on mission and purpose, as well as recognition of the healing power of continuity.

The first order of business for schools that had been closed for an extended period was to work with the state board of education to calculate the number of days and student contact hours missed and determine what would be required for students facing immediate graduation and make-up dates (10/305/V).

The second challenge was to establish a timeline to resume the academic calendar. For some, the academic calendar needed to accommodate events that were part of the healing process:

> And then we decided that we would cancel for the week—this was on a Tuesday, it happened on Monday—and we would have the memorial on the following Monday, and after we had our ceremony and the like, we would then talk about meeting with students afterwards to begin talking about how we would deal with the end of the semester. (6/804/V)

Readiness of people and space was another issue related to the academic timeline. One leader found the issue of timing to be sensitive.

> I had faculty saying, “I need to get into the clinical area.” And I’m saying, “Let’s develop a plan for that. You’re not ready to do that and neither are the students. And we can’t even get into our building because it’s taped off as a police crime scene. You can’t even get in there to get the things we need. So we have to let that go.” (6/804/V)

Replacing lost classroom space was essential to the academic timeline:

> What do we do? We educate. We could not educate in the facilities that we had. Your co-op plan—your continuity of operation plan—continuous co-op plan you have. You’re supposed to have an alternative where you can offer your classes

> and everything would work in your community. Well, when your community is a disaster zone, that doesn’t work.” (14/305/ND)

At one institution the hunt for classroom space required working with external agencies:

> We had to speak with other institutions, public and private, as well as the Board of Education, to come up with a plan to allow us to get the semester started in case we could not get back in. And that plan was the notion of using space that was unused by the public schools, by private colleges, by other City University of New York colleges. (10/305/V)

For those whose campus had been significantly altered by the crisis, the resumption of the academic program necessitated working in altered physical environments for the long term. In none of the cases was this more startling than at the school affected by the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center. Campus leaders were able to secure enough classrooms from the space available to them. But the situation was far from ideal:

> The noise. Because the constant moving and the digging and everything. And we had parts of the building being taken right by the college. They were dismantling parts of the World Trade Center. You could see the trucks carrying the pieces by so that was disturbing for a lot of the faculty and students. (10/305/V)

As the quote above indicates, coping with an altered physical environment had an effect on the emotional well being of students and staff. But the noise was not the only issue with which they had to contend:

> Teachers were happy when they got in the classrooms, but there was something they started to discover. This room is too noisy. This room is too cold. This room is too unbearable, it is too hot. And so that was part of the reality of what occurred afterwards. Trying to deal with that because even though we replaced the classrooms, suddenly there were two or three classrooms that were not ideal. And what do you do then? Because nobody wanted to teach in those rooms. (10/305/V)

The problem did not end there. There was one additional issue with which campus administrators had to contend:

> We had this smell there for a long time and so because of that, students and faculty—and we have a union shop—they did think maybe something was left back then in the air. Health issues. That was one. (10/305/V)

For a school dealing with a shooting, the classroom space issue had to do with reclaiming space where colleagues had been murdered:

> There are a lot of things. Probably from the human perspective, it’s students being able to continue on in classes and being able to be successful, professors being able to teach at the actual site to where, you know, this traumatic event occurred. (8/404/V)

A third component related to resuming academic endeavors was establishing a communication plan with students and faculty (6/804/V).

At the school where two faculty members were killed, one other logistical issue dictated the timeline for resumption of the academic calendar. Leaders there had to find other faculty to finish teaching the courses being taught by the slain professors (6/404/V).

Facilities and staffing issues were not the only concerns related to refocusing on the academic mission. Study participants were acutely aware of the repercussions the campus crisis had on students and adjusted policy and procedures for students to return to or leave school accordingly (2/304/V; 6/804/V; 10/305/V). They also recognized that students would need special support to be successful academically. One participant described the focus on academics as inseparable from the trauma students were experiencing. “And it was kind of like a coping phase and it was kind of a dual thing. Coping with the grief, the fear, the mourning, and then also how will we deal with the semester?” (6/804/V). Another recognized that helping students focus on academics in the aftermath of a crisis was not an exact science. “But throughout the semester, there are going to be little things—smaller things that have to be taken care of that still have an intensity that you have to be able to deal with” (4/304/V). Another identified these specific issues:

> And then we had the issue of how do you deal with students who are dealing with all of this grief and you can’t teach them in the same way because of their attention span? Are they sleeping well? Are they able to retain information? All this kind of thing. So we have to teach this program in a different way as well. The faculty needed support to do that. (6/804/V)

Dealing with long-term effects.

Competing for recovery resources. Study participants from one school commented on the political dynamics of crisis recovery. Crises large in scope and damage and affecting entities other than just the university cast all in competition with one another for recovery resources:

> We have a very, very good high school—nationally known. One of the best high schools. And they got a lot of attention. Because we are a community college, they are not very happy with the attention that was given to that high school, including how they washed the building down and made sure every inch of it was o.k. And the community college felt they didn't get that. (10/305/V)

Self-analyzing. With the calmness of the ending phase of the crisis came time for self reflection and analysis. Participants identified four challenges. The first was constructing an effective analysis of institutional response. Most focused on questions such as: Did each office or operational area perform as it should have? What worked well? What were our deficiencies? (3/304/V; 2/304/V). The second challenge, a corollary to the first, had to do with addressing feelings of inadequacy in terms of the institutional response. In other words, some leaders were questioning whether they had done all they could (2/304/V). These two challenges naturally led to a third, which focused on how to use what had been learned to prevent a similar crisis from happening in the future, and having a plan in the event that it did (4/304/V; 2/304/V). This information would then be used to fortify the campus response plan and team (14/305/ND). A fourth challenge required leaders to revisit the disbelief of the earlier stages and forced them to ask whether or not they could have done something to prevent the crisis from occurring:

> I don't see how this could have been [prevented]. If somebody would come in at midnight and nobody would have been around, they would have had free access. But this was nine o'clock in the morning or something. And so you think well, if we are attacked on this we simply have to put the facts out and say "This

> is the way it is here. Somebody can walk in, armed into a dormitory. We don't have that kind of security." (3/304/V)

The act of engaging in self-analysis and reflection played an important psychological role for some campus leaders. As one participant said, reviewing what had happened was a "kind of phase out" (2/304/V). Another characterized looking back through the previous stages as symbolic that a degree of stabilization was present: "We're back to sort of a normal" (11/305/LL).

For one school, self-analysis could not begin before the question of who was responsible for this kind of evaluation could be answered.

> So, I think there was another dilemma in terms of who was to take the role in evaluating the University's response with this situation and whose job was it to take the responsibility? Was it the Police Department? Was it Student Affairs? Was it the President's Office? Was it University Relations? I think there were a lot of discussions—probably in the President's Office—about who was going to take responsibility for it. (2/304/V)

Healing: Leadership Challenges

A central component of the ending phase of the crisis as reported by participants was the healing phase. Signs of healing included myriad events and processes, both tangible and symbolic. For some it included the outpouring of support in the form of letters, cards, and flowers from around the nation (6/804/V). For others is was taking stock of the impact of the crisis on anniversary dates (6/804/V).

Dealing with long-term effects.

The crisis stays alive. Factors that kept the crisis alive varied across the cases. Anniversary dates were an emotional trigger for most schools (5/804/V). All of the participants reported intense media coverage as a significant dilemma. But two specific instances in which the media kept the crisis alive are worth noting. At a school where a shooter murdered three professors, the local paper published a letter written by the killer:

> It was a very rambling, sort of self-serving letter that pissed off just about everybody who read it. But the anger was also directed at the newspaper. Why would they print it? And the Editor did an editorial to say why she thought it was important to be printed. You could get that material but it sort of opened up the wound to have this printed again. (5/804/V)

Leaders at another school feared copycat acts months and even years after serial killings (4/304/V). The activities of victim advocate groups, law enforcement agencies, and the media, while not under the direction of university officials, had a significant impact on university officials' ability to maintain continuous movement toward healing (4/304/V).

A lack of resolution of the crimes also kept the crisis alive:

> And of course from a kind of leadership perspective you know, as we begin to get closer and closer to the end of the semester, well then it hits you. Well, God, we've got to start another semester and the person or persons hasn't been caught and we are going to have this whole replay, you know, of this whole thing again. (4/304/V)

Years later the final act of the crisis had yet to play out:

> [The killer] of course is still on death row. He's been there, you know, a number of years. He continues to try and get off and all. And whatever that stuff is that happens with people on death row, I think if he, if it ever gets to the point where

> he is actually going to be executed or getting closer, whatever, probably all of this will ramp up again. (4/304/V)

In the case of a missing student, searches drug out over a period of several months and on-going “manhunts for the perpetrator” kept the crisis alive (13/305/V).

For other schools, media attention focused on the culpability of the institution or cast the school in a negative light (2/304/V):

> There was nothing peculiar about our operating procedures. But all of the sudden, now the operating procedures were on the front page news every other day as if we were all a bunch of incompetent fools. “How could you do it this way?” and watching the various agencies. How do you maintain a proper place for that event or us because it continues to be on the front page of the newspapers? So managing public perception about it and public perception of the university and its operations, as you move from the experience. (11/305/LL)

Ironically, for one school, the very thing that was designed to help deal with crises was the very thing that brought back much of the trauma of past crises:

> We had a mock—we had an exercise where a student, you know, was down. We didn’t know what was wrong with the student, didn’t have control over him. We went through the whole thing and this response team was on campus. Not at the site—we were in this building—but we had to interface. It brought it all back again, you know. It really did. And we are planning to have another one of these mock drills that would include the entire campus. I’m sure it’s going to trigger a lot of the same thing. It’s still very much there.” (5/804/V)

The September 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City was an issue for one school:

> September 11th even triggered disproportionate resurfacing of emotion on my campus that stems from this event. You know, we did see the towers come down from my campus from the upper parts of the buildings. To see it, it was a very impacting experience for all of us as Americans, but it did trigger a lot of haunted feelings from the people who were involved in that [crisis]. (11/305/LL)

Living at the site of a traumatic event. "I had staff who weren't so sure that they could ever go back into the building, as well as faculty. And we had to deal with that as well" (6/804/V). The issue of reclaiming the physical space where a traumatic event has occurred was another challenge inherent in the healing process (2/304/V; 5/804/V; 11/305/LL). The quote above speaks to the fact that restoration of psychological safety was as important as physical safety. One participant stated that the site of a traumatic event becomes "a sacred area" (2/304/V) that becomes a challenge for leaders to address. Sites designated as crime scenes or marred by fire, gunshots, blood, bio-hazardous waste, or the like had to be cleared and cleaned before they could be considered for restoration (11/305/LL; 6/804/V).

For the school dealing with a hostage situation, reclaiming the physical space was very different. It was not innocent victims who were killed in that crisis, but rather, the perpetrator. With no victims to memorialize, the site of the incident was a place without honor and bore only horrific memories.

Making meaning. One of the most challenging leadership dilemmas inherent in the ending phase was the task of making meaning of a horrific event. This was true whether the crisis was natural or human caused. Leaders recognized that their ability to make meaning of the event was connected to healing. The desire to bring some good of something bad, the need to create a context for something that had none, and the desire to learn from something that seemed senseless, required participants to engage in leadership behavior not previously required of them, and for which many felt at a loss to address. Such was the case for leaders who were faced with the brutality of a serial killer:

> We were as frustrated as they were because why would somebody do this? The incomprehensibility of the whole thing . . . . There's no way to explain to a student. That's the whole fallibility of it. You know, students often look to us for the answers. But we did not have any answers. We do not have one answer that could explain why this had to happen. And so I'm sure it was frustrating to the students and if it was frustrating to them it was even more frustrating for us. Because it just doesn't make any sense that a perfect stranger—a total perfect stranger—would pick out five people and kill them. (4/304/V)

One aspect of making meaning of the crisis event was being intentional about extracting what could be learned from it (14/305/ND). Leaders also recognized that making meaning would not be possible until some of the trauma of the event had been overcome:

> So part of that moving on and the dilemma that was faced is we have to recognize what's happened. We have to take time to talk about it. We are a community and I think as a community we want to make sure that folks feel free to talk about it. But you have to feel safe. (14/305/ND)

Memorializing and moving on. Memorializing was the most public and symbolic means of making meaning. The issue of memorializing presented two challenges for campus leaders. The first was the question of how to memorialize. A major question inherent in how to memorialize concerned religion. Some incorporated religious aspects, others did not. “It was not a religious service deliberately. We thought about that” (9/804/V).

The second dilemma related to memorializing addressed two questions: (a) how long should memorializing last? and (b) at what point can and should campus leaders make the decision to move on and away from the crisis? And what is the appropriate level of memorializing? An academic leader struggled with these issues:

> So of course we had a lot of commitments out there and what have you, and we had these initiatives we wanted to move forward and I talked with my administrative staff and the faculty leaders, and I said, “you know, we have to figure out what we’re going to do. We’re at a crossroads now, and we’re going to have to make a choice. We’re going to have to make a choice of do we take time out for mourning, for healing, for grieving, or are we going to move forward with our initiatives?” (6/804/V)

The decision to move forward had to do with timing and sensitivity to the needs of those traumatized: “And I think that it was a delicate balance, because we couldn’t push too hard with that and not acknowledge the personal trauma that faculty and staff were going through” (6/804/V). Another issue had to do with recognition of the possible negative effects of not moving forward: “I said if we choose not to move forward, there’s one thing that I am concerned about, and this is that we will give [the shooter] more power over this college and I think he has done enough” (6/804/V). Leaders also understood that people naturally reach a point where they need to move forward and that there is healing power inherent in recovery:

> O.K., bad things happen all the time. Who you are as a community and how you respond to it. Stuff happens all the time. How do you deal with it? How you move

> forward from it is really more of a reflection on the fabric of the institution. And I feel pretty good about how we've done with that. (11/305/LL)

One of the complicating factors to these questions, and one that is unique to crises in higher education, is that the student body turns over: "Well, one of the realities of university life is that the population turns over so rapidly and many of the students who were personally witness to the crisis have graduated. Maybe all of them" (9/804/V). This has an effect on the institutional memory of the crisis, and puts faculty and staff in a different place than students. The dilemma then becomes memorializing for populations who did not share a common experience. This becomes even more true as faculty and staff turn over. As institutional memory dwindles, the institution typically engages in fewer activities to memorialize the event.

Recognizing all who should be appreciated*.* A natural indication that a crisis has come to a close and that healing is underway is when recognition is formally given to those who assisted during the crisis. Even this proved to be a challenge for some:

> How do you show adequate appreciation and acknowledgement of so many people who did so much in everyway? People were doing so many things outside of their regular office job. You know, the guy who works in our teaching and learning center. Terrific guy. But most of his life he worked in insurance and he was manning the warehouse. And students would show up with their families. So people were out of role all over the place. How do you acknowledge all of that? You don't know who's doing what. You didn't know what people were doing but they were doing them. So as you kind of get the distance, still today I don't know if I have a handle on everything people did for us. And also within the

community outside of the campus, the acknowledgement of all the emergency service workers that showed up." (11/305/LL)

Lingering Effects: Leadership Challenges

For most, there was not a crisp ending point of the crisis. While the danger and urgency of the crisis may have passed, lingering effects remained for weeks, months, or years.

Dealing with long-term effects.

Psychological environment changed forever. Of the participating schools, nowhere was the impact of the psychological environment of the crisis more evident than the case of the murdered professors. Shortly after the shooting, campus leaders received an increasing number of calls from faculty regarding individuals whom they believed to be potentially threatening. Many recognized that the campus was in a state of hyper-vigilance that could not be ignored (8/804/V). Behavior and comments of a threatening nature, or referring to harming oneself or others that would have been brushed off in the past were taken seriously, even if made in jest. One participant recognized that striking a balanced perspective was tricky: "I'd rather for it to be hyper-vigilant than not at all, you know, so it is a Catch 22" (8/804/V). Another understood the potential for damaging the academic environment: "And if you over react and create a hostile environment in the classroom, of course you damage teaching, but you also damage the whole process—the learning process" (7/804/V). This attempt to decrease risk and prevent something similar from happening again was a clear reaction to the realization that the physical and more importantly, the psychological safety of the campus was forever changed. As one participant stated, they were dealing with "sensitivity to vulnerabilities."

"Remembering without obsessing" as one participant said, was a key ingredient to the second challenge related to a changed psychological environment (11/305/LL). Maintaining a proper perspective not only on what happened, but also their role in the aftermath of the incident and their perception of themselves as victims was essential to maintaining the mental health of the campus:

> So I think there's a leadership dilemma in that, or at least be mindful of, I think moving on is hard. Some people like to stay in that place. I think the dilemma of that is difficult for staff all along the way. (11/305/LL)

This same participant identified how the crisis had modified her perspective on crises in general:

> Most things that have happened since then really pale in comparison. So when people – I have to laugh. You know, after 9-11, everybody became very focused on crisis management. Some of it is laughable. I don't mean to make light of 9-11 by any means. But even that day when I listened to people in the aftermath, crisis became really in vogue after that. (11/305/LL)

One participant feared a pendulum swing in terms of perspective:

> My only fear right now is that we've come into a false sense of security. We forget and we let some of the recommendations lax. We just need to continually remind our teachers and our students that these codes exist, and the process is there, and the expectation is. One of the other things that came out of this was a video tape that the university created on classroom behavior. (7/V/CPHC)

One individual summarized the long-term implications of maintaining a perspective with the following: "It has totally impacted the environment. We're still dealing with it" (8/804/V).

***Living with a lack of resolution**.* For some, the aftermath of the crisis included a protracted period before all of the elements of the crisis were revealed.

For one school the lack of resolution presented genuine danger that a serial killer would kill again. It wasn't until months later that the killer was caught. The intervening months left the campus community in an uneasy state: "There were things always in the back of people's minds, I think, for a while and continued to be because the person hadn't been caught yet" (4/304/V).

At another school the search for a missing student stretched over five months:

> They had some searches in the Fall. And of course, we were up against final exam week. Nothing happened and then in the winter, nothing more was going to happen except the family did their own searches and our student law enforcement wanted to have a search when the spring thaw first occurred, because maybe there would be something without much snow on the ground. So that was planned. And we were notified of it, but people had lived under this so long that I think it was difficult to know how many searches they needed. (13/305/V)

At the time of this study, a new phase of the crisis had just begun for another campus:

> They finally made some arrests. But it hasn't gone to trial so it will continue to resurface every time there's a fire somewhere in the country. In fact, just this morning there was something about fires and always footage of our buildings. You know, how do you get away from that? (11/305/LL)

But killers caught, bodies found and arrests made were not the only issues associated with resolution or a lack thereof. For staff significantly affected by the crisis, there may be no resolution. More than 15 years after the serial killings, one staff member recognized the long-term impact on staff:

> I'm not sure it ever did [get resolved for staff]. To be real honest, and I am only speaking for myself, sometimes when I talk to people that I worked with very closely, we get teary eyed over the same thing. (4/304/V)

While several study participants spoke of the difficulty of "letting go" or that it was obvious that the crisis was "on the minds" of faculty and staff, the effect on one individual was even more profound: "You question, 'what is the value of my work here at the university?'" (8/804/V).

Changes in public and institutional memory*.* Participant comments on the long-term institutional and public memory of a crisis event covered a range of experiences. For some, recollection and reminders of the event were infrequent—an occasional remark in passing conversation, an oblique reference to the fact that there had "been an issue," or the rare question at a student or staff orientation (5/804/V; 1/304/V). Turnover in staff also contributed to the incident fading from public memory (4/304/V). In the case of the hostage situation, the crisis was gone from public memory almost as quickly as it had happened. One participant offered an explanation:

> I speculate one reason [the situation didn't linger] was, although as I said before, it was a tragedy, a young man's life was taken, but he was the culprit. He was a murderer and the innocent people, although I think they were traumatized, at least they were not seriously injured. And I think, I believe there was sort of a resolution there. Whereas in those other instances the innocent suffered. (3/304/V)

Several participants identified dynamics within the student body as a gauge of institutional memory. The annual turnover of the student body was reported as a scorecard of the percentage of students aware and impacted. (9/804/V; 10/305/V). For some, classifications and academic programs had the effect of containing the crisis. For example, one case involved a graduate student in a professional school physically located across from the main campus. This was enough physical and psychological distance that it did not directly impact the majority of the undergraduate population. Other indicators that the incident was fading from public memory included less administrative time dedicated to it (13/305/V) and changes in the nature and frequency of formal remembrances. For most, this was an intentional strategy: “Then in the second year of it, the university decided that we would not do anything on campus or participate in anything in the community” (4/304/V).

Similarly, the treatment of a physical site that spontaneously developed during the serial killings case was a measure of public memory:

> On 34th street there’s a kind of retaining wall and people go and take a section of it. And they’ll paint “Happy 21st Birthday, Sally,” or whatever. And there was a section of the wall that was painted black and the names of the five students were put up there and so on, and for years if anybody painted over it there was a great outcry in the community and somebody would go and repaint up the names and that kind of thing. Now it feels like maybe the community has gotten over it because now part of the wall is painted over and nobody has gone back to paint up the names again. (4/304/V)

If institutional memory resides in the personal experiences of those affected, one comment told the tale of what caused the event to persist, which indicated that the crisis ended where it began--with on-going disbelief: “I think the lingering question was, how could this have happened on our campus and have something that dramatic occur?” (2/304/V).

Impact on enrollment and retention*.* Participants reported concern for enrollment and retention, but the degree to which the crisis impacted these areas varied (2/304/V; 10/305/V; 11/305/LL; 2/304/V). For one school it was essentially a non-issue in spite of the fact that the crisis had occurred in the Spring when students were making decisions about attending school in the Fall. However, leaders there were not without concern: “Now, one could say well, if that situation hadn’t happened enrollment would have increased to a greater degree than it did” (3/304/V). Leaders at another school were relieved by the number of returning students:

> Part of the plan was to say that we could get open and we could serve, at that time, 17,000 students. And fortunately for us, almost all the students did come back. Out of the 17,000, I think maybe 500 didn’t come back. But that wasn’t bad considering the circumstances. (10/305/V)

Leaders here were aware that some students did not return because routes to campus were not open or were impassable. But the long-term impact on enrollment at this school did not seem to suffer: “Interestingly enough though, our enrollment was higher than ever, because at the time [of the crisis] there were 17,000 students but there are now 19,000 enrolled in the college. So we seem to have recovered” (10/305/V).

For another school, drops in enrollment lessened as time passed: “About 1000 or 1500 students, I think, chose not to return for that semester. The following semester though there were only 500 that did not return to the university” (4/304/V).

***Lawsuits**.* Each of the participating institutions had different experiences regarding lawsuits. Instances where lawsuits were not filed when they could have been generated the most comments. One participant wondered about why, when lawsuits are so common, that they had not faced them:

> But in terms of any other critical thing, interestingly, and this is just an indicator, to my knowledge none of the families have sued the university. It is amazing. I don’t even have the details and I don’t know if they inquired or considered it. But I only know the outcome. That to date none of them have done that. It would serve to mean something but I don’t know quite what. (5/804/V)

Table 7 summarizes the leadership challenges in the end stage of crisis by the number of participants addressing the theme and the crisis type.

Table 7

End Stage: Challenges by Number of Participants Reporting and Typology Classification

Challenges	No. participants addressing theme N = 14	Typology categories addressed by theme		
		Victim	Natural disaster	Legal liability
Communicating about the crisis				
Communicating meaningfully	5	X		X
Managing transitions				
Refocusing on the academic mission	10	X	X	X
Dealing with long-term effects				
Competing for recovery resources	1	X		
Self analyzing	7	X	X	X
The crisis stays alive	6	X		X
Living at the site of a traumatic event	6	X		X
Making meaning	5	X	X	X
Memorializing & moving on	6	X		X
Recognizing all who should be appreciated	1			X
Psychological environment changed forever	4	X		X
Living with a lack of resolution	4	X	X	X
Changes in public & institutional memory	11	X		X
Impact on enrollment & retention	5	X		X
Lawsuits	2	X		

The End Stage: Leadership Strategies

Seven meta-themes associated with strategies were prominent in the end stage of the crisis. These were (a) leading planning and policy development; (b) leading intentional communications efforts; (c) clarifying the leadership infrastructure; (d) modifying leadership approaches and styles as needed; (e) framing the crisis for others; (f) leading the healing process; and (g) leading efforts to learn from the crisis.

Leading planning and policy development.

Leading planning efforts. Leading planning efforts was particularly important for those dealing with an altered physical environment, particularly if it required closing and re-opening school (6/804/V; 14/305/ND). For the school that lost classroom space as a result of falling debris from the attack on the World Trade Center in New York City, planning efforts were necessarily vast, encompassing not only the relocation of classrooms but communicating new schedules and locations to students:

> And we had to have these programs ready because students are going to come and say, "I had a psychology class at a certain hall. Where do I go now?" We had to say, "what's your name? This is your program now. You go to this room." (10/305/V)

For a school dealing with killings that sent students home before the school year had an earnest start, leaders were aware that their planning efforts needed to focus on not only the logistics of beginning a new semester, but the importance of setting a tone that signaled moving forward. "Lots of planning and try and hope that our next semester will not start off in such a terrible way" (4/304/V).

Establishing means to guide students leaving school. Schools dealing with separating students from the institution due either to forced evacuation or counseled support were thoughtful about the means through which this was done (10/305/V; 1/304/V). A campus facing forced evacuation realized a special student population was going to have difficulty complying. Leaders there utilized discussion groups with international students to explore options for them evacuating the campus and to plan where they would go (12/305/ND).

Another leader advocated for an attitude of understanding and leniency when considering requests from students to miss class or leave school:

> I tried to talk to one of the deans about the fact that when the students say they are traumatized by this, believe them. Use really good sense about how or why people may have missed a class or an assignment. Be very generous with the exceptions to handle this. So it permeated the campus. (13/305/V)

Leading the campus in moving on. One of the most difficult challenges reported by leaders was determining at what point to move forward while still respecting people's need to grieve. Many recognized that moving on, while a delicate matter, was essential for the healing process: "Try to develop hardiness in people—being mindful that you can't push too hard. But we did not want the event or the perpetrator to continue to have power over people" (6/804/V).

Leaders utilized several strategies, beginning with sticking to previously developed plans:

> At first, the faculty said, I don't know that they're going to be ready to do that [move forward with strategic plan] and I said, but we have to make the choice. So I pushed for us to have a meeting of the faculty to talk about this, you know, I said, we can make the choice. We have to know what we're going to do, and for me, and it's something that I shared with the faculty. (6/804/V)

A second strategy was refocusing on the academic mission. Comments such as "We assured folks that the semester was going to continue. That we are going to complete the term" (14/305/ND) and "The students move on. They still need to be academically successful. How do we do that? Help them focus" (13/305/V) were indicative of leaders' determination to make an academic focus foremost in people's minds.

A third strategy, accomplished either intentionally or by default, was to dedicate less administrative time to the crisis (13/305/V).

A final strategy was changing the nature of the institution's response on anniversary dates of the tragedy:

> We planned for the year anniversary and again involved the family, the community. And we really looked at those events. And we really talked about what is this going to be and it was clear from the faculty, the students, the staff's point of view when we did the year what this is going to be. And everybody said it's not going to be another memorial service. We're not there anymore. This is going to be a celebration of these women and their lives and what they accomplished. They made a very deliberate choice of what was going to be the nature of this event. (8/804/V)

Another school took a similar stance but for a different reason:

> Then in the second year of it, the university decided that we would not do anything on campus or participate in anything in the community, because if you think about it, by that time half of the students had gone because they graduated. (4/304/V)

Leading intentional communications efforts.

Directing communications to address emerging issues. Communications became increasingly complex in the ending phases of the crisis. Campus leaders had to tend to not only the critical messages pertaining to the crisis, but the effect of the crisis on institutional reputation. Comments such as “How do you come back and make sure you can tell your story?” (14/305/ND) and “What is the message? What do we want people to know about our university?” (4/304/V) spoke to the latter.

For one school, communications focused on making students more aware of safety issues in a community where a serial killer was still on the loose without creating an overwhelmingly fearful environment:

> We tried to emphasize to the incoming students and the returning students and so on about health and safety and all of those kinds of things. Not in an overly blitzing heavy handed kind of way, but just a little reminder, you know. That kind of thing. When moving day happened, you know, we had like little half sheets of paper, you know. We talked about safety kinds of things, gave it out to the parents and the students as they were moving into the residences halls. (4/304/V)

At another school, communications focused on the good will intentions of the institution: “You maintain the line of communication to let them know that you’re still there for them. You’re still working on the issue. We are still going to return to the campus” (10/305/V).

Becoming much more directed in how to respond (5/804/V), implementing campus public service announcements (4/304/V), and utilizing web pages were specific strategies mentioned: “I think one of the more effective [strategies] was just keeping the word out. Again, to maintain information on the web page. And to let the students know that we were there, planning to be open” (10/305/V).

Formalizing communications with faculty. Schools dealing with a disruption of classes found it necessary to formalize communications with faculty (6/804/V). One campus established a special task force dedicated to communicating with faculty regarding the academic calendar. “We had an academic affairs group and they met Monday, Wednesday, and Friday the week after the storm. Their focus was to communicate with faculty about extending the semester” (14/305/ND). One Residence Life operation designated specific staff whose role it was to communicate information to the faculty, staff and students regarding what was happening in the residence halls (12/305/ND).

Clarifying the leadership infrastructure.

***Broadening the decision-making team and/or process**.* Two participants identified broadening the decision-making team or process as critical in the ending stage. One school expanded the number and nature of people involved in decision-making:

> As far as academics and everything, and we made a decision with our crisis response team and bringing all kinds of people to help make decisions who were not necessarily specifically a part of the particular team, but we made the decision as a university. (4/304/V)

Another focused on the process of gathering information and receiving input to influence decision-making at the upper levels:

> And so to an extent that we got out there and did invite people to comment, to talk with us, and dialogue with us to tell us what we needed to do. What questions needed to be answered. How would they feel safe? What’s needed to be put in place for them to feel safe? Is it a realistic expectation? We had that discussion too. (8/804/V)

One school recognized the importance of having the right players as part of the team: “Only the people who could do something need to be on the team. Otherwise, go away” (11/305/LL).

Modifying leadership approaches and styles as needed.

Exerting compassionate leadership. Several participants recognized that they had to make visible a shift in their leadership focus to accompany the need for formalized healing. “So you have to become a sympathetic listener” (9/804/V), and the following were indicative of leaders expressing awareness of their role of care takers

> So in essence, my major goal was to let them know and to recognize what they had been through. I think that was really what they wanted at that time. Not all of this nitty-gritty stuff. I needed to be able to tell them that and say to them that, you know, we would get through this and talked about how we would proceed to do so, and dealt much more initially with their grief, recognized their mourning, let them know they would have time to do that. To mourn. (6/804/V)

Others modified their leadership behavior:

> I would go out to make rounds. Just deliberately walking around to the faculty offices, to the staff, saying, “Hello, how are you doing? How are things going?” Giving them a hug. That kind of thing. I think I underestimated how important that was. (6/804/V)

For crises in which the physical or psychological safety of the campus had been violated, leaders recognized the importance of providing a safe environment: “In order for people to even start coping, start diffusing, start venting, start feeling something, they need to be in a safe place. But we were able to locate them someplace on campus in order to do that” (8/804/V).

One leader recognized the message sent by exerting emotional support: “Because it was like we didn’t want them to think we were forgetting them or that we were trying to sweep it under the rug and forget it” (6/804/V).

Framing the crisis for others.

Invoking proper perspective. While securing the campus and making it safe was a desired goal, several leaders recognized the importance of keeping a perspective on campus safety. For example, installing common safety features utilized in other types of institutions (such as metal detectors) would change the nature of the historically open campus environment. One individual warned against becoming “overly sensitive to the possibility that it might happen again” (3/304/V). One commented on the use of rituals to communicate the leadership’s perspective:

> And every year on the anniversary we do celebrate it, but we tried to leave it in its time and place. Not make it such a point of focus. Generally what we’ve done, we’ve just had the fifth year anniversary, but we always have a mass. We generally have a reception. Lots of staff come back and do their own thing together. We always invite the families. The father of one of the deceased students has been remarkable. He’s asked for the opportunity to address the incoming classes. He is terrific. He’s balanced. He’s really important to the other students. We’ve never asked him. He’s always wanted to do it. We ring the bells. We do certain things on that day. But we don’t suspend life on that day. It’s built into that day. (11/305/LL)

Making meaning of the event*.* One participant recognized making meaning as a stage of the crisis associated with the return to normal conditions: “then perhaps meaning making, and restoration back to stabilization" (11/305/LL). Another recognized it as essential to moving forward (14/305/ND).

The strategies for making meaning began, for most, with opportunities for group communication and dialogues: "We had a forum to answer questions people had because there was all kinds of rumors and it was just sort of a give and take and it did seem to help clear the air for people" (5/804/V). One campus deferred to the faith community to lead efforts to make meaning (11/305/LL).

Leading the healing process.

Formalizing the healing process. Among the first strategies in the ending stage was for the institution to formalize the healing process beyond their initial responses (6/804/V; 7/804/V; 5/804/V; 9/804/V): "I think we hit another stage when we decided as a university to really kind of help the healing process—so to speak." (4/304/V). The intent behind formalizing the healing process was not only to provide support for those in need, but to stabilize the emotional status of faculty, staff and students: "We needed to deal with their outright fear, their outright grief and let them know they were going to have an opportunity to mourn" (6/V/SN).

Participants reported six strategies. On one campus, leaders met with counselors who were doing assessments to keep in touch with the nature of issues emerging (6/804/V). A second strategy was making counseling available for the long term. One administrator reported that survivors of the tragedy on their campus spent weeks in counseling (8/804/V) and another, citing the need for leaders to be perceptive about how long this type of support was needed, extended counseling on their campus for a year or more (6/804/V).

A third strategy was differentiating the nature of counseling and segmenting the populations of clients to provide targeted counseling (6/804/V; 5/804/V; 1/304/V). While both individual and group counseling was made available, one campus reported that people preferred individual counseling (6/804/V). In at least one case leaders implemented a fourth strategy which was to extend the ranks of the counseling staff to include faculty who were not practitioners but teachers of psychology to help with the counseling load (10/305/V).

Personal counseling was not the only approach taken to address the healing process. Two other strategies were reported. One school used open forums and town halls to allow people to ask questions (8/804/V). Finally, one school was intentional about outreach efforts:

> Instead of doing counseling in the traditional way of waiting for the students to walk in to see what their problems were, we started looking for counseling from a different perspective. Walk out there and see what's out there, and what kinds of problems the students are having. Sit with them in the cafeteria. Look and see if they are in the staircase and talk to them there. So, counseling was not from the traditional setting anymore. (10/305/V)

While not mentioned as a specific strategy, one leader commented on the healing nature of support from colleagues:

> One of the colleges every month did something for this college. Maybe it was bagels and coffee for all the students, faculty and staff. Someone else would bring over roses for everyone, or someone would bring plants for all of us. (6/804/V)

Similarly, upper level leaders stating and demonstrating support and concern for the healing process was significantly important to other leaders and the campus in total: “I think for me, the support that I saw not only from the president, but the provost and vice president within the university was absolutely incredible and that’s what kind of really helped me” (6/804/V).

Investing in the healing process spoke to efforts of campus leaders to ensure not only the physical safety of the campus, but the psychological safety (6/804/V).

***Memorializing**.* Campus leaders recognized the importance of memorializing, not only in terms of allowing people to “let go” (14/305/ND), but as a means of diverting people’s energy (6/804/V). They were appropriately intentional and thoughtful about memorials (4/304/V; 11/305/LL), attending to the details of what was to be involved and what was to be done (4/304/V; 5/804/V).

The most commonly identified strategy to memorialize was the use of rituals and ceremonies. Common among these were candlelight vigils (4/304/V; 13/305/V; 6/804/V), services (4/304/V; 5/804/V; 7/804/V; 10/305/V; 9/804/V), spiritual rituals (6/804/V; 7/804/V; 11/305/LL; 10/305/V), collective marches/walks/runs (7/804/V; 9/804/V), planting or erecting lasting memorials (6/804/V), connecting to current student activities (sited were the clothes line project and take back the night activities) (13/305/V), and dedicating physical space such as courtyards (6/804/V). Rituals and ceremonies were a significant component of the healing process for those traumatized, provided a lasting memory of those who were lost (7/804/V; 9/804/V) and offered a means through which the institution could communicate an ethic of care:

> But they also planted the trees because they wanted people to understand that even with death that life goes on and there is renewal. There’s constant growth

> and renewal that happens in a community where there is a college campus community or a community at large, and that's the symbolism of the way those five trees were planted. But the names are there, and you can walk back there behind that part of the library and see that. (4/304/V)

Informal methods of memorializing were also used. At the school where two faculty members were murdered, others asked to move into the offices of their slain colleagues (6/804/V). Their college also created another means through which their colleagues would be remembered:

> Many of us wear these little pins that help us to think about our colleagues. The pin was designed by the college of architecture and we passed all those out to our students, faculty and staff. It's just a nice way to remember. (6/804/V)

Another strategy was being inclusive when considering who should be involved in the design and implementation of rituals and ceremonies. Campus leaders recognized that allowing employees and students to memorialize those who lost their lives was an important component of healing. Making sure that students had a role and, as one participant stated, "having a ceremony that included student voices alternating with other folks who would logically speak so that it was an even handed thing" (13/305/V). Others recognized the importance of engaging family members (4/304/V; 13/305/V; 6/804/V):

> I suggested that we invite [the mother of a missing student] to speak, and, I'm telling you, it was just powerful for them and for us. And the students led a candle vigil and I was in the house having dinner with the mother and the students put out luminaries all up and down University avenue because leading up, we were going to have the event leading all the way to the sorority—that's

> about two blocks. All those luminaries. And they were trying to do a fundraiser through the luminaries so they could have scholarship money. So tying through activities with such practices of education and the students led the way for much of that. (13/305/V)

Yet another strategy was being intentional about the degree and nature of religion in the ceremonies. One leader knew it was important to accommodate the requests of staff:

> I had staff who—many of the them are Latino and Roman Catholic—who came to me and asked me if a priest could come and bless the building, and I said, “Absolutely.” So we announced that a priest was coming and all those who would like to participate in the blessing of the building, please come. I went with them, and we went through the entire building and had a blessing of the building. Then we had a Native American healer come and do a cleansing of the building with chanting and sage and the like and what have you. So we had to make it safe. (6/804/V)

Another was careful about the nature of a religious service and who should deliver it:

> So the ritual, the memorial service, was a huge ritual and it was celebrated around a mass, which is appropriate in our situation. We attempted to make it ecumenical and we built pieces around it. We tried to make sure the right people played a role in it. (11/305/LL)

Anniversary events provided yet another opportunity for memorializing (11/305/LL; 6/804/V). Two specific strategies were identified. The first was cancellation of classes to remind the campus community of the event (6/804/V). The second was the establishment of an annual event: “We had a 5k memorial walk/run. We had it there on the plaza and involved the community. We had a tremendous response. A fantastic response. About eight thousand people participated" 6/804/V).

For one participant, it was not something tangible that provided a reassuring demonstration that those slain would not be forgotten:

> So we didn't create memorials in that way, you know, that this is going to be it, we choose to remember them. But we have a level of awareness about them and I think a lot of that is deliberate. I think that's important. [Name deleted] birthday was Monday. I know that. I think there is a commitment to remember these—that they will not be forgotten. But we think of them now in terms of their most horrific day on this earth. We need to think of them more with respect to their contributions—the great [word deleted], educators, and women that they were. (6/804/V)

Reclaiming the site(s) of traumatic events*.* The strategies utilized to reclaim the site of a traumatic event varied based on the nature of the crisis and the culture of the campus. For some, rituals provided the means by which space could be reclaimed:

> The President walked across campus and everybody followed and the [words deleted] bell was ringing in the background. And this walk from the main campus to the college signaled to the entire campus that we're in this together. We're all going to walk together in the heat. It was hot. And I think that event really did do more to pull the entire campus together and start the healing process in a very positive way. That we have all been wounded—not just those poor students. It said to everybody, "we suffered, and we are together. Walk over together and take over the building again." That was the first time we had gotten back into the building. (7/804/V)

Leaders at another school took a very different approach. The site of the crisis was where the perpetrator rather than victims had been killed:

> So having those concrete images there. I know that they have closed off that room. I don’t think they’ll ever use it again. I think it was made a storage unit or something. But there was a lot of work repairing bullet holes and doors and this kind of thing. (2/304/V)

Another school found itself still attempting to reclaim a site a year after the event:

> Now the first anniversary there were student events on that floor. Actually, the president was up there then, too. There were a lot of rituals on the first anniversary. A mass, readings. Somebody had donated a bell tower with three bells. We had installed a round circular stone in front of the residence hall with the word “Remember” over it. Made sort of a contemplative garden in front of the building. (11/305/LL)

One campus utilized portable classrooms while restoring and constructing classrooms:

> And one of the mechanisms that we put into place is constructing new classroom space. You know, where we took away cafeteria space. Took away a fitness center. We took away some student development area space to create classrooms. We took the classrooms out because we managed to rent another building and the after effect is great. We got enough money where we had some brick walls around the dining rooms, and we have enough money now where we took out the brick walls. And now they get to look out the windows. And they now see outside on the water because we’re on the water. Now who’s enjoying

> it? The students that are currently enrolled. Did they know what it looked like or anything before 9-11? So they don't appreciate it. (10/305/V)

Leading efforts to learn from the crisis.

Formalizing ways to learn from the crisis. "Another aspect of moving on is what did we learn?" (14/305/ND). The first strategy employed to learn from the event was agreeing on a philosophical approach to analyzing the school's response. One school committed itself to an extended period of analysis based on improvement rather than blame:

> And we decided that rather than a postmortem that almost had a kind of clinical tone to it, we would work more with our policies and get the right people in the room to talk about what the gaps were and move forward. So our focus wasn't so much on what we can learn from tracing back all the steps of this perpetrator but what we can learn in terms of how we move forward, anticipating something like this might happen again. And I do think it was a conscious decision. (5/804/V)

A second strategy was to use information gleaned from post-crisis analysis to continue to refine and strengthen relationships with the university Crisis Incident Response Team (CIRT) (4/304/V):

> One participant recognized the difficulty in separating recovery from learning.
> I think we're still in—the recovery is still the same—the best word. I don't know how to describe it. For lack of a better word it's sort of recovery, but then it's not. We're continuing to educate ourselves. We're continuing to put into place those things that decrease risk behavior. (8/804/V)

Engaging in thoughtful self-analysis. Most schools engaged in some kind of analysis and self reflection on their institutional performance in the latter stages of the crisis. Analysis questions included the following: How could we handle it better in the future? What did we have in place? What worked well? What did we not have in place? Did we do everything we could have? Did everybody do the right thing? What plan do we have in place if this happens again? (3/304/V; (2/304/V).

Investing in future crisis prevention. While catastrophic events are infrequent and unlikely, campus leaders in this study were determined to prevent them from happening again, and committed themselves to being better prepared for and able to mitigate the resulting damage. One common response was to increase training for the campus crisis response team, as well as strengthening relations between the team and others on campus (4/304/V).

For another school the answer was an educational campaign to educate faculty and staff of the warning signs of emerging dangerous behavior, accomplished by engaging a consulting firm to produce training CDs (7/804/V):

> So the mature stage of response to a crisis such as the [word deleted] murders, which is just now—the one that we are just now entering—manifests itself in an effort to provide training programs for all faculty, students and staff so they can be more sophisticated observers of their fellow faculty and staff, so they're more likely to recognize symptoms of the

Table 8

End Stage: Strategies by Number of Participants Reporting and Typology Classification

Strategies	No. participants addressing theme N = 14	Typology categories addressed by theme		
		Victim	Natural disaster	Legal liability
Leading planning & policy development				
Leading planning efforts	5	X	X	
Establishing means to guide students leaving school	6	X		
Leading the campus in moving on	5	X		X
Leading intentional communications efforts				
Directing communications to address emerging issues	7	X	X	
Formalizing communications with faculty	1		X	
Clarifying the leadership infrastructure				
Broadening the decision-making team &/or process	1	X		
Modifying approach/style				
Exerting compassionate leadership	2	X		
Framing the crisis for others				
Invoking proper perspective	2	X		
Making meaning of the event	1			X
Leading the healing process				
Formalizing the healing process	9	X	X	
Memorializing	8	X		X
Reclaiming the site(s) of traumatic events	4	X		
Leading efforts to learn from the crisis				
Formalizing ways to learn from the crisis	2	X	X	
Engaging in thoughtful self-analysis	3	X		
Investing in future crisis prevention	4	X	X	X

> potentially dangerous behavior and more likely to report those symptoms when they recognize them. (9/804/V)

Another institution used after action reviews: “We will use that as we review our coop plan and as we review our hurricane preparation beginning in May for the June season” (14/305/ND).

Table 8 summarizes the leadership strategies utilized by campus leaders during the end stage of crisis by the number of participants addressing the theme and the crisis type.

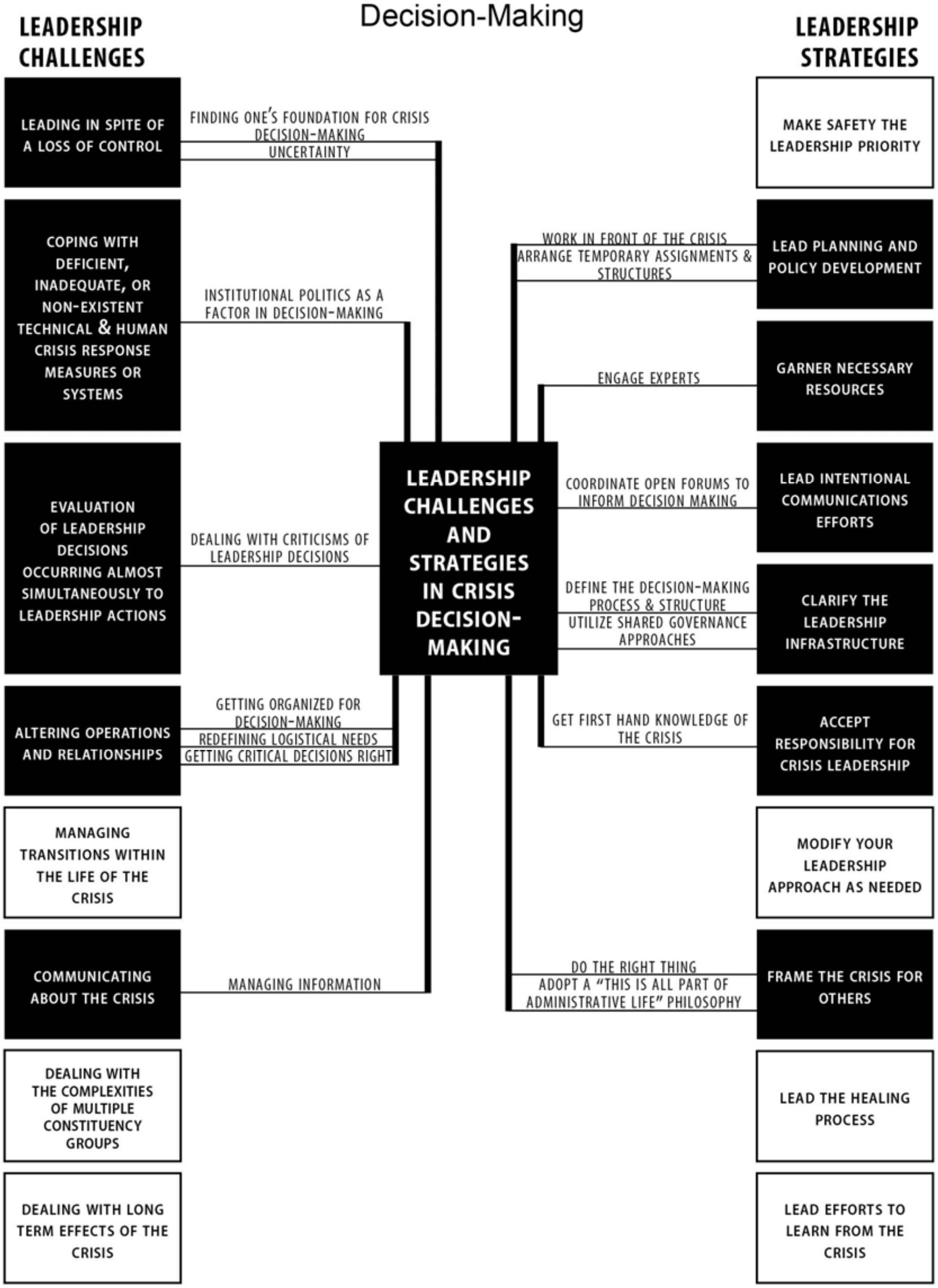
Challenges and Strategies in Fields of Crisis Leadership

This section will develop leadership challenges and strategies in three fields of crisis leadership: crisis decision-making, leading multiple constituency groups, and crisis communications. Challenges and strategies for each area will be developed.

Crisis Decision-Making Challenges and Strategies

Figure 6 depicts the leadership challenges and strategies utilized in the field of crisis decision-making. Five of the challenge meta-themes were inherent in crisis decision-making, along with six of the strategy meta-themes.

Figure 6 Leadership Challenges and Strategies in Crisis Decision-Making


LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES
LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES
LEADING IN SPITE OF A LOSS OF CONTROL
FINDING ONE'S FOUNDATION FOR CRISIS DECISION-MAKING
UNCERTAINTY
COPING WITH DEFICIENT, INADEQUATE, OR NON-EXISTENT TECHNICAL & HUMAN CRISIS RESPONSE MEASURES OR SYSTEMS
INSTITUTIONAL POLITICS AS A FACTOR IN DECISION-MAKING
EVALUATION OF LEADERSHIP DECISIONS OCCURRING ALMOST SIMULTANEOUSLY TO LEADERSHIP ACTIONS
DEALING WITH CRITICISMS OF LEADERSHIP DECISIONS
ALTERING OPERATIONS AND RELATIONSHIPS
GETTING ORGANIZED FOR DECISION-MAKING
REDEFINING LOGISTICAL NEEDS
GETTING CRITICAL DECISIONS RIGHT
MANAGING TRANSITIONS WITHIN THE LIFE OF THE CRISIS
COMMUNICATING ABOUT THE CRISIS
MANAGING INFORMATION
DEALING WITH THE COMPLEXITIES OF MULTIPLE CONSTITUENCY GROUPS
DEALING WITH LONG TERM EFFECTS OF THE CRISIS
LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES IN CRISIS DECISION-MAKING
MAKE SAFETY THE LEADERSHIP PRIORITY
WORK IN FRONT OF THE CRISIS
ARRANGE TEMPORARY ASSIGNMENTS & STRUCTURES
LEAD PLANNING AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT
ENGAGE EXPERTS
GARNER NECESSARY RESOURCES
COORDINATE OPEN FORUMS TO INFORM DECISION MAKING
LEAD INTENTIONAL COMMUNICATIONS EFFORTS
DEFINE THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS & STRUCTURE
UTILIZE SHARED GOVERNANCE APPROACHES
CLARIFY THE LEADERSHIP INFRASTRUCTURE
GET FIRST HAND KNOWLEDGE OF THE CRISIS
ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY FOR CRISIS LEADERSHIP
MODIFY YOUR LEADERSHIP APPROACH AS NEEDED
DO THE RIGHT THING
ADOPT A "THIS IS ALL PART OF ADMINISTRATIVE LIFE" PHILOSOPHY
FRAME THE CRISIS FOR OTHERS
LEAD THE HEALING PROCESS
LEAD EFFORTS TO LEARN FROM THE CRISIS

Crisis Decision-Making: Leadership Challenges

Five meta-themes associated with challenges were prominent in the field of crisis decision-making. These were (a) leading in spite of a loss of control, (b) coping with deficient, inadequate, or non-existent technical and human crisis response systems, (c) assessing and evaluating almost simultaneously with leadership decisions, (d) communicating about the crisis, and (e) altering operations and relationships.

Leading in spite of a loss of control.

Finding a foundation for crisis decision-making. “I suppose you are tempted to try to show authority in leadership by doing something, but I couldn’t think of anything whatsoever to do!” (3/304/V). This remark by one participant illuminates his entry into decision-making during crisis. Several participants described the internal struggle faced and ultimate resolution regarding what to do and how to do it when finding oneself in a crisis. None of the participants identified a leadership theory or model that served as a guidepost for decision-making, and some commented on the lack of such a guidepost:

> It was not part of any kind of leadership scheme you have or even thinking ahead, “if this kind of thing happens, this is what I am going to do.” You had no idea, so things just kind of came to you as you were doing it. (3/304/V).

Another participant explained:

> I think all leaders are conscious of the fact that they are leaders. You don’t forget that. But I don’t ever remember consciously thinking of any symbolism—that this is symbolic that I show that the university cares. I just thought that’s where I ought to be. That’s what I ought to do. (3/304/V)

For most, it was much more personal: “Well, what I ought to do as a leader is go out to the hospital. It just seemed like a natural thing to find out how she was doing” (3/304/V).

This comment was typical of participants who indicated that decision-making was done by “feel” or what came naturally.

Personal orientation was not the only thing guiding decision-making by campus leaders. For some it was understanding their own limitations and the importance of deferring to those who had expertise: “The last thing you want to do then is try to tell the police how to run something like this where there, goodness sake, when you are the lay person with no experience at all handling something like that” (3/304/V).

For another it was gauging one’s actions based on a “read” of the situation combined with personal wisdom, “Knowing when to step up and when to step back” (9/804/V). For another it was predicated by the nature of the crisis: “Your response is dictated by the kind of crisis it is and your role is dictated by the type of crisis that it is” (8/804/V). And for another, it was an assessment of the strength of the people and procedures in place to deal with the crisis: “And so I felt, well, the institution is strong” (3/304/V). One individual summed up the personal quandary associated with crisis decision-making, “So you don’t have any experience. And you are guided mainly by instinct. You do subconscious thinking.” (3/304/V).

Uncertainty. Complicating the issue of drawing on one’s foundation for decision-making, was simply uncertainty about what to do. Participants expressed several concerns beginning with the acknowledgement that there is no way to be totally prepared for most crises and that every crisis contains elements that are out of the control of campus leaders. But many identified lack of preparedness—either personal or institutional—as the cause. For one participant lack of preparedness stemmed from the disconnect between the crisis response team and campus leaders:

> In this day, on college campuses, there's a lot more crises I think. If you had a crisis response team—at least from my perspective—and other people in the office didn't exactly know what this team should be doing, and you're just out there on your own and doing the best you can without much training or knowledge of what else is going on. I felt very ill-prepared. (2/304/V)

One individual focused on the very core of leadership as the problem. Problems began with a lack of leadership focus or direction: "Not really focused and no strong guidance or leadership or no understanding for what would happen given the different types of situations that could arise." Failure to function effectively as a leadership team was also part of the problem:

> There were so many folks on campus that wanted to take control and didn't want to just turn that over. O.K., let's have some leadership. There needs to be clear guidance, clear direction, and a lot of us just need to be followers. (12/305/ND)

The inability to fully understand the situation compounded the leadership problem:

> I saw that there were lots and lots of people making lots and lots of decisions with some assumptions on what had happened on previous issues or crises, but not really looking at how are we going to frame this instance or what was really ahead of us. (12/305/ND)

Lack of understanding of who was to do what and questioning of the soundness of leadership decisions also contributed to the uncertainty, along with fear of being found out: "We had a bit of a panic mode that set in because there was something—"Oh my goodness, we've got to make like we know what we're doing" (12/305/ND).

For others, uncertainty came from hesitancy to address conflict. One participant recalled a situation in which an employee was mishandling the crisis and needed to be confronted: “It was kind of like the wheels had been set in process. But I’m sure that I needed to be more assertive” (2/304/V). For another it was the struggle to monitor one’s own personal tendencies: “This recognition, I think, that I want to overcompensate. That this was an emergency and you want to do what’s reasonable, but don’t go too far” (7/804/V).

For one leader, the uncertainty about what to do stemmed from a genuine dilemma about where he should physically be and why: “I can remember debating that. Should I go over [to the crisis site]? Or would it be better to stay here, and therefore I can get information from a variety of places?” (3/304/V).

Another not only understood the source of uncertainty, but recognized the high stakes it carried in times of crisis: “There’s no instructions for a job like this—no training program. And so it’s just by experience and observation that you finally get it through your head that people attach a significance to your behavior that’s not really rational” (9/804/V).

Coping with deficient, inadequate, or non-existent technical and human crisis response systems.

Institutional politics as a factor in decision-making. As if the crisis were not enough, participants identified institutional politics as a challenge in effective decision-making. A dominant but difficult personality required one administrator to go to battle in the early stages of the crisis:

> We had a new [administrator] . . . who was pretty taken with himself. And also almost started making speeches at our first cabinet meeting, which got my back up a little bit. You know, he was starting to sound as if he thought he was going to direct Student Affairs about what we were going to be doing and that was just

> not going to happen. So I had an initial conflict with him for multiple reasons. . . . I didn’t think I needed his direction to figure out what I needed to do. And he was very quickly descended upon by other members of the cabinet, which sort of cut him off at the knees. The executive team just really pulled together with the exception of the one person who thought they were going to take control and was least equipped to take control from our collective sense, and he became very isolated very quickly. We didn’t see him for a couple days. He was marginalized by the rest of us. And I didn’t really care. (11/305/LL)

On one campus, the President had to intervene to combat territorialism between two departments who were expected to work together:

> I saw that there was a lot of sort of “I’m not supposed to do it, they’re supposed to do it. It’s not my job, it’s their job.” I saw a lot of that and so our President came in—and I really give him a great deal of credit—and said this is what will happen. Period. It will happen. There was still some aftermath of that. (12/305/ND)

Individuals and entities understanding the consequences of their behaviors and decisions sometimes had far-reaching consequences. At one school, decisions by the maintenance department thwarted the efforts of those organizing search parties to look for a missing student:

> Unintended consequences. All year long there had been a plan for electrical outage for the residence hall for some kind of maintenance. So that weekend students were all told to go home or go live with a buddy because of an entire section of the campus being an intentional maintenance issue. All of the sudden you don’t have an entire group of volunteers you might normally have. So the

> unintended consequences of other people's decisions affect how you might have someone help. (13/305/V)

Structural issues, either organizationally or within the chain of command also created unanticipated challenges in decision-making. A leader at one school realized that how she was asking employees to function challenged the historical relationship between leaders and followers, the culture of the institution, and the methods by which employees completed tasks:

> They're such a collaborative group and prior to my arrival everybody thought that they all needed to get information from me. And if they didn't hear it from me then it wasn't good enough. And I said, "No, this Director is doing this and the Associate Director is doing this. This coordinator will do this." This is how we'll report to it and then they're going to bring their projects back and come back in. (12/305/ND)

In one case, organizational structure played a role both in how the institution responded to the crisis and the nature of the crisis experience for the students. The situation involved the relationship between the main campus and the campus of a professional school:

> The students are really considered undergraduates. Their clinical years are very much on this campus. There's an undergraduate campus which those students sort of fit into—actually move back and forth taking courses. Then there's the Health Sciences campus, which is predominately a graduate campus. So they were hybrids in a sense. And when they and the leaders were looking at who's in charge, where do I go for help, people were going both directions. And we had to work that out. There were counselors for undergraduate students and

> there were counselors for the graduate students, and the medical students, and the other graduate type students. So that brought in a new challenge of it. And the question arose—does this process of dealing with this emergency take place in our campus or on the main campus? And the students, as I said, were a little bit pulled in both ways. Some more than others—but predominately looked to the medical campus. Most of them had transitioned into the medical campus. They felt like they were part of the health sciences. Yet, I think a lot of the leaders still weren't clear. (7/804/V)

Another factor that challenged the decision-making process had to do with old assumptions and the inability to overcome patterns of behavior and thinking based on the past. One leader found it difficult to influence the decision-making process and direction regarding use of residence halls. Because the original design and construction of the residence halls had largely been controlled by facilities, there was not unilateral recognition of the decision-making authority of the Vice President for Student Affairs and the Director of Residence Life regarding the use of the residence halls during the crisis: "I think my observation would be that's the way it had always been and we were a young institution" (12/305/ND). Individuals who were new to their institution saw their newness as a positive factor in combating history that influenced those with a longer institutional history: "I think we were ignorant enough to be open to mutual ground whereas someone who had been here a longer time might have pushed the process one way more than another" (7/804/V).

Assessment and evaluation occurring almost simultaneously with leadership decisions.

Dealing with criticism of leadership decisions*.* Criticism of leadership decisions became an emerging dilemma as the crisis moved into the aftermath phases. The frustrations for leaders stemmed from the fact that people did not understand the reasons behind decisions. Foremost among the critics were the media:

> We were criticized some for the coverage in the newspaper. Interesting. The newspaper stayed on our campus. Some of the reporters were on our campus, and they at one point wrote a story that said they couldn't find anybody at the university. Bizarre. (13/ND/VSA)

The most common focal point of criticism was the question of whether or not a campus was safe and the inherent question of whether there was something more campus leaders could have done to prevent a crisis:

> I think there was a criticism about security in the halls. That how could a young man who was high and had a pistol get into the hall and up to the rooms and do that? How safe are our children? (2/304/V)

Three campuses reported taking criticism for the actions of external agencies and actors. In one case, the university was criticized for the poor performance of a community social service group allowed on campus during a natural disaster:

> One of the biggest things we were criticized for was the Red Cross had a shelter on our campus in one of our other buildings. They blew it. They will admit that they blew it. They had no food. We had food for our students in our shelter, so we had folks coming over that we could not allow the two groups to mix. An intentional decision to not do that because we couldn't monitor those folks and

> they—I did not interact with the folks that were in the shelter—but some of my colleagues said it was a good decision. It was a hard decision because it's like you care for people but it would not have been a good mix of groups. We have 18-24 year-old students and we have a responsibility to them and their parents not to mix them with just anybody from our community. So we were criticized for that. (14/305/ND)

For two schools, the external agency that drew criticism was law enforcement. In one case, comments from a law enforcement official created distractions (4/304/V). In another case, the decisions of a sniper team who killed a murderer who had taken students hostage became the focus (2/304/V).

Specific decisions that drew criticism fell into six categories: (a) decisions regarding students, (b) facilities and property, (c) use of staff, (d) placement of upper level leaders, (e) processes, and (f) poor performance of staff. Decisions regarding students for one school involved the institution's refusal to allow students back to campus immediately following the crisis (14/305/ND; 12/305/ND). For another, it was orchestrating back to back events, the structure of which inadvertently placed students in the same environment with the media (4/304/V). And for another, it was lack of forethought about the special needs of a particular student population (12/305/ND). Decisions regarding staff that drew criticism involved the reassignment of staff and bringing staff in from other institutions rather than using one's own (12/305/ND). Allowing non-university personnel into student buildings and opening on-campus residence halls for cleaning also drew criticism for one leader:

> I was criticized because I let the custodial staff members come into every single one of the rooms to clean and discard rotten food and things from the

> refrigerators. I was criticized in articles, newspaper articles that were written for my decision to do that. There were items that were—we really didn't know if students had lost them or if things were stolen. (12/305/ND)

Criticism regarding the placement of campus leaders occurred at a campus where a hostage situation was unfolding: "I think there was criticism that the president and the vice president of student affairs were right there on the scene when the bullets were flying. Were they safe? There was some criticism there" (2/304/V). Leaders at one school found themselves dealing with criticism regarding the nature of the process used to conduct the post-crisis analysis (5/804/V) and the rate at which processes were moving (7/804/V). Finally, two institutions reported criticism directed at the performance of particular key leaders (12/305/ND; 2/304/V).

Criticism was not a leadership dilemma for all participants. Several participants indicated that they did not receive criticism for a variety of reasons (9/804/V; 1/304/V; 3/304/V; 11/305/LL). Among these were a collective recognition that it was not appropriate to criticize in light of the magnitude of the crisis (10/305/V), speculation that upper level administrators are too insulated and people do not want to report criticisms to them (9/804/V), a lack of serious injury or deaths resulting from the crisis (3/304/V), a lack of grounds for legal actions (3/304/V), recognition that the university was not to blame (3/304/V), and parent satisfaction with the manner in which the crisis was handled (1/304/V). Several individuals reported receiving accolades (9/804/V; 11/305/LL; 13/305/V). Students' criticism of the decisions at one school became a rallying point for other students who defended their institutional leaders:

> the students that replied "how dare you comment and criticize these individuals . . . when they are trying to help us to be able to complete the semester." And that

> was a very proud moment to know that there were students who were really, really dedicated to the institution. It was a very proud moment. 12/305/ND)

One participant reflected on the impact a lack of criticism had on subsequent leadership decisions. One was the institution's orientation toward "lawyering up": "I think if we would have come under a severe attack, then I think the temptation would have been there" (3/304/V). The second had to do with putting additional security measures in place following the incident.

> Given the fact that we were not attacked for it, we then didn't impose the kind of security measures that one could have done, but which I think would have been then an overreaction to a situation you can't control anyway. (3/VP)

Communicating about the crisis.

Managing information. Information management played a critical role in decision-making and allowing campus leaders to organize for action. Four challenges presented themselves in this category: (a) differentiating information based on constituency groups, (b) identifying the appropriate source for disseminating information, (c) controlling misinformation, and (d) establishing an information infrastructure.

The need to control misinformation drove many leadership decisions regarding information management. Recognizing the potential for worsening a situation, leaders focused on accuracy and a need to know. The information disseminators changed over the life of the crisis. For one campus, the nature of the crisis necessitated that this be an individual from off campus emergency response personnel in the early stages of the crisis:

> Initially, the county emergency management guy, the police management guy, kind of orchestrated that meeting. And the purpose of that really was information. Because it is a dilemma to maintain communication of accurate information and ensuring that the right people are getting the right information. (11/305/LL)

One crucial area of information management concerned establishing an infrastructure for communicating with students, staff, parents and the public. Several participants spoke of the importance of web-based communications. And in the case of one foreseen natural disaster, information dissemination via the web prior to the crisis was essential to the safety of students and staff as well as the continuity of operations. Information management was particularly complex in the chaotic early stages of the crisis because, as one participant said, “We didn’t know what we knew or didn’t know” (11/305/LL).

Altering operations and relationships*.*

Getting organized for decision-making. Mobilizing for effective decision-making began with the inner circle of higher-level administrators on the campus: “It was clear that as an executive team we needed to make some decisions pretty quickly. We needed to secure the campus” (11/305/LL). The first component of mobilizing was gathering the key decision-makers (13/305/V; 10/305/V) and then establishing meeting frequency, duration and structure (10/305/V; 11/305/LL; 13/305/V; 12/305/ND; 14/305/ND). For at least one school, this was more difficult than it sounds: “How often do you call meetings? When do you start letting people back off? That was complicated by all the funerals and memorial services” (7/804/V). Ancillary to assembling the decision-making team was identifying a location that could serve as the headquarters/meeting place. For a school contained within one building that was lost to the crisis, leaders not only lost meeting space but the "heart or brain trust" of the school (10/305/V). Additional issues to be addressed as part of getting organized for decision-making were establishing a chain of command (14/305/ND) and identifying the leadership agenda (12/305/ND; 14/305/ND). It should be noted that at least one participant stated that there were no strategy sessions or major meetings of the executive team during the crisis (3/304/V).

Redefining logistical needs. Part of getting organized for decision-making was sorting through and prioritizing the demanding and endless list of logistical decisions. Three categories of logistics were identified as priorities.

Clearly, safety issues topped the list. Once an assessment of safety concerns was underway, campus leaders then had to sort through the best options for addressing these. Decisions focused on restoring the physical safety of the campus, along with implementing safety practices for staff as they conducted their work.

Tending to the logistical needs of students, staff, and in some cases, emergency personnel and volunteers was a second logistical area of concern. Providing housing and food for displaced students, emergency workers, or affected family members, and assigning university staff to tend to them was a challenge. Providing communications options for students to contact family members was another logistical issue. Tending to student needs, for one school, began with an assessment of whether or not the institution could address their needs: "We still had loads of students that we needed to do some triage on—to figure out—do we need to ship them off somewhere?" (11/305/LL).

Reorganizing the infrastructure and facilities was another challenging logistical area. Cases involving significant destruction required campus leaders to rethink previous paradigms about how the campus and its infrastructure was to be experienced. One urban school, having lost not only part of their own buildings but several around them, found themselves forging new pathways to bring students back to campus:

> She and I had to walk it and see it first hand the day before [reopening day]. We got up like at 3am to lay out signs and directions. This is how to get there. Because we had to walk it. You have to think like a student. You know, when you come there, where do you have to go next? Do it first hand to see it. (10/305/V)

Temporarily renaming buildings also contributed to the campus leaders' role as sense-maker:

> But not only did we do that, we had to have signage to go to these new places because they didn't know them anymore. And now we had new—like a Hall was "F" or "101" or whatever. And so now they are seeing "W" and "H" in front of the room number that they had never seen before. So we had to have signage going in all these directions, telling them where to go. (10/305/V)

This (re)construction of a navigation system for the campus required campus leaders to not only think like students, but understand how students and staff would interact with the physical environment.

The final area of logistical decisions was personal. Faced with the potential of long hours on the job, some campus leaders were immediately challenged with taking care of the home front:

> I have two young children. Making sure that as I left the house at 4:30 in the morning there was a plan for care. You know, a plan to keep their schedule as stable as it should be and predictable. So managing the home front as I depart from one role and enter another was a dilemma. (11/305/LL)

Getting critical decisions right*.* One challenge associated with crisis decision-making was accurately focusing on the decision areas that needed to be addressed and making the right call on the most critical and immediate decisions. Decisions concerning safety—physical, emotional and psychological—came first. Several participants sited the myriad decisions concerning logistics as the most demanding of their attention. Challenges and dilemmas associated with timelines for openings and closings (12/305/ND; 11/305/LL; 14/305/ND) written or verbal plans to be communicated to others (12/305/ND), temporary infrastructures and policies for dealing with students (13/305/V), means and methods for the resumption of activities, and handling staff issues (14/305/ND) were all identified as the most challenging decisions.

What made these decision points the most challenging was as varied as the decisions to be made. At one school, several critical decisions involved the safety and welfare of staff:

> One was that we closed the campus early. We made that decision. The storm was still pretty far out in the gulf. It was coming towards, I think, New Orleans, all the way over to Apalachicola which was pretty much that stretch of the panhandle. We didn’t know exactly where it was going, but we decided to close the campus Monday afternoon and said, Go home and get your homes ready. Get your plywood up. Get your homes ready. Evacuate the area. Don’t be part of the backup, the clog up. That was the biggest piece because folks could get

> out of the area, particularly as that storm continued to turn in the gulf. (14/305/ND)

This same school identified another critical decision concerning staff that not only benefited the welfare of staff, but also communicated a powerful symbolic message:

> We did make a decision that even though we were closed three weeks, all of our employees did get paid, with the exception of those that were OPS--we could not pay them legally. Our salary and our support staff who are hourly but they are part of our work force did get paid for those three weeks. Can you imagine not getting paid for three weeks? And it's not your fault? So some of those dilemmas. We really had to think big and all the aspects. (14/305/ND)

Another staff-related decision was controversial:

> This is something that I did. I don't know how popular a decision this was, but I would still stand by it. I wanted to bring—I put the call out the Saturday we closed down the shelter to all of my peers in the state and asked for help. I said please come and help us. This is what we need. I sent out a list of probably 25 items and the kind of help we need. . . . I took some critical feedback because my staff said "What about me?" or "Don't you think I'm good enough? Why can't I come back? I can do this, I promise you." That's when I said, "No. We want people to do it for you because we need you to be fresh and ready and you're going to be busy enough when your students get back." And it was an amazing decision and I'm glad I did it. I think it was best for the university. It helped us to get the buildings open in a very, very short time. (12/305/ND)

Critical decisions concerning staff were not the only challenges facing leaders at this school. On-going assessment of the institution’s capacity to care for students yielded another critical decision point:

> But we closed our shelter. That was one of the biggest decisions we had to make. We didn’t have the ability to be an open long-term shelter. So as part of that assessment, we decided we are going to be closed for a period of time. We cannot house students in a room like this. We communicated that to the students. (14/305/ND)

Several participants identified going public with whether or not to hold classes, the timeline for the resumption of classes or adjusting the academic calendar as critical decisions. One participant understood the commitment and institutional obligation for making public announcements:

> We’re going to make a deliberate choice about that because if we choose to move forward, we’re really going to have to do that. And if we’re not, we need to write out plans and what it is we’re saying we’re doing and put another timeline on that. (6/804/V)

The implications of going public were not the only factors that made some decisions more critical than others. For some, it was the potential consequences for failing to meet deadlines. “We were on a tight timeline and we really needed to make sure we could manage the students and have them come back to safe buildings again” (12/305/ND). For others, it was preventing bad decisions from being made: “And the central office had a plan in mind where we were going to disseminate our students throughout the rest of the university system. We were supposed to give them all up to register at the other universities!” (10/305/V). For others it was sorting through the potential legal ramifications of the decision:

> So the President made the determination that he didn’t much care. We are going to turn this [a missing student’s computer] over to law enforcement to see if there is anything there. He said that if someone is going to sue us, we’ll have to deal with that. So, in the meanwhile doing the right thing for the right reasons and not worrying about protecting the institution from reasonable risk—it’s not an issue if somebody’s life might be at stake. (13/305/V)

For one leader, the most critical decision was one that never had to be made: “Maybe he [the hostage-taker] is going to make some demands, and . . . somebody from the institution is going to have to respond to those demands. That did not happen, so I never had to do that” (3/304/V).

Table 9 summarizes the leadership challenges inherent in crisis decision-making by the number of participants addressing the theme and the crisis type.

Table 9

Crisis Decision-Making: Challenges by Number of Participants Reporting and Typology Classification

Challenges	No. participants addressing theme N = 14	Typology categories addressed by theme		
		Victim	Natural disaster	Legal liability
Leading in spite of loss of control				
Finding a foundation for crisis decision-making	3	X		
Uncertainty	9	X	X	
Coping with deficient response systems				
Institutional politics as a factor in decision-making	4	X	X	X
Assessment & evaluation occurring simultaneously with leadership decisions				
Dealing with criticism of leadership decisions	13	X	X	X
Communicating about the crisis				
Managing information	2			
Altering operations & relationships				
Getting organized for decision-making	4	X	X	X
Redefining logistical needs	5	X	X	X
Getting critical decisions right	3		X	X

Crisis Decision-Making: Leadership Strategies

Six meta-themes associated with crisis decision-making were prominent among strategies in this field. These strategies were (a) garnering necessary resources; leading planning and policy development; leading intentional communications efforts; clarifying the leadership infrastructure; accepting responsibility for crisis leadership; and framing the crisis for others.

Garnering necessary resources.

Engaging experts. Experts of various types and sources were involved in decision-making at different stages of the crisis. In some cases, experts were sought out and engaged by campus leaders. Others were professionals inherently connected to particular types or magnitudes of crises. Some campus leaders drew from the ready-made bevy of on-campus experts, and others went off campus for vendors and consultants.

Three categories of on-campus experts were reported as being called upon by campus leaders. First were staff who could provide psychological counseling to victims. These included not only licensed staff from the campus counseling center, but others for whom counseling, in some form, was an inherent part of their job. Staff trained in crisis response, such as members of the crisis response team were a second group. Faculty with expertise in an area specific to the nature of the crisis were the third category. A faculty member who had conducted research on those who act out violently, and another with expertise in violence in the workplace were among those called upon after a shooting at one campus. Faculty from engineering and architecture were asked to lend their expertise on their home campus after several buildings had been devastated by a natural disaster.

Emergency response personnel were foremost among the off campus experts present during and after the crisis. The nature of the relationship between campus leaders and emergency response personnel varied greatly. In some cases, campus leaders deferred entirely to this group of experts. This was particularly true in the early stages of a catastrophic crisis or one involving crime. In these cases campus leaders and emergency response personnel operated almost as a tag team. Campus leaders only assumed their leadership role once emergency response teams exited the campus. By contrast, other leaders worked in tandem with this group of experts, including them as part of the executive leadership team. Police, fire, hospital workers and members of other social service agencies were among the off campus experts campus leaders engaged. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) had a physical presence on campus in some cases, but was more often an absent expert:

> For me it was learning as much as I possibly could from the FEMA pages before the storm. It seems like a small piece but I remember taking some of that information home and just reading through it and I knew what we would have to be prepared for in case the hurricane actually hit us. There were a couple of folks on campus who became really knowledgeable folks about FEMA. (12/305/ND)

Campus leaders sometimes sought out consultants and vendors based on particular needs. One campus engaged the services of a professional company as part of the clean up after a natural disaster: “We literally had to remove students’ belongings out of all of their rooms with a professional company. We moved it to a warehouse, then orchestrated the claims process for the students” (11/305/LL). An outside firm was used to assess damage to roofs and structures as well as the recreation center pool on another campus. And a bid process was initiated as part of the healing process after a campus shooting to select a vendor capable of training faculty and staff to recognize students who may cross the line and act out in violence.

In one instance the external experts were not consultants or vendors but higher education colleagues. One campus contacted another who had been through a similar situation for advice on how to utilize staff, relocate students, and run selected university operations.

Leading planning and policy development.

***Working in front of the crisis*.** Forewarning that a hurricane was going to strike campus allowed leaders at one school to not only prepare, but work ahead in anticipation of documentation that would be needed after the natural disaster. The process began by organizing binders prior to the storm arriving: “The binders that we were keeping—30 some-odd binders—were going to be for our internal auditing, for risk management, so that they could have that information for insurance purposes and FEMA” (12/305/ND). Knowing that a chronicle of what had happened would be required allowed workers to gather the necessary materials before they would no longer be available:

> Strategies. Understanding from the beginning we needed to have cameras, we needed to have batteries and be able to take photographs because I understood FEMA. We need to have cameras ready so that the minute we came on to campus, we were taking photographs of our places, of the faces of the people who were working in there and of the destruction and the buildings that had no destruction. (12/305/ND)

With prior thought and organization, the task could be completed as needed:

> I really started the minute I had some semblance of power even if it was a battery power through the generator. I started typing up the details. Here’s exactly what happened day by day so that we could not only chronicle but also have a record of what we did. (12/305/ND)

***Arranging temporary assignments and structures**.* The use of temporary assignments and structures was utilized on several campuses. Temporary project groups were common (13/305/V; 14/305/ND) as were what one participant termed “mini co-op programs” among departments. Temporary assignments of personnel were based on the desire to tend to the special needs of a constituency group, compensation for a shortage of a particular type of staff, or the need to organize staff differently to deliver services. Two schools identified a case management approach as driving temporary personnel assignments:

> I knew that the students who were most directly affected on that third floor needed not to have multiples of people to deal with. You know these are shattered people. They needed to know that you, or who I went to, there was one place for me and nobody else was going to come in there. Nobody else was going to have access to it. I took my career center staff because we didn’t need too much career mentoring. People are counselors. They have people skills. You’re going to case manage this floor. This is your job. Your job is to figure out what they need, who they need, and how they need it. (11/305/LL)

At one school, the decision to make temporary personnel assignments was driven by the mental and emotional state of staff:

> I need to bring in folks that will be thinking logically rather than from their hearts. And it was really, it was the head over the heart staff that we needed to be here. Because they just needed to look at it as an institution and spaces rather than “Oh my goodness. This is the place that I love. Look at the kind of destruction it has endured.” (12/305/ND)

Leading intentional communications efforts.

Coordinating open forums to inform decision-making*.* Once the chaos of the crisis subsided, some campuses initiated formal and informal methods of gathering concerns or taking the pulse of things before making decisions to move forward. At one campus this took the form of town hall meetings, focus groups, and planned discussions between faculty and campus leaders:

> We got out there and did invite people to comment, to talk with us, and dialogue with us as to what we needed to do. What questions needed to be answered? How would they feel safe? What needed to be in place for them to feel safe? Is it a realistic expectation? We had that discussion. (8/804/V)

Used as an intentional leadership strategy, this accomplished several important leadership goals. The information gleaned pointed out gaps in the decisions being made, provided answers to questions central to decision-making, identified groups who were feeling left out of the loop, and reinforced organizational behaviors, such as talking things through and bringing concerns forward, that leaders deemed essential for healing and wanted to reinforce.

Clarifying the leadership infrastructure.

Defining the decision-making process and structure*.* While simultaneously addressing myriad logistical issues, leaders had to define processes for decision-making. Most began by establishing frequent, regular meetings and identifying who should be present. It started with senior staff and expanded from there in what one participant termed a “cascading” effect. The purpose of the meetings was not just to define a plan of action, but to clarify the leadership agenda. Communications, assessment, and planning were the focus of senior level meetings with the frequency and duration diminishing as the chaos of the crisis subsided. The overarching goals of the leadership meetings were clear for one participant:

> We needed to communicate very clearly and very effectively and very efficiently and very quickly. That meant that we were meeting it to pieces. We were trying to help our staff and students understand. It was that kind of commitment that we had to have. (12/305/ND)

Identifying a meeting location was a challenge for those who lost a substantial amount of campus space as a result of the crisis. In these cases participants reported meeting in the homes of senior staff members or at other off-site locations. The issue of losing the standard meeting place of senior leadership also held symbolic and emotional significance. One individual described it as having the “heart or the brain” displaced by the crisis (10/305/V). In at least one case, a central campus location was established for on-going meetings with constituency groups. This included staff, faculty, students, and the media. Having an established meeting place allowed for a regular schedule of meetings to occur during which leadership could communicate what was occurring, as well as assess the needs and concerns of constituency groups.

Utilizing shared governance approaches*.* For one school, the aftermath of the crisis called for the creation of institutional policy to prevent similar incidents from happening again. Throwing the crisis into the policy arena triggered several campus entities—initially running parallel and competing processes—and reminded one non-academic administrator of the shared governance decision-making structure in higher education:

> I didn’t understand the depth of that until the Faculty Senate did their policy. And with working with three or four of them and going to the Faculty Senate, talking

> about this—I spent a lot of time doing that—but it was worth it to just understand where they are coming from. It's helped me I think know how to target the response my Dean of Students had to make. What kinds of support that office needed to be more responsive to the faculty. (5/804/V)

Accepting responsibility for crisis leadership.

Getting firsthand knowledge of the crisis. "We walked in those rooms, every single room probably six to ten times. Checking them for leaks. Checking them for changes. Checking every single room" (14/305/ND). This account of one individual's walk through residence hall rooms to assess the damage after a hurricane was more than a routine inspection. It was one of many descriptions that revealed a need for some campus leaders to have firsthand knowledge of what had happened, the impact of the crisis and a glimpse at what leaders were facing. This level of intimacy with the interaction of the crisis with the campus was essential for decision-making. From this knowledge leaders could identify categories of decisions to be made, formulate strategies, and rehearse scenarios for communicating about the crisis with constituency groups. Most leaders expressed the desire for first hand knowledge as an immediate and urgent drive:

> The President and I decided to go over to the campus about mid-afternoon. It took us an hour and a half for a fifteen-minute ride. We were dodging power lines. They were on the ground and of course, you don't touch anything. (14/305/ND)

Framing the crisis for others.

Doing the right thing.

> At that stage the dilemma becomes “we know that the right thing is to do this but the insurance doesn’t want us to do that because they’re concerned about. . . .” You start to have outside influences who have a different agenda starting to interfere with decision-making. Not directly. It’s a subtle tension that emerges between things you really need to do and its impact on issues whether it be around litigation or liability or responsibility and all those sorts of things starting to muddy the water. And those created some dilemmas I think because there was a lot of frustration. (11/305/LL)

The comment above is representative of several in which study participants discussed their orientation toward decision-making. All of the participants who addressed the issue framed their orientation as opting for “doing the right thing” regardless of pressure to do otherwise. Comments demonstrable of this included: “It was how are we going to keep principles above personalities?” (12/305/ND), and “We’re going to worry about how to pay for this all later” (4/304/V). Some participants recognized that doing the right thing was not always popular:

> There are some folks on campus that aren’t happy with us right now. We do need to do this. Ultimately our students do live in these buildings. It’s not about the buildings; it’s about the people who live inside them. (12/305/ND)

Another understood the importance of being personally committed to a strong guiding foundation:

> Recognize what needs to be done and what is ethically and morally correct, even if people around you may not feel that that’s what should happen. If your

> principles are based on that, then you have to stick to your principles even when times are tough. I think that's very critical. (4/304/V)

One participant recognized that several individuals at the institution shared a common orientation toward decision-making that was not only part of the leadership culture but served as a foundation for decision-making: "I think that was what was pervasive and how we tried to approach this. What's the right thing?" (5/804/V).

One area of deliberate decision-making had to do with what some participants called "circling the wagons" or "spin." This involved their predisposition to accepting the advice of attorneys, requests for disclosure of information on the crisis, or openness to examination on the institution's handling of the crisis. One participant was clear about his position:

> We use the term "spin" anymore and don't admit certain things that we know, what we should or shouldn't have done. I think one of the fundamental responsibilities of a leader is to resist that. To absolutely resist that temptation. (3/304/V)

Another leader had the same philosophy: "I do know that some universities and some university leaders in crisis kind of hunker down. It's just—I guess everybody has to make his or her own choice, but it's never my choice" (9/804/V). This commitment on the part of a university president is an important one. It was not only admired by followers, but established the approach to decision-making:

> He [the President] said that if someone is going to sue us, we'll have to deal with that. So, in the meanwhile, doing the right thing for the right reasons and not worrying about protecting the institution from reasonable risk. It's not an issue if somebody's life might be at stake. (13/305/V)

Two institutions intentionally put their reputations at risk for the sake of doing the right thing. At one, the word went out that there would be no attempt to control information about the crisis: “We communicated to everyone to open the books—show the press the reports that came in” (7/804/V). And at another, there was never a question as to whether or not the university should involve itself in a case involving a student who lived off campus: “So it’s an off campus case. Does it taint the university to be involved in it? Because you know, it’s kind of muddy. And the answer is you do the right thing for the right reasons” (13/305/V).

Confirmation that “doing the right thing for the right reason” was the best course to take came in a variety of forms. For one, it was seeing the outcomes after the crisis had passed:

> Of course when you are doing it, you feel like you’re doing it for all the right reasons. But when you go back and look at it in hindsight and process it, yes, we chose the right road for it. Because we didn’t circle the wagons. (4/304/V)

For another, it was realizing the benefits of such an orientation: “At the time of the incident, we really came across as a caring institution and I think that really helped not having any lawsuits” (1/304/V). For another is was learning from the mistakes of others: “Over and over again we see examples of the fact that the cover up or the evasions are worse than what happened” (3/304/V). And for another it was understanding the potential negative consequences: “If you don’t do that [be open], you so hurt the reputation of the institution that you damage your relationships with students and faculty and generations of students. You just have to deal with it” (9/804/V).

One challenge inherent in process planning was communicating what was to be done and who was going to do it. This was a challenge for those whose communications systems had been destroyed. A more organic process necessarily replaced traditional means:

> We're going to scratch out some handwritten notes and post them up in our office, and we're literally going to say these are the projects. It was a project board, and this is how we're going to communicate the roles people are going to play. (12/305/ND)

One might describe the nature of process creation for most as "just in time" and iterative. A cycle of assess, plan, act, analyze was done quickly and at multiple levels within the organization. A review of one day's activities served to shape the game plan for the next day: "You keep going back to assessing what you knew yesterday to plan for tomorrow. So it's almost a cycle when it's more than a short-term event" (14/305/ND). Another described it in more simplistic terms: "Okay, here's where we are. We're not happy about this. Here's what we have got to do. Here's how we are going to do it. Let's accomplish it" (12/305/ND).

Adopting a "this is all part of administrative life" philosophy to guide decisions.

> And the fact is, you know, any college campus, especially large ones where more things are going to happen because there's just more people, there are more crisis situations, other student deaths, suicides, car accidents, all kinds of things you know are going to happen. It's just part of the normal course of what happens in a university environment. And those things, while maybe not as drawn out or horrific, are no less challenging to the people who have to deal with it, and no less intense or horrific to the immediate group that is affected by it. (4/304/V)

While all of the study participants understood the magnitude of the crisis situations with which they were dealing, most coupled their strong sense of responsibility with a philosophy that indicated that crisis is a standard component of administrative life. As one said "walking into a crisis when you are a student affairs officer is crisis du jour" (11/305/LL). This perspective also included awareness of the impact of major crises on the institution. "Getting through crisis since then has been a different experience for us as a community and as a campus" (11/305/LL).

Table 10 provides a summary of strategies utilized by campus leaders in crisis decision-making by the number of participants addressing the theme and the crisis type.

Table 10

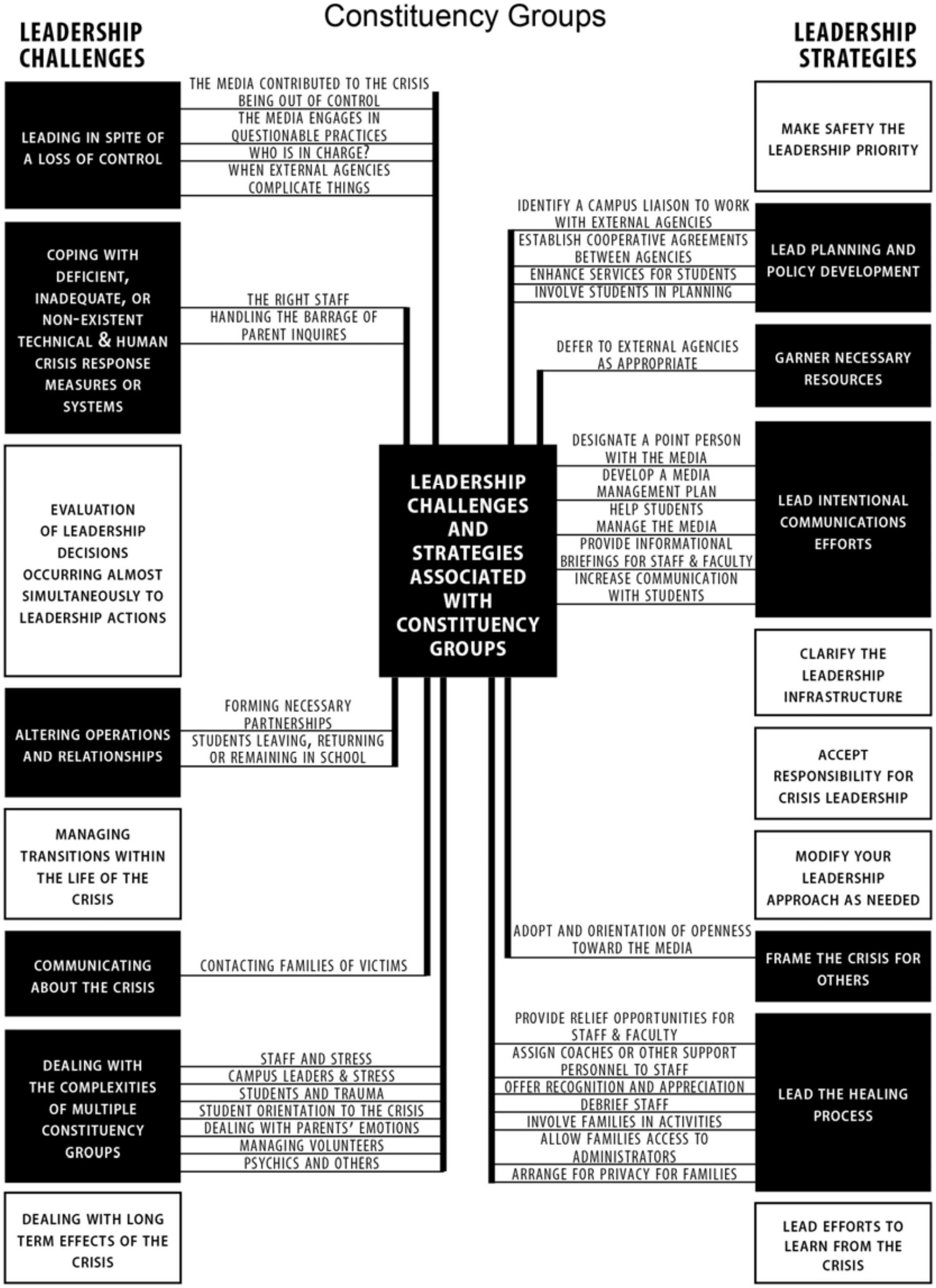
Crisis Decision-Making: Strategies by Number of Participants Reporting and Typology Classification

Strategies	No. participants addressing theme N = 14	Typology categories addressed by theme		
		Victim	Natural disaster	Legal liability
Garnering resources				
Engaging experts	8	X	X	X
Leading planning & policy development				
Working in front of the crisis	1		X	
Arranging temporary assignments & structures	5	X	X	X
Leading intentional communications				
Coordinating open forums to inform decision-making	2	X		
Clarifying leadership infrastructure				
Defining the decision-making process & structure	10	X	X	X
Utilizing shared governance approaches	1	X		
Accepting responsibility				
Getting firsthand knowledge of the crisis	2		X	
Framing the crisis for others				
Doing the right thing	13	X	X	X
Adopting a “this is all part of administrative life” philosophy	4	X		X

Constituency Groups

Several of the leadership challenges identified by study participants were associated with a particular constituency group. In this section, these challenges, along with the strategies used to address them, will be explored for the following constituency groups: the media, staff and faculty, external agencies, students, parents/families, and volunteers and others. Figure 7 depicts the five meta-themes were predominant in the constituency group challenges. These were (a) leading in spite of a loss of control; (b) coping with deficient, inadequate, or non-existent technical and human response systems; (c) communicating about the crisis; (d) dealing with the complexities of multiple constituency groups; and (e) altering operations and relationships. Eight meta-themes were prominent in strategies associated with leading multiple constituency groups. These included (a) leading planning and policy development, (b) leading intentional communications efforts, (c) clarifying the leadership infrastructure, (d) accepting responsibility for crisis leadership, (e) modifying leadership approaches and styles as needed, (f) framing the crisis for others, and (g) leading the healing process.

Figure 7 Leadership Challenges and Strategies Associated with Constituency Groups


LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES
LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES
LEADING IN SPITE OF A LOSS OF CONTROL
THE MEDIA CONTRIBUTED TO THE CRISIS BEING OUT OF CONTROL
THE MEDIA ENGAGES IN QUESTIONABLE PRACTICES
WHO IS IN CHARGE?
WHEN EXTERNAL AGENCIES COMPLICATE THINGS
COPING WITH DEFICIENT, INADEQUATE, OR NON-EXISTENT TECHNICAL & HUMAN CRISIS RESPONSE MEASURES OR SYSTEMS
THE RIGHT STAFF
HANDLING THE BARRAGE OF PARENT INQUIRES
EVALUATION OF LEADERSHIP DECISIONS OCCURRING ALMOST SIMULTANEOUSLY TO LEADERSHIP ACTIONS
ALTERING OPERATIONS AND RELATIONSHIPS
FORMING NECESSARY PARTNERSHIPS
STUDENTS LEAVING, RETURNING OR REMAINING IN SCHOOL
MANAGING TRANSITIONS WITHIN THE LIFE OF THE CRISIS
COMMUNICATING ABOUT THE CRISIS
CONTACTING FAMILIES OF VICTIMS
DEALING WITH THE COMPLEXITIES OF MULTIPLE CONSTITUENCY GROUPS
STAFF AND STRESS
CAMPUS LEADERS & STRESS
STUDENTS AND TRAUMA
STUDENT ORIENTATION TO THE CRISIS
DEALING WITH PARENTS' EMOTIONS
MANAGING VOLUNTEERS
PSYCHICS AND OTHERS
DEALING WITH LONG TERM EFFECTS OF THE CRISIS
LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES ASSOCIATED WITH CONSTITUENCY GROUPS
MAKE SAFETY THE LEADERSHIP PRIORITY
IDENTIFY A CAMPUS LIAISON TO WORK WITH EXTERNAL AGENCIES
ESTABLISH COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS BETWEEN AGENCIES
ENHANCE SERVICES FOR STUDENTS
INVOLVE STUDENTS IN PLANNING
LEAD PLANNING AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT
DEFER TO EXTERNAL AGENCIES AS APPROPRIATE
GARNER NECESSARY RESOURCES
DESIGNATE A POINT PERSON WITH THE MEDIA
DEVELOP A MEDIA MANAGEMENT PLAN
HELP STUDENTS MANAGE THE MEDIA
PROVIDE INFORMATIONAL BRIEFINGS FOR STAFF & FACULTY
INCREASE COMMUNICATION WITH STUDENTS
LEAD INTENTIONAL COMMUNICATIONS EFFORTS
CLARIFY THE LEADERSHIP INFRASTRUCTURE
ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY FOR CRISIS LEADERSHIP
MODIFY YOUR LEADERSHIP APPROACH AS NEEDED
ADOPT AND ORIENTATION OF OPENNESS TOWARD THE MEDIA
FRAME THE CRISIS FOR OTHERS
PROVIDE RELIEF OPPORTUNITIES FOR STAFF & FACULTY
ASSIGN COACHES OR OTHER SUPPORT PERSONNEL TO STAFF
OFFER RECOGNITION AND APPRECIATION
DEBRIEF STAFF
INVOLVE FAMILIES IN ACTIVITIES
ALLOW FAMILIES ACCESS TO ADMINISTRATORS
ARRANGE FOR PRIVACY FOR FAMILIES
LEAD THE HEALING PROCESS
LEAD EFFORTS TO LEARN FROM THE CRISIS

Media: Leadership Challenges

Leading in spite of a loss of control.

The media contributed to the crisis being out of control. Participants identified five factors related to the role of the media in the crisis being out of control. The first was the chaotic environment created by their presence (4/304/V; 7/804/V; 5/804/V; 3/304/V; 2/304/V). As one participant described it, “the helicopters were buzzing the place the whole time and had their zoom lenses” (2/304/V). Helicopters were not the only indicator of media presence: “You know, we had 22 satellite dishes on campus for weeks” (4/304/V). The second factor related to who had information when (8/804/V):

> But I’ll have to tell you that in every aspect of the alarm [phase] we were preempted. We meaning the institution by the outside media. And some of that happened because the students who were actually in the situation at the time of the shooting were using their cell phones to call loved ones, and so the story got way ahead of anything we communicated. (5/804/V)

A third factor that was challenging for leaders was not only the fact that the media propelled the campus and the crisis into the national limelight, but the speed with which this was done (2/304/V; 11/305/LL): “There is what seems like an instant at the beginning when you find yourself visibly on point and literally on television or responding. In that instance it was national news” (9/804/V). For one campus, the media had to be contained by law enforcement:

> One of the things that really hurt the situation, and again because it all happened so quickly. One of the news channels had a helicopter that kept hovering overhead and the police chief just went ballistic and said, “Get that

> helicopter out of there!" because they were afraid it would frighten [a hostage taker]. He could have even thought it was the police up there. He doesn't know who it was, to the point that he might have shot the victim. So, it was again the media containment. One of the biggest problems. (1/304/V)

Intense coverage of memorials, vigils and anniversary events were additional ways the media kept the crisis alive (4/304/V; 11/305/LL; 5/804/V). Unrelenting scrutiny of every detail was also characteristic of media coverage (4/304/V). As one participant said, "Every aspect was analyzed and broadcast, written about" (3/304/V). The handling of sensitive information was yet another way in which the media contributed to the crisis being out of the control of campus leadership. When police snipers shot and killed a hostage taker/murderer, some members of the media publically demanded to know the name of the officer who shot him (2/304/V).

The media engaged in questionable practices*.* A second media related challenge for campus leaders was dealing with questionable practices. Foremost among these questionable practices was the hounding of students and "sticking microphones in their faces" (4/304/V; 2/304/V; 11/305/LL). Deceptive media practices included reporters attending meetings that were intended to be closed (2/304/V) and, in one case, a television reporter, clothed in a school sweatshirt, posed as a university student (1/304/V) as a means of blending in to gain access to students.

Table 11 summarizes the leadership challenges inherent in dealing with the media by the number of participants addressing the theme and the crisis type.

Table 11

Media: Challenges by Number of Participants Reporting and Typology Classification

Challenges	No. participants addressing theme N = 14	Typology categories addressed by theme		
		Victim	Natural disaster	Legal liability
Leading in spite of loss of control				
The media contributed to crisis being out of control	9	X		X
The media engaged in questionable practices	6	X		X

Media: Leadership Strategies

Leading intentional communications efforts.

Designate a point person. The most common strategy reported for dealing with the media was designating a point person (1/304/V; 3/304/V; 5/804/V; 11/305/LL). This was typically the head of marketing and/or communications who had pre-existing relationships with the press (3/304/V; 5/804/V; 11/305/LL): “The goal of containing the media was helped by, I think, the connections the person had and by his ability to work with the media” (1/304/V). At one school, the communications representative maintained continuous contact with the public relations person with the local police department (8/804/V).

Develop a media management plan. “We needed to be responsive [to the press] but we needed to get a handle on that” (6/804/V). As this remark suggests, while all participants recognized the importance of dealing effectively with the media both for public relations damage control and containment of press activities (1/304/V; 2/V; AVPSA), some identified specific strategies as part of a comprehensive media management plan. One strategy was to restrict media access to particular locations

(4/304/V; 1/V/P; 2/304/V). Another was using security measures as a means of containment: “But interestingly, the primary reason they did that [police enforced 24 hour lockdown of a residence hall] was to keep out the media because the media was just hounding our students” (1/V/P). A third strategy involved establishing the university as the driver of institution/media interactions rather than the reverse: “I didn’t want them [the press] calling offices and calling them at home and things like that. We will respond, but we will respond in this way. And we did that” (6/804/V). A final strategy was directing with whom the media spoke: “What we did was we asked who would be willing to [talk with the press]. And so my assistant had a list. Here are some faculty leaders who are willing to talk. Here’s some student leaders that are willing to share and what have you” (6/804/V).

Help students manage the media. While institutions had control over which staff interacted with media, guiding students to do so was more complex. The approaches taken with students revealed not only the concern leaders had for students (“We did want to protect our students as much as possible from the blitz of the media” (4/304/V)), but also concern for the institution/student relationship:

> We talked a lot to the student leaders and said, you know, it is your decision. You don’t have to talk to the press. Sometimes the press can be very insistent and they make you feel like you’re violating my first amendment rights if you don’t talk to me and that’s not true at all. (4/304/V)

This supportive but “hands off” approach was coupled with warnings to students (“Just because somebody sticks a camera or microphone in your face, that doesn’t mean you have to respond” (4/304/V)) and respect for student autonomy: “But I think that's a part of the caring and nurturing, and being open about the facts and talking to students" (4/304/V).

Another school took a more hands on approach:

> And the sorority had an advisor that was super. She would prompt them, and they would take the lead from her on how to handle the media. For example, she would stand behind the media person so that the sorority person answering knew whether to expand on the topic or just cut it off because it might get too personal. (13/305/V)

Framing the crisis for others.

Adopt an orientation of openness. One strategy for dealing with the media was maintaining an open orientation toward the press. One participant recognized both the importance of an open posture toward the press and the inherent risk in doing so: "I've been at this a long time, and, boy, I tell you, you can't shut down. You can't keep out the press. You just have to be open and take your chances" (9/804/V). Another participant stressed the importance of everyone in the institution understanding the position leadership was taking toward the media: "We communicated to everyone to open the books. Show the press the reports that came in" (7/804/V).

Strategies utilized by campus leaders to deal with the media are depicted in Table 12. The strategies are listed by the number of participants addressing the theme and the crisis type.

Table 12

Media: Strategies by Number of Participants Reporting and Typology Classification

Strategies	No. participants addressing theme N = 14	Typology categories addressed by theme		
		Victim	Natural disaster	Legal liability
Frame the crisis				
Adopt an orientation of openness	2	X		
Lead intentional communications				
Designate a point person	4	X		X
Develop a media management plan	4	X		
Help students manage the media	2	X		

Staff and Faculty: Leadership Challenges

Coping with deficient, inadequate, or non-existent technical and human response systems.

Assembling the right staff. Having staff with the skills and characteristics needed to handle both the tasks and trauma of the crisis at hand was a dilemma for one leader who had to rely on junior staff: “It was very clear to me that the level, the depth of skill that I needed, even though I have a terrific staff, I didn’t have the depth of experience in as large a number as I really needed” (11/305/LL). The need for more senior level staff skills was particularly apparent when attempting to address students’ psychological needs.

> It was very difficult to look in the eyes of those young kids, you know, who don’t know how to attach any sense to what has happened to them, and really know what to say to them to comfort them, to motivate them. But also recognize the limitations [of staff]. So even in terms of mental health issues we were dealing with, students were really hurting. The freshman body for the most part. The

> mental health needs were extraordinary. You certainly don't want to put them up with a bunch of quacks. (11/305/LL)

One leader made the controversial decision to bring in staff from surrounding schools. Outsourcing was done in part to spare an already stressed staff from having to engage in even more traumatizing activities, and in part because the same tragedy that had obliterated the campus destroyed staff homes.

Dealing with the complexities of multiple constituency groups.

***Staff and stress**.* Concern for the issues of faculty and staff ranged from near neglect ("Our focus was on the students and we forgot that we should focus a little bit on the staff as well" (10/305/V)) to being overwhelmed ("And dealing with staff fallout with all of this. Where do you begin?" (11/305/LL)): "To be really honest with you, I think it was hard for me to know who was really okay and who really wasn't. And that was hard" (11/305/LL). This statement by one participant demonstrated the difficulties leaders encountered when addressing the stress staff experienced as a result of campus crisis. Several factors contributed to stress. Emotional intensity (9/804/V), fear (4/304/V), and exhaustion (4/304/V) were significant. For some, the realization that there would be no relief soon was daunting: "The overwhelming 'I've got to get through this' went on for, this chaos went on for a long time" (11/305/LL).

> Lack of relief affected staff across a variety of positions: "It seemed like we were constantly on that front line and there was not any break of any kind. That seemed to go on that entire year. It seemed like there was never a break" (4/304/V).

Stress resulting from emotional intensity was greater for those interacting with families and victims. Nowhere was this more evident than for staff who could relate to victims who had been killed: “Some of our junior staff who were in their mid- to late-twenties, being very close in age to the age of victims. It was very, very stressful for them” (4/304/V).

One leader characterized the situation as post-traumatic stress disorder (4/304/V), and another recognized the difficulty for faculty whose colleagues had been murdered: “Faculty are trying to teach and they’re trying to support students but they have grief. They were their friends, their colleagues” (6/804/V). This leader was tuned in to the tentative nature of coping. “We had students as well as faculty who weren’t sure that they could do it. That they could go on. I mean, they weren’t so sure they could. They were feeling as such that they weren’t really so sure” (6/804/V).

A final challenge related to stress was taking care of care givers: “They really needed to know that they were the victims here. That they weren’t the caregivers and if you want to get through this most effectively you need to receive care. So to convey that message to them was very difficult” (7/804/V).

Campus leaders and stress. Several leaders were cognizant of their own stress during and after the crisis. As one participant stated, “How do you help yourself at the same time you are trying to help others?” (6/804/V). Stress for some came from assuming responsibility for addressing that which was stressing others. For one it was helping other staff stay in control:

> A secretary at one point. This mother was so out of control—out of her mind about her son who was nowhere near where this happened—she would call every fifteen minutes about an insurance claim. . . . Then we have a kid who comes from limited means as a family background who is only wearing what we had given him from the Red Cross and has nothing. He is totally destroyed and

> is just really humble about it. Helping staff not to react to that kind of student conduct. So I think keeping people even was a dilemma. (11/305/LL)

For another participant, it was responding to the persistent fear and subsequent behavior resulting from a campus shooting: “The Dean of Students Office got increasing numbers of calls from the faculty believing that they had people in their classrooms that were suspicious to them. What were we going to do about it?” (5/804/V).

Another source of stress stemmed from their sense of responsibility as a leader, including having higher expectations of oneself: “I slept on the floor in my office a couple of days. Catching two or three hours at a time. I didn’t expect my staff to do that but I expected myself to be everywhere because that’s just your job” (11/305/LL).

Feelings of guilt and responsibility for the tragedy was another source of stress:

> My own personal struggle was, even though I knew it wasn’t my fault, I felt responsible. That’s sort of a hard one. How do you explain that? I don’t know how to explain that. I think if you do this kind of work you kind of know what I mean. How do you explain that to somebody? I knew it wasn’t my fault. I certainly didn’t [cause the crisis]. (11/305/LL)

For another leader an encounter with the parents of a murdered daughter triggered this sense of responsibility:

> I remember one of the families I worked with was the first two students that were murdered. One of them was an only child, and I’m an only child. And I remember going with them to the apartment to get the student’s things once the police said it was o.k., released it from the crime scene or whatever. And there are all these things that an 18 year old girl has—little stuffed animals and pictures from high school and all this kind of stuff. And they had these baskets and boxes of stuff in

> the back seat, and I was in the back seat of their car helping direct them to go pick up her bicycle that the police had taken to our police station. And I kept thinking as we were driving, this is all these people are going to now have for the rest of their lives. And I just remember thinking, people send their students to college and they never expect to be bringing them home in a box. Literally. (4/304/V)

Leaders were also aware that, given that the crisis was now part of who they were, there were bound to be things that triggered the emotions of that time. For one, it was the sound of helicopters—a reminder of first responders and media—anniversary dates, and ongoing responses to the crisis:

> I had staff working on a safety video that we would like to do, and the President is very uncomfortable about it. You know, there was a lot of interviewing of students and the first time I sat down and watched it, I have to tell you it was hard. I found myself becoming emotional at times. But I wouldn't expect myself to be emotional. I don't remember being that emotional during it all. (11/305/LL)

A stress trigger for another leader was encountering others who had been traumatized (13/305/V), and for another, a trigger, regardless of what it was, would "make me think about that time—it will be just like it was all there right in front of me and it has never gone away" (4/304/V). This participant recognized the permanence of the situation: "Even with Alzheimer's I won't forget anything that happened."

The leadership challenges inherent in dealing with faculty and staff are depicted in Table 13 by the number of participants addressing the theme and the crisis type.

Table 13

Faculty and Staff: Challenges by Number of Participants Reporting and Typology Classification

Challenges	No. participants addressing theme N = 14	Typology categories addressed by theme		
		Victim	Natural disaster	Legal liability
Deficient response systems				
Assembling the right staff	4	X	X	X
Complexities of constituent groups				
Staff & stress	10	X	X	X
Campus leaders & stress	6	X	X	X

Staff and Faculty: Leadership Strategies

Leading the healing process.

Provide relief opportunities for staff and faculty. One strategy utilized by leaders to support faculty and staff was to give permission for them to be relieved from the crisis. As one participant stated, “I think it is important that we not expect people to live in crisis all the time. So it is important to send people home. It’s important to take care of the staff” (13/305/V). One campus provided relief in spite of the fact that staff were not able to leave campus: “We knew our people were kind of beginning to fade and so we called up a restaurant that was down the street and we brought in a hot lunch. I know it doesn’t sound like maybe a big deal but at the time it was” (4/304/V).

Leaders dealing with the devastation in the aftermath of a hurricane were given an odiferous reminder of the importance of taking breaks:

> We had been going through the buildings doing this assessment. We went to Applebee’s with their no water menu and we noticed that people sitting around

> us were moving their tables. We had been in buildings with rotting food and smelling and no power and they had been closed up and shades had been drawn. So we stunk. I can't even explain to you the smell. We couldn't smell it, and it was in our noses. And so we started to eat the food. I said, do you taste something odd with the food? And you know, "I kind of do," he said, and we realized, oh my goodness, we smell! And so people around us were moving and our wait staff came up and said, "I just wanted to let you know that we recognize where you work but you do stink." Anyway, one of the strategies was that he and I could take breaks. So we realized that he and I would not be on campus at the same time at any point. He would go away and take a break, I would go away and take a break. Because we needed to do that. (12/305/ND)

Assign coaches or other support personnel to staff*.* At one school, staff engaged in the most intense aspects of the crisis were assigned individuals with special characteristics to support them:

> The way the counselors worked, they were available to the faculty, students and staff and then they deliberately identified some people for us to work with. For instance, I had assigned to me a retired principal of a high school that had experienced violence, who was available to me. And I think there is a great deal of wisdom in that so I had somebody to call. (6/804/V)

Offer recognition and appreciation. Three schools reported utilizing recognition and appreciation for the efforts of staff as a means of not only addressing stress but signaling that the crisis had moved from one phase to another (2/304/V; 11/305/LL; 14/305/ND). In two cases, recognition and appreciation efforts were led by the campus President.

Debrief staff. Debriefings for staff not only addressed stress but served as a means of assessing their status:

> One of the goals was to assess how the staff who were immediately working with the situation were affected. What kind of trauma and stress they were experiencing and to deal with some of those issues. A member of the counseling staff came and worked with our immediate student affairs staff and held a debriefing session for us so we could talk about what we experienced and how it impacted us. How we were dealing with the stress. What would be helpful for us to do in the future. That was extremely important. (2/304/V)

Leading intentional communications efforts.

Provide informational briefings. One leader provided informational briefings for staff to dispel rumors and provide accurate information (12/305/ND).

Strategies utilized by campus leaders to deal with faculty and staff challenges are depicted in Table 14 by the number of participants addressing the theme and the crisis type.

Table 14

Faculty and Staff: Strategies by Number of Participants Reporting and Typology Classification

Strategies	No. participants addressing theme N = 14	Typology categories addressed by theme		
		Victim	Natural disaster	Legal liability
Leading the healing process				
Provide relief opportunities for staff & faculty	3	X	X	
Assign coaches or other support personnel to staff	1	X		
Offer recognition & appreciation	4	X	X	X
Debrief staff	2	X		
Lead intentional communications				
Provide informational briefings	1		X	

External Agencies: Leadership Challenges

Leading in spite of a loss of control.

Who is in charge? The chaos of the crisis necessarily brought first responders and myriad local, state, and, in some cases, federal law enforcement agencies. One participant described the ensuing confusion over who was in charge:

> So we had every emergency management team in the country and the state descending upon us. It did seem to have a bit of a difficult feel in terms of who was in charge. You know, were we in charge of our own campus or are we being taken over by the occupying forces? And even among the occupying forces, they were vying positions, because there was the county, there was the state, the Governor flew in. You know, it was “who is in charge?” for awhile. (11/305/LL)

When external agencies complicate things. Several participants spoke to the ways in which external agencies complicated an already chaotic situation. One was the persistence of external agencies who began investigations:

> Every agency under the sun thought they were going to come in and investigate. You're all of the sudden under the microscope, every which kind of thing, asked questions that make no sense, in my mind, to be asking. About things that you know are standard operating practices in probably 90% of the universities in this country. (11/305/LL)

A second complicating factor was the sheer number of external agencies on and around campus. As one participant described, "You could barely drive two or three blocks without seeing some type of visible presence of some type of law enforcement agency" (4/304/V).

A third factor was conflicting information:

> One would tell you this, and one would tell you the complete opposite of the other because they were coming at it out of a lens that only they were looking at. Whether is was OSHA or the fire department, I mean, pick somebody. They had a different idea about what it was you did right or what it was you did wrong and not all was in agreement with each other. So you're in kind of, it was a bit of an argument at that point. (11/305/LL)

A fourth participant reported that some complications arose from police officials withholding information regarding students from student affairs officials who were trying to interface with families (5/804/V).

Altering operations and relationships.

***Forming necessary partnerships*.** As the crisis unfolded, several campus leaders realized the necessity of forming strong relationships with external agencies. One issue was dealing with multiple agencies:

> But luckily, we were able to work fairly closely with, by that time, the state police, the county sheriffs, local police. I think some of the secret service type entities that exist within the state, and so on. All of those different kinds of groups were coming together. (4/304/V)

A second challenge was identifying which external agencies to partner with at different phases of the crisis. No place was this more evident than for a school in New York negotiating around recovery efforts following a terrorist attack. Leaders there had to work with politicians who could influence decision-making about moving forward:

> Because we're right on the line of demarcation for Ground Zero. And we had to negotiate and convince all the authorities that it was feasible and we could do it [bring students back], and it wouldn't be an intrusion to the whole recovery plan for Ground Zero. (10/305/V)

But politicians were not the only ones this school had to partner with to move forward:

> We had to speak with other institutions, public and private, as well as the Board of Education, to come up with a plan to allow us to get the semester started in case we couldn't get back in. And that plan was a notion of using space that was unused by the public schools, by private colleges, by other city colleges. (10/305/V)

Partnerships with external agencies was precipitated by the fact that, in most cases, the institution needed them to handle aspects of the crisis a university simply cannot handle. Dealing with extreme violence such as the cases involving a shooter and the hostage situation were prime examples of this. Leaders recognized that they were dependent on external agencies, particularly in the early stages of the crisis, for specialized expertise, human resources, and information about the situation (3/304/V; 11/305/LL; 13/305/V; 8/804/V).

Table 15 provides a summary of the challenges associated with external agencies by the number of participants addressing the theme and the crisis type.

Table 15
External Agencies: Challenges by Number of Participants Reporting and Typology Classification

Challenges	No. participants addressing theme N = 14	Typology categories addressed by theme		
		Victim	Natural disaster	Legal liability
Lead in spite of a loss of control				
Who is in charge?	2	X		X
When external agencies complicate things	4	X		
Altering operations & relationships				
Forming necessary partnerships	6	X		X

External Agencies: Leadership Strategies

Garnering necessary resources.

Defer to external agencies as appropriate. In spite of the challenges of working with external agencies, participants recognized the importance of deferring to them for critical services (3/304/V; 1/304/V; 9/804/V). Several participants commented on the excellence with which external agencies performed their duties (3/304/V; 11/305/LL; 13/305/V; 5/804/V).

Leading planning and policy development.

Identify a campus liaison to work with external agencies. One leader identified a staff member with a similar background of the external agencies they were working with to serve as a liaison:

> We go out there to find out that law enforcement is doing as good a job as they know how but they aren't good at asking for help. So I told our Associate Dean who used to do a lot of work in the military, "I want you to help me as a point person so that together it will be successful." (13/305/V)

Establish cooperative agreements between agencies. Participants attributed successful handling of the crisis in part to cooperation between the university police and external law enforcement groups: "There could have been turf battles over who's doing what, but as far as I could tell, there weren't. They worked quite well together" (7/804/V). For one campus, cooperation was aided by an understanding of authority: "We had the university police and the city police, and it was clear right up front that the university police were in charge. And that was very helpful and there was no question about that" (1/304/V).

Strategies utilized by campus leaders to address concerns related to external agencies are summarized in Table 16 by the number of participants addressing the theme and the crisis type.

Table 16
External Agencies: Strategies by Number of Participants Reporting and Typology Classification

Strategies	No. participants addressing theme N = 14	Typology categories addressed by theme		
		Victim	Natural disaster	Legal liability
Garnering resources				
Defer to external agencies as appropriate	3	X		
Lead planning & policy				
Identify campus liaison to work with external agencies	1	X		
Establish cooperative agreements between agencies	3	X		

Students: Leadership Challenges

Dealing with the complexities of multiple constituency groups.

Students and trauma. The most pressing challenge associated with students was recognizing and addressing trauma (9/804/V; 8/804/V). Participants identified issues related to students' ability to persist (6/804/V), students' ability to learn (6/804/V), and the desire to keep students from self-isolating (9/804/V).

Student orientation to the crisis. Two challenges were identified related to student orientation toward the crisis event. The first had to do with institutional memory of the crisis given the transient nature of the student body:

> New members of the community having the appropriate respect and appreciation for others who were there and went through it. There were times when tensions emerged there. For example, the seniors, they were graduating seniors. So now it was three years from the fire. They felt as though the

> freshman class didn't understand how important fire and safety was. Several of them actually were coming to our staff saying you need to do more. They think it's a big joke, and they just don't understand. So there was tension that emerged in the student community between the unknowing and inexperienced and those who had lived through it. That was interesting. I don't think any of us would necessarily predict that. That was an interesting dilemma for staff to figure out how do you create the respect for what was really a very significant community event? The newcomers to the community—how do they become part of the campus community culture as it relates to that experience and its role in the university's life? (11/305/LL)

Another participant commented on this same issue simply by stating "Students have a remarkable capacity to put away danger" (8/V/P).

Another dimension of student orientation toward the crisis had to do with differences in how demanding students were:

> I think managing the diversity of human behavior and seeing students who have truly lost everything who expect nothing. Right up to the student who was really unaffected who was in your face every three minutes in an opportunistic "how can I get something out of this?" (11/305/LL)

Altering operations and relationships.

Leaving, returning or remaining in school. "One of the goals was to reach out to the students involved and see about their intentions of returning and what the university could do" (2/304/V). As this remark highlights, dealing with students leaving, remaining, and returning to school following a crisis was an issue for most. This issue was often connected to opinions about the institution's responsibility for providing financial compensation to students:

> I know the administrative representative of student government spent a long time talking about student safety. That the university owed a year's tuition to the students for all the stress and grief and the fact that this guy was able to walk in with a loaded pistol right to the room and no one was even aware of it. (2/304/V)

This issue was even more complex when dealing with students who were directly involved as victims:

> From almost the moment this incident started, then probably three to four weeks later, there were issues about what to do about the students returning to the classroom, the ones that were injured. I think one of them went home for awhile and then wanted to return. What was the university's response to her? What should that be? What kind of compensation might she have for her experiencing this? (2/304/V)

The struggle with compensating students for physical and emotional trauma went hand in hand with recognition of the on-going struggles victims faced. Being in an environment with constant reminders was the bulk of it: “But the young women were severely traumatized and I don't think any of them finished school. Most of them, by the end of the year, had left the institution. Just too many traumatic memories for them evidently” (3/304/V). But memories were not the only challenge for victims: “If I were her [a student who had been wounded], I could understand why I would not want to come back. Because there's no anonymity after a situation like that” (2/304/V). Not all students who had been victimized left school. One student who had been taken hostage not only persisted in school, but made significant career choices based on her experience:

> Interestingly, she switched to a criminal justice major. She started working with crisis intervention. So, it was interesting to see the direct impact that had on her, and she really had to take, from what I can tell, the lead in the room. When they were doing some negotiating with him that day, he wanted a six pack of Pepsi or something, and she was the one who was pulling up the rope to get information in to him. She remained calm throughout the entire thing. It was interesting that she was the coolest on that day, and she was the only one that was able to stay. She was the only hostage that ended up staying at the university all four years and graduating. (1/304/V)

One campus recognized the tremendous investment students had to make to come back to a campus physically altered to the point that returning to and remaining in school was an arduous task (10/305/V).

Table 17 summarizes the leadership challenges associated with students by the number of participants addressing the theme and the crisis type.

Table 17

Students: Challenges by Number of Participants Reporting and Typology Classification

Challenges	No. participants addressing theme N = 14	Typology categories addressed by theme		
		Victim	Natural disaster	Legal liability
Complexities of constituency groups				
Students & trauma	6	X		
Student orientation to the crisis	2	X		X
Altering operations & relationships				
Leaving, returning or remaining in school	3	X		

Students: Leadership Strategies

Leading planning and policy development.

Involve students in planning. Involving students in planning was an opportunity for them to have ownership over some part of the situation. One participant recalled how important control of rituals was for students: “It was very important to the students that they control a prayer service that was of their making and organization and not about the administrators doing stuff” (13/305/V).

Enhance services for students. The extraordinary circumstances of a crisis situation necessitated extraordinary enhancement of services to students. Study participants reported moving beyond the traditional means of connecting students to services based on staff positions and titles, to making connections based on greater degrees of expertise, concern or personal connection. For example, a crisis that occurred in a professional school connected students to student affairs professionals from the main campus who otherwise would not be involved in the issues of the school

(7/804/V). Leaders dealing with students who had no place to go at the time of evacuation or after being displaced by the tragedy found themselves assessing options and finding suitable placements for them (14/305/ND; 11/305/LL). Enhancing services also meant addressing student stress in extraordinary ways: “A massage group came up and gave the students massages. So it is the little things in the end” (10/305/V).

Leading intentional communications efforts.

Increase communications with students. Participants reported that continual meetings and ongoing communication with students were a means of providing support, assessing how students were doing, and responding to requests from parents. This was sometimes done as small group meetings conducted by staff (12/305/ND) or one-on-one meetings with individual students: “There was one victim who stayed in school. I think a lot of us continually made an effort to stay in contact with her. To continue to show her support, really during the next four years” (1/304/V).

Strategies associated with addressing student concerns are summarized in Table 18 by the number of participants addressing the theme and the crisis type.

Table 18
Students: Strategies by Number of Participants Reporting and Typology Classification

Strategies	No. participants addressing theme N = 14	Typology categories addressed by theme		
		Victim	Natural disaster	Legal liability
Lead planning & policy				
Enhance services for students	4	X	X	
Involve students in planning	1	X		
Lead intentional communications				
Increase communication with students	5	X	X	

Parents/Families: Leadership Challenges

Coping with deficient, inadequate, or non-existent technical and human response systems.

***Handling the barrage of parent inquiries*.** Schools dealing with a crisis that unfolded with media coverage were barraged with calls from concerned parents (2/304/V; 7/804/V). Such was the case of a hostage situation at a residence hall: “the minute they said residence hall, I think every parent who was aware of what was going on was calling to see ‘What hall was it? Was my daughter involved? What was going on? What were the injuries?’” (2/304/V).

Communicating about the crisis.

***Contacting families of victims*.** Once victims were identified, the process of contacting families began. The goals of the conversations were to provide accurate information about what had happened, inform the families of how the university was responding, and begin to connect the families with the university in the appropriate ways (1/304/V; 2/304/V; 3/304/V). Among the challenges were finding out who the victims were and sorting out who should contact the families. One leader recalled the process of contacting the families as an almost forgotten piece amidst the chaos of the crisis:

> Now some of this in retrospect is obvious. Obviously, you’ve got to inform the family. At the time it didn’t seem obvious. I mean, if you’re very concerned about just the safety of “are those young women going to be alright?” you might not even think about informing the families. (3/304/V)

Dealing with the complexities of multiple constituency groups.

Dealing with parents' emotions. One participant described dealing with parental concerns in the aftermath of the crisis as being the most "ticklish" leadership challenge and one that required the greatest sensitivity (3/304/V). Another described the emotions as ranging from general concerns to anger: "How can you not appreciate their hurt at losing a child" (11/305/LL).

Table 19

Families and Parents: Challenges by Number of Participants Reporting and Typology Classification

Challenges	No. participants addressing theme N = 14	Typology categories addressed by theme		
		Victim	Natural disaster	Legal liability
Deficient response systems				
Handling the barrage of parent inquires	2	X		
Communicating about the crisis				
Contacting families of victims	3	X		
Complexities of constituency groups				
Dealing with parents' emotions	3	X		X

Table 19 summarizes the leadership challenges associated with parents and families by the number of participants addressing the theme and the crisis type.

Parents/Families: Leadership Strategies

Leading the healing process.

Involve families in activities. A standard strategy for working with families of victims was to involve them on multiple levels in the aftermath of the crisis:

> We had the families very, very closely involved with us and tried to support them as well as involve them in what we were doing so that they felt connected with us. We invited them to all the activities we were dealing with. (6/804/V)

Allow families access to administrators. One campus made the commitment to the family of a murdered student that they could have access to any university administrator they wanted when they wanted (13/305/V).

Arrange for privacy for families. Given that family members of a missing student had a presence for a prolonged period, one leader recognized the importance of providing whatever level of privacy they desired amidst the chaotic environment of media and law enforcement and the impending possibility that their child would not be found alive:

> The family always talked in the present tense. So the dilemma was what to do. And we had just had a 100 million dollar arena built where there are private entrances. So we would escort them to be alone with pastors and so forth to help be there for a private place to deal with it if it happened under our watch. (13/305/V)

Table 20 summarizes strategies utilized by campus leaders to address challenges associated with parents and families by the number of participants addressing the theme and the crisis type.

Table 20

Families and Parents: Strategies by Number of Participants Reporting and Typology Classification

Strategies	No. participants addressing theme N = 14	Typology categories addressed by theme		
		Victim	Natural disaster	Legal liability
Lead healing process				
Involve families in activities	1	X		
Allow families access to administrators	1	X		
Arrange for privacy for families	1	X		

Volunteers and Miscellaneous Constituency Groups: Challenges

Dealing with the complexities of multiple constituency groups.

Managing volunteers. Three study participants identified challenges regarding volunteers in terms of appropriateness and logistical arrangements (11/305/LL). Searches being organized to search for a missing student in winter temperatures of 25° below zero was cause for concern:

> Because our young people were waiting all day to get on a bus out in this cold weather. There were like 1500 volunteers. And the other piece is doing no harm to those volunteers because you worry about their safety as they are in this environment. (13/305/V)

A campus evacuating prior to a hurricane did not feel they could capitalize on the offers of volunteers:

> There were some faculty and community members that called us and said that they wanted to open their homes to students. And while this is a very nice and

> well-meaning kind of thing, we decided that we would not relay that information to students because we didn’t know anything about them. (4/304/V)

Psychics and others. Some leaders had to deal with unexpected constituency groups. This was true for leaders dealing with a serial killer: “I think every crackpot in America probably called, too. People who were psychic saying ‘Well, if you just go look there’” (4/304/V). For those dealing with a missing student, psychics were not the only odd constituency group with which leaders had to contend:

> I think one of the things I had not expected is the level of mentally disturbed people who insisted on having access to the family because they know exactly where her body was. So letters, documents, phone calls where there is a whole aspect of people not being well and incorporating this need to be helpful and feeling they have a role to play. That I had not expected. (13/305/V)

It was not psychics or the mentally ill one leader had to deal with: “You don’t want to hurt people’s feelings, but you don’t necessarily want them there. How do you pull out the sensation seekers from the bonfire that can offer something legitimate?” (11/305/LL).

Table 21 summarizes the number of participants addressing each of leadership challenges associated with volunteers and others, as well as the crisis type with which each challenge was associated.

Table 21

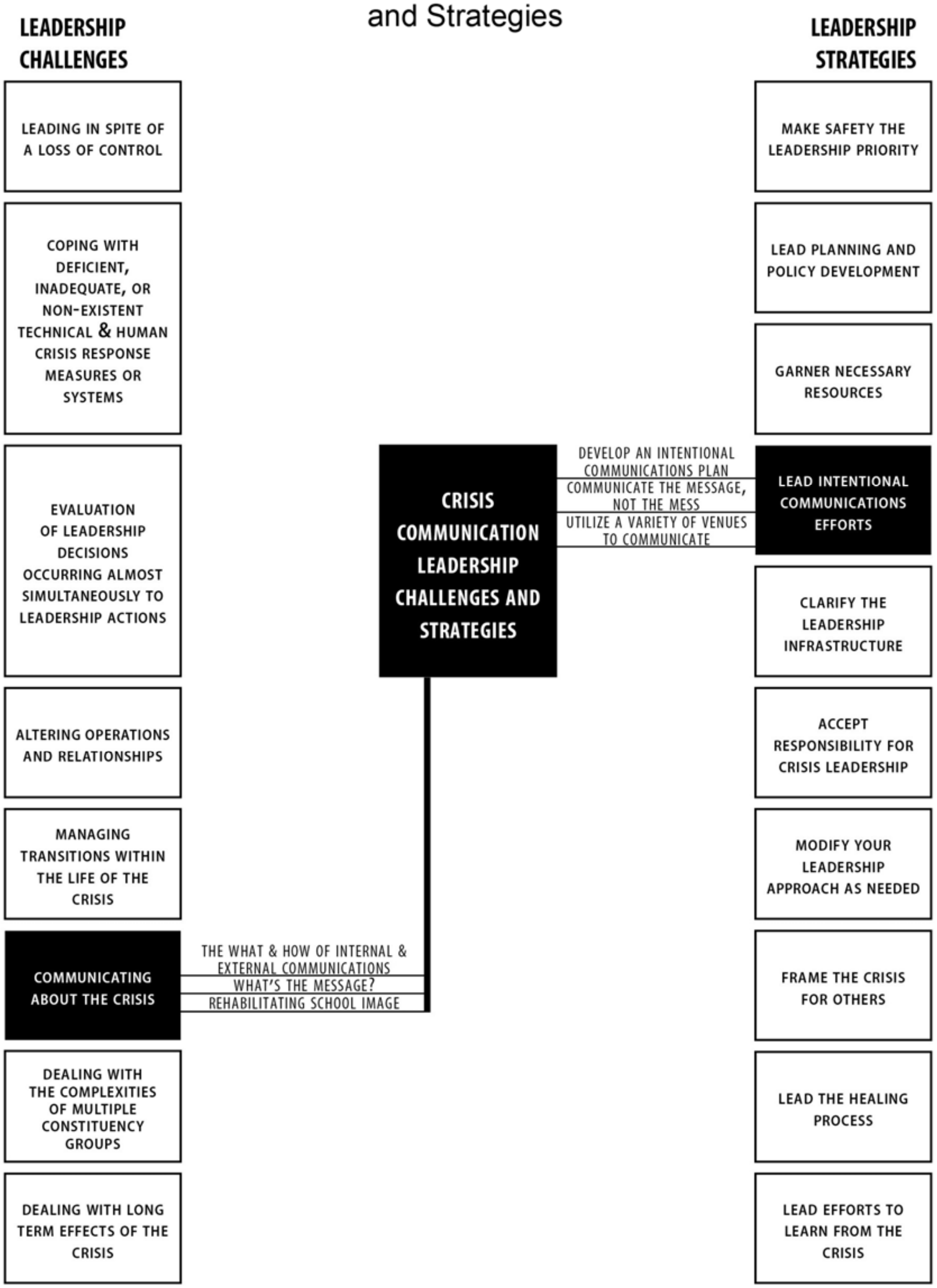
Volunteers and Others: Challenges by Number of Participants Reporting and Typology Classification

Challenges	No. participants addressing theme N = 14	Typology categories addressed by theme		
		Victim	Natural disaster	Legal liability
Complexities of constituency groups				
Managing volunteers	3	X		X
Psychics & others	3	X		X

Crisis Communications

Figure 8 depicts the leadership challenges and strategies associated with crisis communication and the strategies utilized by campus leaders to address these challenges.

Figure 8 Crisis Communication Leadership Challenges and Strategies


LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES
LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES
LEADING IN SPITE OF A LOSS OF CONTROL
COPING WITH DEFICIENT, INADEQUATE, OR NON-EXISTENT TECHNICAL & HUMAN CRISIS RESPONSE MEASURES OR SYSTEMS
EVALUATION OF LEADERSHIP DECISIONS OCCURRING ALMOST SIMULTANEOUSLY TO LEADERSHIP ACTIONS
ALTERING OPERATIONS AND RELATIONSHIPS
MANAGING TRANSITIONS WITHIN THE LIFE OF THE CRISIS
COMMUNICATING ABOUT THE CRISIS
THE WHAT & HOW OF INTERNAL & EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS
WHAT'S THE MESSAGE?
REHABILITATING SCHOOL IMAGE
DEALING WITH THE COMPLEXITIES OF MULTIPLE CONSTITUENCY GROUPS
DEALING WITH LONG TERM EFFECTS OF THE CRISIS
CRISIS COMMUNICATION LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES
DEVELOP AN INTENTIONAL COMMUNICATIONS PLAN
COMMUNICATE THE MESSAGE, NOT THE MESS
UTILIZE A VARIETY OF VENUES TO COMMUNICATE
MAKE SAFETY THE LEADERSHIP PRIORITY
LEAD PLANNING AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT
GARNER NECESSARY RESOURCES
LEAD INTENTIONAL COMMUNICATIONS EFFORTS
CLARIFY THE LEADERSHIP INFRASTRUCTURE
ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY FOR CRISIS LEADERSHIP
MODIFY YOUR LEADERSHIP APPROACH AS NEEDED
FRAME THE CRISIS FOR OTHERS
LEAD THE HEALING PROCESS
LEAD EFFORTS TO LEARN FROM THE CRISIS

Crisis Communications: Leadership Challenges

Communicating about the crisis.

The what and how of internal and external communications. The first communications challenge was determining what to communicate and how to get it out: “I’m in the Dean of Students area, so my responsibility is all of the information, getting it out to students, parents, informing the community of what was happening” (8/804/V). The task was complicated by limits on what university personnel could discuss: “We were not allowed to release information at that time because they were in an investigation. We were trying to respond to a crisis and we weren’t able to give out information” (8/804/V). Another challenge was establishing the best means of communicating with the public (1/304/V).

What’s the message? The challenge of determining the answer to the question of what the message was to be communicated began, for most, with disseminating valid and accurate information (7/804/V). Campus leaders were aware that controlling information in the modern age of technology was near impossible: “We live in a very different age now. You have people that have cell phones, witness to things that are happening. They could call the news station. They could call their families and in turn call the news station. So we’re in a very different era” (8/804/V). This presented a sense of urgency for leaders:

> It’s always my belief that you better get out there and tell people what’s going on and you take a certain risk in doing that. But you take a certain risk in not doing that. If you don’t attempt to answer people’s questions, they will speculate and rumors move so fast that goodness knows what people will believe 12 hours later. (9/804/V)

Or as another participant said, “Communicate, communicate, communicate. Because when you don’t, people make it up” (14/305/ND).

Getting valid information out was just the first step. Determining the message beyond that proved to be a challenge:

> And figuring out what was the information that we wanted to get out was not this kind of glitzy, spin doctor kind of stuff. What was the genuine message we wanted our students to understand and their families as well as the university community and the outside community? (4/304/V)

Rehabilitating school image. Crisis communications focused for some on how the institution was presenting itself in light of bad press (2/304/V; 5/804/V). One leader was tuned in to the implications of how a school would be viewed following a violent incident: “I wanted to make sure the people across the country did not see [school name] as suddenly a dangerous place” (9/804/V). Another had to overcome a devastating choice of graphics shown repeatedly by a metropolitan television station.

> There was another dilemma. One of the news channels. When they would air this on TV, the TV coverage had our logo with blood dripping or some gross representation of the university. And that image is what went out across the state and nationally. (2/304/V)

Table 22 summarizes the number of study participants addressing each of the leadership challenges inherent in crisis communications, as well as the type of crisis with which each challenge was associated.

Table 22
Crisis Communications: Challenges by Number of Participants Reporting and Typology Classification

Challenges	No. participants addressing theme N = 14	Typology categories addressed by theme		
		Victim	Natural disaster	Legal liability
Communicating about the crisis				
The what & how of internal & external communications	4	X		
What’s the message?	5	X		
Rehabilitating school image	2	X		

Crisis Communications: Leadership Strategies

Leading intentional communications efforts.

Develop an intentional plan. After the initial chaos of the misinformation in the early stages of the crisis, participants reported coming to terms with the complexities and challenges of communicating with all of their constituency groups and the need to become more intentional in their efforts: “And we started becoming much more directed. How were we going to respond to the campus community?” (5/804/V). For some, communication planning had to occur incrementally: “We said we will develop a plan for how we will communicate with the students and others and then think about the rest of the semester. But for now, we’ll think about classes being cancelled for a week” (6/804/V).

Communicate the message, not the mess. Intentionality in communication forced leaders to define the message even further. As one participant said, “It was really a strategy for myself and my staff just to communicate the message rather than the mess" (12/305/ND). Seven essential messages were identified by study participants. The first was to communicate that the university was in control of the situation (2/304/V) and, second, that the campus was safe (1/304/V). A third message focused on communicating what services were being provided by the institution. One school did this in a letter to parents:

> Now that school has started back and so on, these are the kinds of services. Things we have to offer your student if he or she is feeling anxious or whatever kind of thing. Here are the helping resources. Here's the Dean of Students Office, the Vice President for Student Affairs. Call them if you have questions or concerns. That kind of thing. (4/304/V)

A fourth focus was to convey the level of effort institutional staff were exerting to address the needs of students and others (2/304/V; 4/304/V; 1/304/V). A fifth focal point of communications was to diminish fear while acknowledging it, as well as the grief people are experiencing . One leader spoke of the delicate balance required to do this:

> The danger is over. There's no fear. There's no reason for fear. But I don't want to minimize it either. If I were to stand up there and say "don't worry folks, it's all over, forget about it," well, that's not the right reaction. So it's really important for me to be serious and personal about the grief but at the same time not propagate fear. And if you don't do that right at the moment when everybody is discovering this event, then fear can run rampant and bad things can happen. (9/804/V)

A sixth component of planned messages was inspiration. One school asked the student body president to take to the TV airwaves to encourage students to return to campus: "He talked about "you love your university. Come back. Everybody's doing everything humanly possible” (4/304/V). Finally, one school felt it was important to communicate information about the perpetrator who held students hostage before being killed by police snipers:

> One of the things we had to get out, and this was through the media, was that this person was not a student. And that was very important to people, we thought, to realize that, and that he was an ex-boyfriend, and I think his intent was probably to come and kill her. Luckily that didn’t occur. I think that was an important piece. (1/304/V)

Utilize a variety of venues to communicate. Study participants identified eight venues utilized for communication: student newspaper (4/304/V), university produced videos (2/304/V), letters to students and parents (4/304/V), television appearances by the student body president and/or the university president (4/304/V), radio interviews (14/305/ND), websites (14/305/ND; 7/804/V), forums (5/804/V) and press conferences (5/804/V).

Table 23 provides a summary of strategies utilized in crisis communications by the number of participants addressing the theme and the crisis type.

Table 23
Crisis Communications: Strategies by Number of Participants Reporting and Typology Classification

Strategies	No. participants addressing theme N = 14	Typology categories addressed by theme		
		Victim	Natural disaster	Legal liability
Lead intentional communication				
Develop an intentional plan	2	X	X	
Communicate the message, not the mess	10	X	X	
Utilize a variety of venues to communicate	4	X	X	

Reflections on and Analysis of Crisis Leadership Performance

In this section, participants' reflections on crisis leadership will be reported under six categories: (a) personal foundations of crisis leadership, (b) characteristics and outcomes of the crisis, (c) mistakes in crisis leadership, (d) successes in organizational crisis leadership, (e) factors that allowed leaders to be successful, (f) lessons learned, and (g) personal leadership successes in crisis leadership.

Personal leadership foundations. Only one study participant identified a leadership theory as a foundation for leadership behavior during crisis. Situational leadership was cited as being drawn upon by this participant (14/305/ND). But others rejected the notion that they drew upon theory to guide them through the crisis and instead named five other foundational areas: cumulative learning, understanding of change, work styles and strengths, personal qualities and faith in institutional strength.

Leaders who cited cumulative learning as the basis for their leadership actions began with the recognition that a lack of experience dealing with crises meant they had only the culmination of their previous experiences on which to draw:

> Just do it based on the experience. Of course, I've been doing it for over 30 years. You do it based on what you know about student life and working with families all along. Otherwise, you would never make a decision. (13/305/V)

Reliance on past experience led several leaders to characterize their foundation for leadership actions as instinctual and unconscious (3/304/V; 8/804/V; 10/305/V; 11/305/LL). The importance of continual learning in preparation for the day one might face a campus crisis was not lost on one participant: "I think that it's just important to take opportunities to learn everything you can along the way. You just really don't know what's going to come along your way on any given day" (11/305/LL).

One leader cited understanding of change as the foundation for leadership actions:

> Organizational thinking. It's a model that really helps when you go through change. The crisis is a lot of change and transformation for the institution. That's something I believe in and I fall back on that a lot. Also, this thinking that happens to myself in terms of how I am as a leader, you plan the plan but you don't plan the outcome. I know that the outcome is going to ultimately change, especially with a crisis of this magnitude. (12/305/ND)

Several participants identified work styles and values as the foundation that guided leadership actions. For one it was a commitment to collaborative approaches:

> Quite honestly, it's collaboration. Because once again you have to rely on the fact that there are team members that are in place because they're qualified, bright, and you know, we collaborate. Student affairs collaborates, makes sure things work. It is very important to make sure that everybody is on the same

> page and you are tapping into the knowledge, experience and resources of everybody on the team. (10/305/V)

Two participants identified a preference for dealing with objective tasks that allowed them to “roll up their sleeves” and get down to work (10/305/V; 11/305/LL). Others identified the values inherent in their professional training as the foundation for leadership actions, specifically, training grounded in the counseling and psychology field (8/804/V; 5/804/V; 1/304/V):

> And so because that was my orientation, and it seemed to be the right one for this situation, I used a lot of that background and training in terms of trying to understand where people were dealing with grief, trying to understand what kinds of things we needed to heal the community, what kind of space the college needed. All of that was out of a psychological framework. (5/804/V)

The personal qualities identified as the foundations for leadership during crisis were confidence, previous experiences with traumatic events, and a sense of personal responsibility. One individual addressed the importance of having confidence in one’s ability to handle crisis situations:

> When I was a very young man, I was driving up Highway 101 with my wife and her brother. And we got involved in an automobile accident. And a small car was dodging around a truck that was ahead of us. It got out of control and was bouncing down the highway and landed on the hood and burst into flames and ended up in the ditch. And I got these people out of the car. Out of a flaming inferno. But until I did that, I had no way of knowing if I would do it. Because that thing could have blown up in my face. But my instincts took over. I got two women out of that car. I saved their lives. I know I did. And once you do that

> once, you know you will. It is the same thing here. And so how did I make a difference? I had a very deep confidence in my ability to handle crisis. I had no time for figuring out what to do but I know my instincts were good. So I go into the next unpredictable unknown crisis with confidence in myself and frankly with other people having confidence in me. And that is big. And there is no way to get there except to go through it. (9/804/V)

Several participants cited previous experience with crisis and traumatic events as providing a leadership foundation (11/305/LL; 12/305/ND; 13/305/V; 9/804/V; 14/305/ND). For one it was not having previous experience with a major crisis that was helpful, but the opportunity to learn from minor crises:

> The campus I worked at before coming here, we had every which thing all the time. We had all kinds of systems failures, building failures—put a tent up here because the dining room needs jack hammering. So I felt as though I had enough experience with little things. Sort of knew right away what I needed. But it wasn't coming from a model. It was coming from experience. (11/305/LL)

For a leader dealing with a missing student, the previous experience with crisis was more personal:

> I knew exactly what to do because I had a sister that had been missing for about four months one time. I started my very first job July 1, and my sister went missing at the end of September. And so there are so many things I learned in that process. About communication with the media. About standing up for people who need a voice. One of the things I learned is that our own agendas may interfere with judgment. (13/305/V)

One leader, reflecting on a life of experience with crises, simply stated, “This is a terribly demanding situation, and I have been at this a long time. I mean, there aren’t many university presidents who have been through the wars the way I have” (9/804/V).

One participant identified being brought up to accept responsibility as the foundation that guided leadership during crisis:

> I go back and think of my parents and particularly my mother. There was a conscious sense of trying to instill a sense of responsibility in her oldest child. You’re supposed to do certain things. I guess my feeling has always been in any position of leadership, the professor included, is what’s expected of you. What are you supposed to be doing here? And if anything, that’s what was there. (3/304/V)

Finally, for one individual, it was not personal beliefs that guided leadership behavior, but belief in the school: “And so I felt, well, the institution is strong” (3/304/V).

Characteristics and nature of the crisis as a factor in leadership.

Positive outcomes of crisis. One positive aspect identified is that crisis provides a defining moment for leaders. In some instances, the crisis provided a defining moment for both the institution and individual leaders. One leader placed the crisis in the early developmental stages of a new administration: “It was certainly a way of defining the moment for the administration, and we were a young administration” (3/304/V). Another felt the crisis defined his place and voice on campus: “I think it helped me assume a position of leadership for the colleges. I think it said for the first time on this campus that there is a person who speaks for the colleges” (7/804/V). For another, the crisis defined individual strengths:

> It become very clear to me I was very comfortable being in the center with the state police people doing the organizing stuff. Okay, what's going on and figuring out a plan. I mean the work of it, that was really natural. I was very comfortable stepping up into a very clearly major leadership role in that respect. I was less comfortable stepping up in a leadership role around the softer side of this. I didn't want to be interviewed by the media on anything. I didn't want a public role. I was extremely comfortable doing the work of it. I don't think I was as aware about separation of comfort as I was in this situation. (11/305/LL)

A second positive aspect of crisis is that it provided an impetus for change. One change resulting from crisis was the implementation of training (4/304/V). At least one leader used the crisis as opportunity to develop training which involved working with a consulting firm, merging crisis response teams, and framing an approach to campus security (9/804/V):

> How can we train our people—faculty, students, and staff—to recognize either individuals who seem to be in crisis or situations that seem to be likely to produce danger? That's a different approach than asking the question "how can we make this place secure?" (9/804/V)

Another area of change concerned staff relationships. For one participant the crisis served as a valuable means of enlightening faculty: "It was actually a good way to educate faculty who may not have been necessarily in the know, so to speak, about all these services that are available to students on campus as well" (4/304/V). Another gained understanding about how to work with faculty:

> It was worth it to me [working with faculty] to just understand where they were coming from. It's helped me to know how to target the response my Dean of

> Students had to make. What kinds of support that office needed to be more responsive to the faculty. (5/804/V)

Several participants recognized a change that naturally emerged from the crisis (13/305/V; 11/305/LL; 10/305/V): “There’s a sense of shared crisis that I think strongly bonds people and you rely on others and if that is well placed then I think there is a synergy involved” (3/304/V). This participant recognized, as did others, that campus relationships were galvanized by the crisis:

> I think, and one hates to say that a tragedy has ever had something good come out it, but I felt better about my colleagues. In other words, more confidence in them, more affection for them because of what I said before, an overused word, you bond in those kinds of situations in ways you don’t in a normal course of events. (3/304/V)

Administrative organization and practices were another area of change. A professional school found itself more closely aligned with the main campus, including the creation of a joint emergency response team (7/804/V; 5/804/V). For another, barriers that prevented campus units from working cooperatively were eliminated as a result of the crisis (14/305/ND).

A third positive aspect of change is that it fortified the strength of the institution. Participants identified four ways in which the strength of the institution was fortified as a result of the crisis. First, the event served as proof that the institution could handle crisis and become stronger as a result (3/304/V; 4/304/V). Second, the crisis at one school resulted in greater awareness within the community about the existence of the professional school (7/804/V). A third means by which the institution was fortified by crisis was enhanced reputation and relationships in the community (7/804/V;

11/305/LL). The fourth area was the often recognized fact that crisis brings out the best performance in staff (7/804/V; 13/305/V):

> You know that the information you’re getting is accurate. You know that the people are sensitive to the concerns of the families. Things of that sort. And I think you take pride in the fact that the folks with whom you work are performing at a very high level. (3/304/V)

At least one participant was cognizant of the political impact of outstanding performance: “I don’t think anybody could help but be impressed with the work of my staff, which was good” (11/305/LL).

A fourth and final positive effect of crisis was that it allowed leaders to define a meaningful perspective. A former student reaching out to an administrator in the throes of dealing with a crisis provided an opportunity to frame the crisis in a meaningful perspective:

> I don’t remember being that emotional during it at all. I really don’t. With the exception of, as I said, a couple of mornings, I was sitting in my office at 4 am and I have e-mails from all over the country. People I had never met, former students, other institutions. One of the ones that was very moving was a student I had suspended in one of my previous institutions for lighting fires in the residence halls. I hadn’t been in touch with this young man in ten years and at 3:30 in the morning up popped an e-mail from this kid—now a young man living out on the west coast—who had read the newspaper and knew I was there. And paraphrasing he basically said to me, “I’m so sorry you are dealing with this. I can’t help but reflect on how you may have saved me on having to deal with this myself. Just wanted to say thank you.” It was a very moving e-mail. . . . The

> point of all of this is that to throw somebody out of school that would have that kind of impact on them. We never really know the impact we have on students that we serve. (11/305/LL)

When crisis involves violence. Leaders dealing with violence inherent in the crisis were aware not only of the immediate danger but the long term consequences. One was aware of the psychological torture some students endured:

> Just think about it. Being in a classroom and having a classmate come in and shoot your professor before your eyes and wave guns around. In that particular situation, he excused three people in the room, as if to say "I'm going to kill all the rest of you." I mean, it must have been just deeply traumatizing. (9/804/V)

For another, use of deadly force was a controversial decision:

> And there was another dilemma about should he [a hostage taker] have been taken out the way he was by a sniper. He had a gun. He was firing. But the police made that call. But they found out afterward this guy was really high on some sort of drugs, and I think he had killed two people in—it might have been three—somewhere in the eastern part of the state before he came on campus. So the potential for deadly violence was there, although we didn't know it at the time. You get a kid with a gun, shooting up the place. You got to assume that everyone is at risk. (2/304/V)

Violence was directly connected to psychological well-being as well as safety dilemmas:

> At that time, the whole community was around 100,000 some-odd people, and it's not like a big metropolis. And I always thought that the community was kind of a very open, warm, friendly kind of community. You drive through

> neighborhoods, see people with their garage doors up and you see people out in the yards, and people would sleep with their windows open. I think there's a lot of trust in that kind of thing. (4/304/V)

The quote above speaks to the enduring impact of crisis on the psychological safety of the campus and surrounding community. Several participants were keenly aware that some crises violate the long held belief that a college campus is a protected environment, immune from violence. The resulting dilemma left leaders asking how to make a campus safe without compromising the culture of the Academy. One leader spoke of the hysteria regarding safety following a violent crisis:

> People have different perceptions of what safety is. Safety is that when I drive up to my parking space here on campus, I would like an armed guard who would walk me to my classroom. Can't do that. It's a public institution and it's open. That's not a realistic expectation. I'm not trying to be funny but some people actually believe that to be true. (8/804/V)

Another was concerned about the balance of providing safety measures without those measures inducing more fear: "so that they would feel safe but not feel so scared they felt like 'I have got to stay here in my four walls of my apartment or residence hall room' or whatever" (4/304/V). Another participant struggled to identify what the level of security should be:

> The answer is you cannot, in a university, put on a guard at every building or put a fence around the place. It is an open culture. People come and go. Strangers come and go. Students don't all have the same profile in terms of their appearance. Students that shuffle with a backpack and have bare feet may very well be perfectly legitimate Ph.D. students, wonderful citizens and future leaders

> of America. So you dare not develop a kind of police mentality, and off-campus police understand that very well. Now, in some environments, in some corporate environments, there is only one way in and one way out. We've got armed guards and x-ray machines. That does not work in a university. There is no expansion of the police department that enables you to be safe. (9/804/V)

Another participant mused about implications of going overboard with security:

> I can remember thinking at the time, I don't know, unless you have the kind of security, it seems to me, that no one would want to come on a college campus. I think you have to do what is reasonable. Go beyond that, then I think you begin to erode the quality of life we hold, we so much cherish in this country. (3/304/V)

The aftermath of crisis not only left leaders responding to the pressure of faculty, students and parents asking what was going to be done (3/304/V; 8/804/V; 9/804/V), but also considering the implications for recruitment and institutional reputation:

> I can remember this specifically, feeling that one of the drawing cards of this institution—because I've used it myself over and over again with prospective students and their parents—as a faculty member recruiting people. This is a very safe place, a comfortable place. We raised our children here and then all of a sudden it's not. (3/304/V)

Regarding safety, maintaining a proper perspective, both in terms of not overreacting and maintaining personal vigilance was identified as important. (1/304/V; 4/304/V).

Mistakes in crisis leadership.

Weaknesses in the institutional leadership structure. Three mistakes were reported related to weaknesses in the institutions' leadership structure. As one participant stated, “It was very frustrating. One of the most frustrating things I have ever been through because of a lack of a leadership plan” (1/304/V). Two individuals pointed to the fact that leadership roles were not clear (2/304/V; 1/304/V). Another individual reported, “The organizational structure went out the window. It became leadership by function” (2/304/V).

A second reported mistake was the lack of a command post or situation room that would allow for strategy sessions, centralized communication and other functions needed during crisis (1/304/V). Lack of internal cooperation among campus leaders was the third area of weakness. This took several forms: administrators failing to understand the demands others were dealing with (2/304/V), failure of leaders at “the scene” of a crisis to communicate essential information to others (2/304/V), failure to put the names of students who were in danger in the hands of those communicating with calling parents:

> We had all of these parents frantic to know if their sons and daughters were okay. And it would be very, very helpful if we had been given the names of the hostages up front so we could have assured the other parents that their sons and daughters were not involved. (1/304/V)

Other areas of weakness included the failure of some leaders to involve those with expertise in dealing with crisis situations—“The school [where the tragedy occurred] never called our dean of students. Never did. They took it upon themselves” (5/804/V))—and the failure of those charged with sharing information throughout the organization to do so:

> The President called a meeting with all the department chairs to explain what was going on, and then it fell upon the department chairs to contact their faculty

> to let them know what was going on. Some things you have control over and some things you leave to others and assume they will get the job done. (10/305/V)

Different priorities were yet another area affecting internal cooperation: “A few times I thought some people were a little too worried about the image of the university, and that kind of thing” (4/304/V). Student affairs administrators reported being particularly affected by the failure of others to share information: “I would think that the university relations director could have played a bigger role in that [getting information back to student affairs]. I don’t think he understood the number of phone calls that were coming in” (2/304/V).

Poor decisions resulting from flawed thinking. Several participants identified poor decisions that resulted from flawed thinking about process, lack of foresight regarding consequences of poor decisions or poor event planning. One campus, trying to shield traumatized students from exposure to the media, created the very situation they were trying to avoid when a press conference was scheduled in the same room where students were meeting (4/304/V). For the school dealing with a hurricane, the sequence of closing the university and the housing operation in relation to the opening of the on campus shelter, had significant consequences for staff and students (12/305/ND).

Upper level administrators perceived as non-responsive. Failure of administrators to demonstrate and provide emotional support contributed to a perception of unresponsiveness:

> The President was so active it was difficult for the Vice President to know what his role was going to be with the students that were directly involved, and also

> with his staff. And as I recall, he wasn't even in the debriefing, which surprised me. So he was kind of aloof from the situation. It was a dilemma in that I didn't feel like he was providing a lot of leadership to our staff—immediately and in the aftermath. He's a very pragmatic, unemotional kind of person, and if he tries to let something not bother him, he thinks everybody else should do the same. (2/304/V)

The disconnect between leadership behavior and the needs of staff was also noticed at another school: "I think this more distant leadership from the President and Vice President was fine, but that is not what they were looking for" (6/804/V).

Communications mistakes. Communications mistakes sited by study participants included contradictory messages conveyed by staff to students (12/305/ND), incomplete contact information in student files (10/305/V; 1/304/V), lack of clarity for the students about whom to call for assistance (10/305/V), and an ineffective communications process such as deficient calling trees. One school failed to anticipate the key players in communication:

> We didn't know how important our web master was to us, and the web master came into the process much later than the web master should have. They should have been in there updating information. We lost a little bit of time because the update wasn't near fast enough. (10/305/V)

Some communication issues had to do with who was involved. As one participant said, "We were all prepared to communicate with the senior managers. Not as well prepared with the students and the faculty" (10/305/V).

Poor decisions related to staff. Two mistakes related to staff were reported. In one situation, an upper level administrator miscalculated the role of faculty: "He contacted faculty and told them not to come to the campus. Which was really a big mistake. We needed people" (11/305/LL). A second mistake was failure to hold staff accountable for inappropriate behavior. In one situation, administrators found themselves at the mercy of a controlling secretary who took over duties they should have performed:

> There was another personnel dilemma in our office as well. The main secretary all of the sudden took over complete responsibility of running the office and [we] weren't allowed to do very much as this point. It was a dilemma—given her need to control, she was the main communication person in that office. (2/304/V)

Part of the issue was that administrators did not know how to manage the phone system, leaving them no choice but to defer to the person who did when it came to handling the barrage of calls from parents. This same support person also became a gatekeeper that impeded internal communications:

> Well, the Vice President had a cell phone and started calling back to our office. However, his administrative assistant would not let anybody else talk to him. And it was such a tense situation that it was not a case where, in retrospect, lessons learned here were great. I should have just said, "No! I'm going to talk to him." But everything, all of the information I got, was relayed through her. (1/304/V)

Another staff person needing to be held accountable was one who leaked information to the press about an unfolding crisis:

> Everybody wondered how in the world the press found out about it so quickly. And then the thought was it was from this person who made a phone call who

> had no authority to do that and maybe [they] were trying to do a little grandstanding. (1/304/V)

Inadequate or improper briefings and/or debriefings. Two participants identified issues associated with inadequate or improper briefings or debriefings. The issues included a lack of depth and time spent debriefing those most heavily engaged in the crisis (4/304/V) and briefings that did not go well (6/804/V).

Inadequate skills, knowledge and equipment. Participants identified four areas in which they felt mistakes were made because of inadequate knowledge, skills, or equipment. The first was technology. One school lacked even the most basic of communication tools:

> I would say, in terms of evacuation, one of the major drawbacks is the fact that at that time, the college did not have a PA system. It sounds like common sense but it was just like, word of mouth on how to get out. (10/305/V)

One school did not have the telephone technology necessary to be as responsive as they needed to be (5/804/V), and another found that their staff was not trained in how to use the phone system to deal with the volume of calls (2/304/V). One participant stated, “Whatever technology is out there, we needed to figure out how to apply technology in crisis kinds of situations” (4/304/V).

A second area of inadequacy concerned staff understanding of the institutions’ crisis response procedures and team. Untrained and unprepared administrators were identified by one participant (1/304/V). Another sited lack of knowledge of the crisis response team: “I don’t think the majority of the staff in that office knew what the crisis response team was and what their function was and who needs to be doing what, and when, and how” (2/304/V). For one participant, it was not only that staff had inadequate knowledge of procedures; the procedures themselves were inadequate: “The crisis management notebook was in the office that I inherited, but nobody looked at it. And I got there and read through it and saw some real concerns. It was almost as if there was some large holes” (12/305/ND).

The two final areas in which staff lacked knowledge were the institutions’ code of conduct (5/804/V) and dealing with the media (2/304/V).

Lack of or inadequate crisis response plan. Three participants reported that their school did not have a crisis response plan (10/305/V; 12/305/ND; 3/304/V). One school was creating the crisis response plan as they went along:

> We were able to put together a plan of recovery. Sort of on the spur of the moment. Because there wasn’t some hidden document we could pull out and say “oh here is step one, let’s do this.” But rather, let’s state logically what has to happen. (10/305/V)

Failure to have alternative locations*.* The institution dealing with a hurricane realized a critical mistake was not having alternative locations to which they could send their students: “And things that we would do differently is, we will have an option. If we get into a bind and our campus is destroyed, we will have an arrangement with another local campus” (14/305/ND).

Table 24 summarizes the mistakes in crisis leadership reported by the number of participants addressing the theme and the crisis type.

Table 24

Mistakes in Crisis Leadership by Number of Participants Reporting and Typology Classification

Mistakes	No. participants addressing theme N = 14	Typology categories addressed by theme		
		Victim	Natural disaster	Legal liability
Weaknesses in the institutional leadership structure	5	X		
Upper-level administrators perceived as non-responsive	3	X		
Poor decisions resulting from flawed thinking	4	X	X	
Communications mistakes	7	X	X	
Poor decisions related to staff	3	X		X
Inadequate or improper briefings or debriefings	2	X		
Inadequacies related to logistics				
Inadequate skills, knowledge & equipment	6	X	X	
Lack of crisis response team	3	X	X	
Failure to have alternative locations	1		X	

Successes in organizational crisis leadership. Naturally emergent from the conversation on crisis leadership was the identification of successful leadership decisions, actions, and attributes, not only because they were critical, but because they exemplified excellence in leadership or facilitated resolution to leadership challenges. Several of these have been developed in earlier sections of this document. These include making special personnel appointments, creating temporary organizational structures, deferring to experts, maintaining an open disposition to information sharing and resisting “spin,” and making good judgments regarding closing, opening and resumption of the academic calendar. Five additional areas include basing actions on a caring leadership disposition, employing strategic communications strategies, engaging key constituency groups and experts, and avoiding blame when identifying performance gaps.

Caring leadership disposition. Several participants identified a caring leadership disposition as an important leadership attribute. Several actions and attitudes comprised a caring disposition. Among these were being calm (4/304/V; 2/304/V; 3/304/V), providing psychological and other support for students (1/304/V), and demonstrating care in interpersonal interactions (2/304/V). One participant identified the actions of the president in establishing a caring disposition:

> At the time things happened, the leadership was very positive and I think the President set the tone for that. He did a lot of hands-on personal reaching out which I think is very exemplary on his part and very needed. So it’s like there was closure brought to it. (2/304/V)

For two individuals, demonstrating care was the foundation of their leadership style: “For me, it is being supportive and caring as a leader, and collaborative, I would say” (1/304/V). For another, being caring was a natural impulse: “Well, what I ought to do as a leader is to go out to the hospital. It just seemed like the natural thing to do to find out how she was doing” (3/304/V).

A significant component of the caring disposition was being intentional about helping the campus heal: “We did a lot to make people feel like the healing could begin” (4/304/V). Several leaders recognized the importance of, and honored the need for, rituals. One individual even identified this as a phase of the crisis: “The third phase had to do with looking at what kind of more longer term response we could make in the community to help the healing" (5/804/V). One leader, capturing the goal of actions taken to help the campus heal after faculty members had been murdered, stated:

> If someone dies here, their spirit may stay. We had to honor that. Whatever it was that we needed to do in order to feel that it was okay, we needed to do that. Trying to figure out what we do next and always looking, always honoring, finding ways to remember and honor our colleagues constantly along the way. (6/804/V)

The caring leadership disposition was also directed at staff. Leaders at one campus recognized the importance of providing psychological support: "I think we were well prepared to know that our staff in our central office needed debriefing with a counselor and the residence hall staff needed debriefing with a counselor" (2/304/V). Leaders at another campus recognized the importance of being present with staff (14/305/ND). Another leader also identified the use of meals as a leadership tool to recognize staff: "If we would have handed out $1,000 bills that day, it would not have meant as much as having that hot lunch for staff. It was such a pick-me-up and a recognition of everyone's effort" (4/304/V). Part of the reason this action may have been so appreciated by staff was because of how easily caring for staff can be overlooked: "Recognition is something that may not always happen in these kinds of situations, especially when they are drawn out like this one was and to recognize that we needed to do something to boost staff morale" (4/304/V). A campus dealing with a natural disaster gave staff time off:

> And so we were closed on Monday afternoon. When you left you didn't have to come back. Many of us did come back on Tuesday that were able. For the most

> part, nobody came back on Wednesday. So only central personnel had to be there on Tuesday. We were so appreciated. (14/305/ND)

***Strategic placement of upper level leaders**.* The decision of leaders to physically place themselves at strategic locations was significant. Typically, this was at the site of a traumatic event or with injured parties. The individual most talked about in this regard was the university president. One participant recognized the power of the president as a symbol of the institution:

> Seeing the President there [at the scene of the crisis]. I think from what I heard afterwards that that gave them a lot of reassurance that the entire university knew what was going on, (although they didn't) and that everything was being done that could possibly be done to protect the students that were being held hostage and to protect the other students. (2/304/V)

This quote speaks to the significance of leader visibility: "And then [the President] was there at the hospital with the students and with the parents. He was absolutely miraculous, in terms of what he did" (2/304/V).

Abandonment of position and status.

> We're a Catholic diocese university and the Archbishop showed up on the scene and was sitting there at seven o'clock in the morning. Sitting in the basement of the affected building and just very calmly—here's a man of incredible power—just sitting there looking and saying just tell me, a student affairs person, where do you need me? Just tell me where you need me. What do you need me to do? Whatever it is, just send me. (11/305/LL)

The willingness of leaders to abandon position and status for the sake of contributing to the resolution of the crisis was another important leader attribute. In the case of a natural disaster, circumstances encouraged this:

> You didn't have hot water. You put on your sandals, put on your tennis shoes with your shorts, and you went to campus with your shorts and your baseball cap on and it was a whole different situation than before. And a whole different leadership team. We walked in with shorts because we were part of the group. There were no ties. There were no suits. There were no pantyhose for weeks. (14/305/ND)

This same participant identified the necessary expansion of the leadership circle as evidence of people's willingness to abandon traditional boundaries:

> Another key decision was the collective meetings we had. We didn't say, "Oh, I'm sorry. You're not financial services so you can't sit here, or you're not in the cabinet, you can't sit here." This was a true collaborative effort. (14/305/ND)

Focus on student safety and well -being. Making student welfare the driving force for decision-making was identified by several as among their most successful leadership behaviors (14/305/ND; 11/305/LL). This included decisions focused on physical safety as well as emotional well-being. One striking example of the measures taken to put safety first came from the school terrorized by a serial killer. Leaders there opted to forego their annual opportunity to save thousands of dollars for the sake of safety:

> To a certain point, even in Florida, we turned off the air conditioning in our residence halls. But we decided no, we're not going to because we didn't want

> students feeling like they had to open their windows—possibly feel unsafe and that kind of thing. (4/304/V)

Another involved developing new resources:

> Then in the community, one of the things, we worked closely with the apartment owners association, was to set up an inspection program where the campus police, city police, and apartment owners association developed a set of minimum standards of security type things in apartment complexes like lighting and locks. Everything in Florida is like a sliding glass door and those kinds of things. That eventually worked out into kind of an approval kind of thing. Like a good housekeeping seal of approval type thing. And the list of the apartments that had gone through this inspection process and had been approved from the police perspective were kept at the off campus housing office of the division of housing. And people who would be contemplating living in an apartment all around in the community used that resource heavily. (4/304/V)

Outreach to students was a second area. Serving as “the voice” that talked to students (13/305/V), communicating the institution’s intent to serve both those directly and peripherally affected (2/304/V), and connecting students to services (4/304/V), were all part of outreach. These efforts were sometimes extensive, engaging the student body and working with leaders of student organizations to mobilize grassroots efforts (4/304/V). One participant recalled the powerful and far-reaching benefits of outreach resulting from a partnership between the student government and university administrators:

> The student government ordered 15,000 whistles, and so the student government officers and elected officers and so on, and all of us in student

> affairs and the Dean of Students office, we went out with them to some of the main places on campus where the traffic or the students are during the student class breaks and so on. Quite concentrated. And we handed them out. And we would all have our cards, and if you saw somebody that looked like they kind of were stressing or maybe they were walking by themselves or something, we would intentionally go up and say, "Hi. I'm from the student affairs office. Would you like a whistle? How are things going?" And what I thought was interesting is that several, many of us experienced several weeks late, after a lot had died down, then all the sudden certain students would come in and they would have your card and they would say, "You may not remember me, but when you were out on the plaza passing out whistles, you talked to me. I wanted to come by because I am having this or I'm experiencing that. I'm struggling over this," or whatever. (4/304/V)

For another it was finding appropriate housing for displaced students (11/305/LL). For others it was providing psychological and other types of support (1/304/V; 2/304/V). And for another it was speaking for students when they were not in the room to speak for themselves: "I was the voice that talked about our students. That they were safe and that we were focused on them" (13/305/V).

Rituals as a leadership strategy. Several leaders took action to signal to the campus, and in some cases, the community, that healing could begin (4/304/V). Leaders engaged in conceptualizing and planning appropriate rituals and memorials with the goal of pulling the campus together, honoring those who had been killed, or making people comfortable about coming back to a site where a violent act had occurred (5/804/V; 6/804/V; 7/804/V). Leaders understood the importance of honoring the beliefs and needs of others in order to move forward. Leaders also recognized the symbolic message communicated by rituals: “It started the healing process in a very positive way. That we’ve all been wounded. It said to everybody, we suffered and we’re together” (7/804/V).

Reward and recognition of staff. Recognizing the toll crisis response took on staff, several participants identified decisions related to the reward and recognition of staff as one of their outstanding areas. Forms of recognition ranged from arranging for meals (4/304/V), to time off (14/305/ND), to engaging staff in debriefings and providing counseling (2/304/V). The goals of leadership were to boost employee morale, recognize staff at all levels of employment, address stress, and demonstrate leadership’s commitment to and appreciation for staff. At one school, leaders ate in the dining facility every day to be visible to staff (14/305/ND).

***Sensitivity to community relations**.* Two schools identified decisions related to the interaction of university actions with the impact on the local community as leadership behaviors recognized as outstanding. In the case of a natural disaster, the local community was grateful for the university’s decision to close, which assisted with traffic management (14/305/ND). For another, the demonstration of compassion from the university to the community was appreciated (8/804/V).

Simultaneous avoidance of blame and hunt for performance gaps.

> We had these forums. There were a couple of people who stood up and said that we really should do a more through analysis than we were doing. And there’s a term for it. They call for, it’s almost like a postmortem where you go back and figure out step by step what was the process and we really did evaluate whether we would do that. (5/804/V)

While debriefings and evaluation of the institution's handling of the crisis was a welcomed and common practice for most schools, the focus was on improvement for the future and not blame for the moment. At one school, the concern was to conduct such an analysis without pointing fingers, assessing blame, or turning self analysis into a witch hunt (7/804/V). In the end, they elected to forego this process altogether:

> We certainly found enough problems just doing the proactive. But we didn't go back. And I think it would have really been destructive to do it because a lot of the focus would have been on the [agency deleted], and we already had all of the focus on them. And we were trying to support them and help them move forward and deal with the loss. We didn't need to go and try to assess blame. And that is how it felt to us. And we said, "No. We are not going to do that." But there were some critics who said, you know, this was the opportunity to do that and you learn a lot from that. And I'm not saying we couldn't have learned things, but we had to evaluate the cost of that knowledge versus where we were. So we chose the other. Chose to do the moving forward piece. (5/804/V)

This intentional choice to avoid the assignment of blame was coupled with an intentional search for gaps in problem-solving. This collective agreement around two seemingly contrasting agendas allowed this school to move forward without contributing to the negative effects of the crisis. (5/804/V).

This sentiment was echoed at another school regarding analysis of the school's performance:

> And one of the refreshing pieces was even when our board convened on the following morning. You know, a situation like that, I think so often people could say "who's to blame?" People could point fingers everywhere. That just wasn't

> there and that made a big difference. It was more a matter of "what do we need to do first?" From the Board right on through the entire culture of the campus. (11/305/LL)

Strategic communications strategies. Several participants identified means through which they stayed connected to constituency groups as good leadership decisions. For most, this was intentional: "And we started becoming much more directed in how we were going to respond to the campus community" (5/804/V). Strategies included leaders getting firsthand information from hospital officials (3/304/V), relaying information to families as quickly as possible (3/304/V), and holding mass meetings with university representatives present to communicate facts (4/304/V):

The benefits of certain communications strategies drove the decisions behind what to do.

> Whether we would go out there and just hand out our cards or help them with the whistles. Those couple of days that we did that kind of thing—being out there and the visibility. Getting students to understand that we were out there and that we cared about them. (4/304/V)

Mass mailings were also viewed as important for this leader:

> But most importantly the communication directly to the parents through those letters. Sending out those letters to the parents was one of the best things that we did. To communicate to them and let them know that their student was important to us. Well, you say, gee, how could a mass mailing to 42,000 or whatever it is families [do that]. But you know, if you're a parent and you get the letter, you don't think about the fact that 42,000 other people got the letter. You got the letter. And so to you it's a personal touch that I think no one in their

> wildest dreams ever imagined that they would have gotten a personal letter. (4/304/V)

Mailings were not the only mass effort:

> We literally called all 17,000 students to let them know that we were planning to reopen. We were there. Not to forget. We hadn't forgotten about them. It is a very simple thing for the student to say they [were] called. It was personal. It was very important. So that was crucial. (10/305/V)

These methods indicated the importance of constituency groups hearing directly from university officials (2/304/V): statements like "the direct communication the President had through the media, whether it was in his interviews or in planned media sessions that the university had" (4/304/V) and "I got comments how appreciative they were [because a university official did radio interviews]" (14/305/ND) are indicative of this.

Being strategic about communications meant controlling the nature of communications. For one, an interactive website presented a leadership challenge:

> And I think one of the best decisions was that decision to take that website down because some of the students had begun to be really cruel to one another and cruel to some of my staff members about "how dare you go into my room without my permission." (12/305/ND)

For another, the strategy was to withhold information about a gesture intended to be helpful but which presented a dilemma for campus leaders. Amid the overwhelming fear of a serial killer in the community, leaders were reluctant to direct students to housing options they could not verify: "And so we were criticized for that [not relaying information to students that faculty offered their homes]. I think that was a good decision. We just didn't need other things to happen" (4/304/V).

For another, it was responding to the needs of a group:

> It was information about what was being done in the building and what would be the next step when it was that people could get back into the building and the like and what have you. And people were getting irritated. "Why are you talking to us about this?" And I finally had to interrupt and just, you know, address the group. (6/804/V)

A final area of good decisions in communications had to do with being strategic about meeting places. This included maintaining a place for campus leaders to conduct strategy meetings (9/804/V) and identifying the appropriate place to hold public forums (7/804/V; 9/804/V).

Resisting media sensationalism. While all of the participating campuses had to deal with media coverage, one was intentional in their efforts to assure that their orientation toward media coverage was consistent with their institutional values:

> Phil Donahue at some point came to town with his show. And he wanted to have a show live downtown and the university made a deliberate decision not to participate in it because we felt like it was a sensationalism of a very terrible tragedy. And as I look back, that was another good leadership decision. All those tabloid television shows that were occurring at that time wanted the university to come on and talk about things . And we made the decision that we were not there to entertain people. This was not an entertainment kind of thing. I think that was really good. (4/304/V)

Engaging and relating to experts and key groups*.* Effectively engaging key groups was identified as a successful leadership behavior. Knowing when to defer to experts was a key leadership success:

> He [the President] let the police chief be in charge of the situation at that point. This was a very good decision because once we realized that the, what do I call him, the hostage taker had probably just murdered three people in another part of the state, it then became even more of a serious situation for the safety of the hostages and of course the police are trained to do that, not the President. So that was excellent, just excellent. (1/304/V)

Engaging the faculty*.* While engaging the faculty was reported by several participants as a good decision, the form of that engagement varied. These included involving faculty in rituals and memorials (13/305/V), asking faculty to accommodate special needs of affected students (1/304/V), providing resources for faculty (4/304/V), asking faculty to take time in class and lead discussion about the event (13/305/V), engaging faculty in plans to move forward (6/804/V), and asking faculty to attend informational meetings (5/804/V).

Good decisions were not calculated. One individual who had been praised for making good decisions was careful to point out that most of the decisions being noted were not conscious on his part: “It came to my attention [that he had made good decisions] from people saying things to me subsequent to the event but it wasn’t that calculated” (3/304/V).

Table 25 summarizes the successes in crisis leadership reported by the number of participants addressing the theme and the crisis type.

Table 25
Successes in Organizational Leadership by Number of Participants Reporting and Typology Classification

Successes	No. participants addressing theme N = 14	Typology categories addressed by theme		
		Victim	Natural disaster	Legal liability
Caring leadership disposition	10	X	X	
Strategic placement of upper level leaders	3	X		
Abandonment of position & status	6	X	X	X
Focusing on student safety & well-being	5	X	X	X
Rituals as a leadership strategy	2	X		
Reward & recognition of staff	3	X	X	
Sensitivity to community relations	2	X	X	
Simultaneous avoidance of blame & the hunt for performance gaps	2	X		X
Strategic communications strategies	10	X	X	
Resisting media sensationalism	1	X		
Engaging & relating to experts & key groups	1	X		
Engaging the faculty	5	X	X	
Good decisions were not calculated	3	X		

Factors that allowed crisis leaders to be successful.

Exemplary individual and collective performances. “There were people doing things that I’ve never seen them do and these are folks that work hard every day” (12/305/ND). As this observation demonstrates, one of the most commonly reported themes regarding factors that allowed leaders to be successful during the crisis were exemplary individual and collective performances by staff (8/804/V; 13/305/V). Leaders sited staff who were well-prepared for the tasks at hand (2/304/V), being so good at their jobs that leaders trusted them to get the institution through the crisis (8/804/V), and those focused on students’ needs as essential (7/804/V). As one leader said, “When you saw people it was very clear that everybody was ready to do what needed to be done for students. So that was really refreshing. I didn’t have to convince people that we needed to do things” (11/305/LL). One example of a “beyond the call of duty” staff response came from workers trying to reopen the school that had suffered damage:

> Because even the workers, the night before it opened—it was raining and they were still working putting together the walk way to the portable classrooms. It was raining, it was slippery. You could see these guys nailing, cutting and drilling. And you know they were laborers but they knew it was important to get these kids back in school. (10/305/V)

Other individual exemplary performances included leaders who were respected:

> Because he was at the time the Senior Vice President for Student Affairs and everyone on campus respected him so highly and looked to him for his leadership and his knowledge and his experience. He’s the kind of person people would walk through fire for and you have to have your most credible people out there no matter who they’re in front of. And so it was important to

> have them there working, visibly working as a team, showing the leadership. (4/304/V)

Several collective performances were also cited. These included cooperation on logistical support such as units loaning staff to other departments to work phone lines or provide facilities and food (7/804/V). Collective efforts also included psychological agreements about how to handle issues imbedded within the crisis. This was the case with a school dealing with a shooting during which everyone collectively kept a perspective on what was important:

> Recognizing that these were very special people and drawing attention to that without turning it into a race issue—the killer was Hispanic. And how do you really emphasize the very special nature of these women without letting it go to some extreme such as racism. But it sure could have. (7/804/V)

Some individuals and departments were more critical than others, depending on the nature of the crisis. The institution's effectiveness in responding to the crisis was judged by the performance of these units and individuals. For example, the performances of residence life staff were critical at the school dealing with the hostage situation in one of the residence halls, as well as at the school dealing with catastrophic damage from a hurricane (12/305/ND; 2/304/V). Obviously, the performance of police and other first responders was critical for campuses relying on them to handle the early stages of the crisis (1/304/V; 7/804/V; 8/804/V). Outstanding performance by public relations personnel was universally cited as critical (11/305/LL; 3/304/V; 13/304/V). Identifying a single individual to speak for the institution was commonly used as an example as well: "I think

> that's a very important leadership strategy. You've got to have, whoever it is, a point person" (4/304/V).

Exemplary teamwork. As one participant put it, "To do justice to this situation you wouldn't be here just to be interviewing me because we had such a team approach" (8/804/V). Themes related to exemplary teamwork included willingness to suspend traditional territorial wars (5/804/V; 14/305/ND), willingness to cooperate with others (13/305/V; 12/305/ND; 5/804/V), and accountability (14/305/ND).

One individual attributed the lack of territoriality to a focus on larger goals: "And it wasn't about territory. It was about how we're going to be as responsive as we can to the faculty and the students and the situation" (5/804/V). This was essential to critical leadership action: "Had we allowed the politics of campus life to prevail, we would never have opened our campus in three weeks" (14/305/ND). Another dimension of suspending territoriality was offering support for internal decisions that might be contentious in non-crisis times. In the aftermath of a campus shooting, administrators on one campus launched an effort designed to track behaviors that might indicate early warning signals:

> We found some software that really allowed them now to track student behavior. And the only people who have access to this is the Dean of Students and the Chief of Police. But it is the kind of thing—and we are still trying to get all of the bugs out of it, but we're now implementing it. But it will really help us—because one of the things we found out about this young—this man who murdered the faculty—is that he had been very disruptive as an undergraduate here, and there was a pattern. And again we try to frame this by discovering that it doesn't necessarily mean we could have prevented him from doing that but we might

> have been able to get him some help a lot earlier than when he got to nursing school. It may even have helped to say this is someone who is so unstable [that] nursing is not where he needs to be. And I think I told the faculty senate this, and the faculty there really believed this was the necessary thing for us to do, because they felt we really didn't have any way to track what was going on. And also it reinforced that the Dean of Students office has to be the repository of that information. . . . It was truly supported by the entire institution. . . . And I think we got support internally from the campus and I think that was a more proactive thing to do than dwell on what were the mistakes and what were the problems in that regard. (5/804/V)

Another participant recognized the payoff of years of relationship building: "I've worked there 30 some years, and all the times I've said, you know, "I need your help." This is why not one person turned me down. Including business people downtown" (13/305/V). Previous investment in internal relationships among the crisis response team was another dimension of teambuilding:

> You need to have the relationships built between members of your crisis response team long before any of this happens, because you need to have somebody who will respond when you call and say "turn on every light outdoors on campus and do not turn them off until you hear from me again." You need the person on the other end of the phone to be able to say O.K. and no questions asked—who is going to pay for it or any of that—no questions will be asked. It will happen. That kind of thing. (4/304/V)

Part of managing relationships was the willingness to keep others in line who violated the expectation of cooperation. A high-ranking administrator at one school was marginalized by fellow administrators and penalized by the faculty: “The faculty was really furious with him and told him not to come and they were really angry about that” (11/305/LL). Finally, teamwork came down to the willingness of individuals to engage others: “I think one of the other things I learned about myself in this process is don’t try and be the lone ranger. Don’t try and do it all. Particularly with something of this magnitude. Rely on your people” (14/305/ND). Relying on others extended beyond the boundaries of campus: “I was very quickly connected by colleagues in the state. Some just showed up. What can we do? Other vice presidents and other directors-veterans-people who were seasoned professionals” (11/305/LL).

In some cases, teamwork was an intentional expectation:

> The Vice President for Student Affairs mandated that the leadership team in student affairs work together jointly and all work as a team, no matter what those existing barriers may or may not have been. I think that worked very well. (12/305/ND)

In another case, it was accidental: “Actually, I think we are fortunate that everybody worked as well together as they did, frankly” (1/304/V). The benefits of teamwork among leaders was obvious: “I thought we were able to have some really good actions implemented at that particular point” (12/305/ND). This participant continued, “So you include more and more people to be problem solvers and the burden of lifting the world on your shoulders is not just among 10 or 12 people” (14/305/ND).

Presidential leadership. Five elements were identified related to presidential leadership. The first concerned the power of presidents who were well-networked and had negotiating power. Reopening one school was dependent on this:

> They didn't think we could do it because we didn't have communications. In another few days we got phone lines. So he was forceful enough. He was strong enough. He was connected enough to be able to get these things to go. (10/305/V)

A second area is related to the president's ability to serve as the spokesperson for the institution (4/304/V):

> The President was seen as a significant spokesperson because we had so much media coverage. He was able to quickly and easily put it in a larger context—a spiritual context. The language that he used was the message that told the human story that was bigger than the here and now, and I think that really helped us an enormous amount. So I feel like we didn't have criticism. (11/305/LL)

A president's ability to inspire staff was a third area:

> Even something as simple [as] when the President—I'll never forget this, it really had a high impact on me—he said, "You know in the Lord's Prayer we pray for our daily bread and there's a reason we pray for our daily bread. Because we just need to get through the day. Not worry about tomorrow, not worry about three weeks from now or a month from now." And that's a very simple concept, but I did think it helped segment the experience. (11/305/LL)

Inspiring staff extended beyond individual performance: "He's very eloquent. He's very compassionate. And I think this bonding across campus that I talked about was because of that kind of leadership" (7/804/V).

A fourth area related to presidential effectiveness concerned the president's decision about where he should physically be located:

> One of the things in terms of success in getting up was the fact that our president had the mindfulness to stay in the college. Like the captain of the ship, he never left. And that was crucial because he really didn't give up the ownership of the building. That was important because it maintained a foot-hold there. (10/305/V)

In one case, confidence in the president stemmed from his 30 years of experience (7/804/V).

Taking action as a way of healing. Another factor contributing to success was willingness to take action as a way of healing:

> We were confronting it. This is adversity that we're facing and we're confronting it squarely and at the same time as we squarely confront that adversity we're diverting our energies toward our strategic initiative. And I quite honestly believe that the choice we made is one of the ways in which we achieved the healing. I don't know if it would work for everyone; it did work for us. (6/804/V)

Moving people forward required consideration of several factors for most leaders: "I said if we choose not to move forward, there's one thing that I'm concerned about, and that is that we will give [the shooter] more power over this college, and I think he has done enough" (6/804/V). Not giving the perpetrator more power was not the only concern for this leader: "That was a delicate balance because we couldn't push too hard and not acknowledge the personal trauma that faculty and staff are going through" (6/804/V). The decision to press forward quickly in this case had positive results:

> They made the choice to go with it and we moved forward with everything; and we truly did, we did amazing things in that year. We launched both programs

> very, very successfully and we went forward with our initiatives. The shooting occurred at the end of October and by the end of November we had already faced that decision where we were going. And that's a lot to ask of people. (6/804/V)

Commitment to respond to individual situations*.* Another factor contributing to success concerned commitment to a focus on the individual in spite of institutional chaos.

> And I think the other thing, especially in a crisis situation like this and when you're at a very large campus, [is] the personalization. The ability to respond to individual situations. I think people were blown away by the fact that we were able to do that. And that the leadership of the university—particularly from the President and from the Vice President for Student Affairs. I don't know if training is the right word, but it's kind of a philosophy, I guess. It's more of what I would call a philosophy, being able to respond to individual situations. Even when all hell is breaking loose around you and there is such [a] massive kind of panic going on around you. (4/304/V)

Continuous assessment of staff's emotional status*.* Constantly assessing the status of staff on an ongoing basis was another factor contributing to success (6/804/V):

> The strategy of bringing people together on a scheduled time basis was very, very important, because it gave me a chance to see everybody eyeball to eyeball. Who's managing and who isn't? Who's got other issues that I need to say to them "You need to go home for a few hours. Why don't you get out of here and get some rest?" So, I think having that eyeball contact which was really

> critical. And also just to extract them from the demands they were under themselves and get them into a place where if they needed to weep they could do it in [the] solitude of [the] other directors. (11/305/LL)

A spiritual foundation. Participants from one school, a religious institution, cited several elements of spirituality as important. Having spiritual practitioners involved, religious rituals, using spiritual beliefs as a way of making meaning of the crisis, and allowing people to participate in collective spiritual activities such as praying together were all identified in this theme (11/305/LL).

Flexibility and a situational approach. Flexibility in the formal planning process was crucial for success:

> I think we were more prepared because we weren’t locked in, if you will. We were open to doing what seemed most appropriate in that situation because I don’t think a plan that might have been set would have been appropriate for this and would have incorporated in the fact we couldn’t get back into the building. (7/804/V)

Being open to the interpersonal level was also important:

> We had a core group of student affairs folks. I was thinking one way, and he was thinking another way, which was good. So be open to listening and that was very important. Keep an open mind. Know that things aren’t going to happen like you think they are. (14/305/ND)

Staying focused. Three themes were identified as related to staying focused. The first was the willingness to go above and beyond: “Make it happen. You have to have people that are willing to think outside the box and are willing to put in the long hours and go, the cliché, that extra mile to make things happen (10/305/V). Being able to triage, sort, and prioritize tasks was a second theme: “So thinking, ‘okay, I’m going to do what today’s tasks are and I’m not going to worry about what’s coming at you.’ That was an important thing. For us to stay focused on today” (11/305/LL). Focus on an educational purpose was the final theme: “And I think for most of us we are dedicated to the fact that we want students to do well. We want them to achieve their goals, and that’s kind of spurring us on to make sure it happens” (10/305/V).

Trigger points. The key to a school reopening on what many thought was an impossibly short time schedule was a trigger event that provided evidence that critical systems could be restored:

> So once that happened [phones restored] and the central office came to visit to see and they said, “O.K., this [reopen] is actually possible.” And so then they say, You have the green light to try and make it happen for October 1st and move forward.” (10/305/V)

Having a crisis management plan*.* Having a crisis management plan that worked also contributed to leadership success (4/304/V; 12/305/ND).

Table 26 provides a summary of the factors that allowed leaders to be successful by the number of participants addressing the theme and the crisis type.

Table 26

Factors That Allowed Leaders to Be Successful by Number of Participants Reporting and Typology Classification

Factors that allowed leaders to be successful	No. participants addressing theme N = 14	Typology categories addressed by theme		
		Victim	Natural disaster	Legal liability
Exemplary individual & collective performances	11	X	X	X
Exemplary teamwork	8	X	X	X
Presidential leadership	3	X		
Taking action as a way of healing	1	X		
A spiritual foundation	1			X
Continuous assessment of staff’s emotional status	2	X		X
Commitment to respond to individual situations	1	X		
Flexibility & a situational approach	2	X	X	
Staying focused	2	X		X
Trigger points	1	X		
Having a crisis management plan	2	X	X	

Lessons learned.

Crisis expands a leader’s conception of his/her role as a leader. For one leader, examining and expanding one’s role in relation to constituency groups was a result of the crisis:

> I think I understand that it’s important to be an advocate for the faculty while at the same time being an advocate for the students. And I was so much on the side of the students before this. There is no question that I’m going to be an advocate for the students, but I think it’s tempered me to see that there is a role

> for me as a student affairs leader, and actually, the role I have on this campus in terms of campus life is because I also have human resources. And the expectation is that I am bridging both the student and faculty. And just seeing this situation crystallized all that for me. (5/804/V)

Crisis causes institutional members to rethink what they do. The crisis for one school required changes to traditional events:

> Everything you routinely do in the course of your academic life—you're planning convocation. Well, that's kind of like a no brainer. We have a template, we have a way of doing it. But this time we couldn't do it that same way. Everything had to be [changed], everything was new. We had to re-think it. How we were going to do everything. (6/804/V)

Crisis leaders must take care of themselves. At least one participant recognized the importance of staff taking care of themselves: "I think one of the most important things was take care of yourself. I made sure I ate" (14/305/ND).

Crisis frequently reveals leader's flaws. One leader was aware that a personal flaw (lack of assertiveness) had an impact on how well the crisis was handled (1/304/V).

Crisis renews a culture of respect. A shooting on campus sparked one leader to adopt a caring attitude:

> I think it's about reaching out. It's about all of us looking out for the other person. I had a conversation with a class the other day where I told them it's really up to us to really take care of each other. I guess my message to people is about being very watchful, caring. Being a good friend to people around you. That's all.

> You know, now more than ever, I think, treating people with respect and dignity is really important. They need to model that behavior. (8/804/V)

***Crisis response requires crossing functional lines**.* The need to cross functional lines was another lesson learned as a result of crisis. One leader saw institutional leaders thrust together in unusual circumstances: “We really need to look at this much more collaboratively. I know my associate director as well as the Dean of Students had several conversations while in the shelter about this” (12/ND/DRL). Another advocated for not only knowing other’s roles prior to a crisis occurring, but “the importance of working so closely with the other key players so that you know almost instinctively how you’re going to react and trust one another” (1/304/V). Policy and structural changes emerged as a result of deficiencies in cross-functional communication at another school: “And it also helped reinforce that there had to be more communication between the Dean of Students and the campus police” (5/804/V). Formulating appropriate responses between campus groups was another area requiring collaboration:

> You see, I was humming along, thinking that all was okay. But it wasn’t. It really wasn’t. And so I think it took my leadership to be able to do that [determine the response the Dean of Students should make to the faculty], because, you know, we were all making assumptions that just weren’t correct. And this crisis brought that out. And it really did take some leadership to bring those two groups together so we could have one policy and not have divisiveness” (5/804/V).

The crisis also resulted in a structural change in crisis response at this school:

> And so rather than having an emergency response for the [professional school] and one from here, we have one team. And so we have members from that

> campus on our team. Again, that was a conscious decision because we said, you know, we are one place and we need to give you our support and you need to give us yours. So everybody was in agreement with that. (5/804/V)

Instruction had to change. Academic leaders in a college dealing with a shooting in a classroom realized that instruction had to be modified for students who had been so closely affected by the crisis: “So their usual teaching had to change. So adaptations needed to be made not only in terms of how we do things after that shooting—I would say nothing was ever done the same way” (6/804/V). Modifying instruction triggered lessons for others: “Wow! I think that I’m much more attuned to where the faculty are in situations of faculty-student interactions” (5/804/V).

Mental health support is critical. Several participants identified improvements to the delivery of mental health services to staff as critical (9/804/V; 8/804/V):

> It could be if you ask for one of the improvements that we would have made it would be how do you take care of the caregivers? We did have counseling for the staff. But it should have been on board as fast as we did for the students. (10/305/V)

Mental health services included educational sessions at another school:

> And then there were these brown bag sessions where we had counselors and student affairs professionals who put on these different workshops to talk about how you deal with grief. How do you deal with your students’ queries about this? (5/804/V)

Preparing for future crises must be on-going. The bulk of lessons learned focused on improving the institution’s crisis response and preparing for future crises. The school dealing with a campus shooting focused on developing a code of conduct for students, a process for reporting disturbing behavior (7/804/V) and an educational campaign to inform faculty, staff and students about the policy changes (8/804/V; 5/804/V). The policy review began with an examination of the school's current policies addressing threatening behavior, incorporated a time limit for sharing information on troubling cases, and developed a formal process for conducting behavioral assessment (5/804/V; 7/804/V). The process also included behavioral definitions:

> An interesting side benefit of that process is that in the sub-committee I had, we chose not only to look at threatening behavior, but disruptive behavior and we said it was really important for us to distinguish what's disruptive and what's threatening and we wrote a whole set or procedures and definitions about disruptive behavior at the same time we wrote the threatening. And we made those distinctions. (5/804/V)

Several schools focused on improvements to the crisis response team. Engaging a broader spectrum of personnel (2/304/V; 10/305/V; 8/804/V), conducting mock training drills and table top exercises (1/304/V; 5/804/V), determining gaps in current protocol (1/304/V; 5/804/V), convening regular meetings of crisis response team members (1/304/V; 4/304/V), enhancing inter-agency relationships (1/304/V; 5/804/V) pooling information about an institution's response to multiple crises (9/804/V), cross-training staff (2/304/V), planning to use a command center, intensifying safety practices (locking doors, trimming bushes, installing metal detectors) (7/804/V; 2/304/V; 1/304/V) and investing in prevention, anticipating the unexpected, and planning ahead were stated improvements (1/304/V; 12/305/ND; 14/305/ND).

The final theme warned against complacency (4/304/V): "I think it's just important not to be too complacent. You never know what's going to happen next. You can't plan everything before it happens to you. You don't know what's going to happen to you" (11/305/LL).

Table 27 provides a summary of the reported lessons learned by the number of participants addressing the theme and the crisis type.

Table 27
Lessons Learned by Number of Participants Reporting and Typology Classification

Lessons learned	No. participants addressing theme N = 14	Typology categories addressed by theme		
		Victim	Natural disaster	Legal liability
Preparing for future crises must be ongoing	11	X	X	X
Crisis response requires crossing functional lines	4	X	X	
Crisis leaders must take care of themselves	3	X		
Crisis expands a leader's conception of his/her role	2	X		
Instruction had to change	2	X		
Crisis causes institutional members to rethink what they do	1	X		
Crisis frequently reveals leaders' flaws	1	X		
Crisis renews a culture of respect	1	X		
Mental health support is critical	1	X		

Personal successes in crisis leadership.

Effectively using the symbolic power of the presidency. One category of bests in leadership performance was recognizing the symbolic power of the presidency. One president was acutely tuned in to this fact:

> You know, universities and university presidents can very easily be perceived as cold and distant and lacking in humanity. And it has always been my way to humanize the institution by humanizing the presidency. What you say and what you do is terribly important. In a time of crisis you have, in a certain sense, a special opportunity to do that. Also a certain responsibility to do that. It's a principle that stands not only in a crisis. Humanizing the institution is an important challenge but a presidential opportunity. It helps you get out there and let them see you as a human being—even if you are not a perfect human being—you're a human being. And that humanizes the whole institution in their eyes. (9/804/V)

One area where this symbolic power of the presidency was critical was in how the president spoke publically about the crisis:

> The president is expected to speak authoritatively about what is going on, and handling that is a real test. There has to be personal sensitivity. People have to feel your pain. Because if they don't, they see the institution embodied in the president as impersonal and uncaring. (9/804/V)

Another area where the president played a symbolic role concerned the message sent by his or her presence at events: "And you have to be a presence. And I went down there and hung out, not because I thought I could do anything, but just because I wanted them to see that their president was there" (9/804/V). The symbolism of the president being present became more critical with highly emotional events:

> We went upstairs and the students who had been in the classroom for the first time were admitted back into the classroom where they experienced this trauma. And that was a very emotional sharing experience, sitting on the floor. And I sat on the floor with them, and I didn't say anything at all. But I just felt the need to be there and to touch them physically and to sit there on the floor with them to somehow share their grief as best I could. Now, I was just one of many, many people in that room. But I am the president and people know and my absence would be noted for sure, and my presence hovering in the corner would be noted, too. But I got down there on the floor with those kids. (9/804/V)

This individual also recognized the impact of the symbolic power of the president on campus employees:

> You've got to step up at the moment of the crisis but have to signal confidence in your people. Your police chief, your deans, your student affairs organization, your mental health people. And so, first, you have to actually have confidence in those people. And fortunately, I do have confidence in those people. Because they too are being challenged to define their leadership. (9/804/V)

Another reported leadership best came down to being a follower:

> One of the important dimensions of leadership, I think, is knowing when to step up and when to step back. And stepping back can be as important as stepping up. (9/804/V)

This participant recognized that different people play different roles over time:

> She stepped in and stepped in nicely. I remember going to a press conference, and she and I were sitting at a table with the reporters and I was there primarily to be backup for her if she needed it. And she was just amazing. She didn't need me at all. In that circumstance I wanted to step back and let her take the lead. (9/804/V)

Conscious choice to be visible. Making the conscious choice to be visible was another leadership best: "We went and visited with every area. It's about visibility. As leaders, we have to be visible" (14/305/ND).

Effective employment of personal skills and traits. Several personal leadership successes involved specific skills and traits. For one leader, it was the ability to think clearly during crisis:

> I do think that the clarity of thinking probably is something. I'm able to see multiple solutions very quickly. So as people were rolling their hands about, what do we do about this? Being quick to identify a whole series of options, some of which were ridiculous perhaps but it was helpful to consider and having people able to have confidence to lead us through this. (11/305/LL)

This participant also cited being quick on one's feet, having personal stamina, as well as the ability and willingness to take action as important traits:

> I didn't set out to have people think I could do it. I just did it. And I think standing in the middle of those emergency management moments and really seeing the respect of the external community. State police were dealing with crisis every day. It was clear to me that they were very impressed with how we mobilized. And I have to believe that I played a role in that. I know I did. I have heard many people talk about it. It's funny. The Dean of Freshmen Studies will often now

> introduce me as the person who got us through the fire. I don’t see it that way. But I did keep myself together. (11/305/LL)

For another leader, organizational skills proved to be invaluable:

> And my organizational skills definitely helped me with that. So that leadership piece [is important], because you really have to be dedicated to the organization. If not, it would have really been hard to handle. The amount of paperwork and people work and the time limits we had on us. (12/305/ND)

Being willing and able to step up responsibility was another valuable trait during crisis:

> O.K., I will be very honest. I sat at a meeting. It was a meeting of all the social and emergency committee, and it literally came down to the wire where the President said “Can we open the buildings by October 4th?” And I was sweating bullets on the inside and I said, “Yes, absolutely.” (9/804/V)

Another leader was thrust into a position of responsibility:

> And even in the early phases we didn’t know what we knew or didn’t know. You just don’t know. I don’t know how, somehow, I became the university point person in those sessions. Which wasn’t really uncomfortable. I just don’t know how I ended up doing that. It just sort of happened. (11/305/LL)

Ability to remove barriers. Another leadership skill identified as a leadership best was the ability to remove barriers so others could get things done (13/305/ND).

Getting critical decisions right. Additional leadership bests involved specific decisions made and actions taken. For one participant, it was getting a critical moment right:

> There is a—what seems like an instant at the beginning when you find yourself as the university president visibly on point and literally on television or responding. In that instance it was national news. . . . And so you find yourself before you get into any of the mature stages of the crisis, when you barely know what's going on, you find yourself as a university president looking into the cameras with a microphone in front of your face, expected to say something meaningful. I truly believe that that is a critical moment. You either get it right instantly or you lose it forever. But I do think I got that right. I think in that critical first moment, I got that right. I think in truth, that my leadership in the first hour was the most important leadership I demonstrated. (9/804/V)

Influencing others. Convincing other campus leaders to accept a leadership role in handling the crisis was another critical decision. This was that case for a leader dealing with a missing student:

> Deciding that this case was not an off campus case. It was simply just not any way I could live with myself if I had said, well, you know, some people are saying they had nothing to do with that. It has everything to do with that. (13/304/V)

This same leader extended this influencing behavior to other parts of the operation:

> And one of the leadership things is convincing people that they are part of what makes a healthy community and a caring community. They took that role on immediately with the help of the Director of Alumni Relations who said, "Listen to this lady—she knows what she is doing."

Effective use of human resources. Assigning people to their strengths was another leadership best: "You find a spot for people who would be meaningful in their effort to help. Not everyone wants to walk the tundra but maybe they could serve coffee" (13/305/V). Similarly, another leader cited the ability to acknowledge others' limitations as a leadership best:

> Acknowledging limitations in oneself and in one's staff, in one's colleagues. It's important because in the absence of that you become very critical of others. Not everybody can do some of the things they are told to do. You have to allow for that. That's really hard to do when you need a lot of help. I think that's important. (11/305/LL)

Performance as a spokesperson. The skill to serve as a spokesperson for the campus was another leadership best (11/305/LL):

> The very first time I was on television my very first words were to the effect that we have to distinguish between grief and fear. This is a time for grief, not a time for fear. . . . So you can't just be that passive authority that says, "Don't worry folks, everything is under control." If that's all you say, you've really blown it badly. If that's all you say, you've missed an opportunity to express your grief. (9/804/V)

> This best was recognized by others as an outstanding leadership performance: "He was working for a company who was giving a workshop on how to handle crisis, and some of the people attending the workshop were from my prior institution. And he, my colleague, did not design this workshop, but he said, "They used your testimony for CNN or whatever. It was a model for what one does in a crisis." (9/804/V)

Providing direction. "I think it was the day I dealt with the faculty about where we go" (6/804/V). As this observation suggests, guiding a committee was another form of providing directions: “I think the best for me was the coordination of my committee with the faculty. Because the faculty were very threatened and anxious about what happened. And they felt very vulnerable” (5/804/V). Another dimension of providing direction was challenging decisions:

> But I kept saying to the President, do not open this campus. Do not open this campus because we cannot guarantee a space for every student. We have no place to put the ones that don’t have a space right now. Let us get up and operational. (14/305/ND)

Identifying priorities, focusing on vision and mission, and being willing to make an unpopular decision were among the actions identified by one participant as leadership bests in providing direction (12/305/ND).

Coordination of an important event. The coordination of an event, in this case a march across campus in the aftermath of the shooting, was an action that represented a leadership best: “It was a beautiful response to the crisis. I’m very, very proud of that” (9/804/V).

Adopting a supportive leadership style. Several participants described adopting a supportive style of leadership as their personal best. For one participant this involved being collaborative, focusing on people and serving as the emotional leader (13/305/V). Another described it as being a sympathetic listener (9/804/V). For another individual this style meant invoking trust from others: “I said I understand. I hear what you are saying. If you could just blindly trust me this time, I promise you that we’ll get through this and we’ll get through this together” (12/305/ND).

For another, taking a leadership role in providing counseling and debriefings for staff were part of this style (2/304/V). For others, it was modeling what they wanted staff to feel:

> I think for me the dilemma was also feeling like I needed to make sure the staff felt that they weren't in chaos. That we as a division weren't in chaos. You know, on a certain level, I was in a little bit of chaos myself. So keeping a sense of calm focus and providing them a sense that they weren't on a rudderless ship. (11/305/LL)

Another leader understood how this was inherent in one's presence:

> I think that it was interesting because I had faculty afterwards, and staff, say to me that when I kind of walked in the room, and when I talked to them, it was like they said to me, it's going to be okay now. It's like, she's here, she's back and now everything will be okay. And it's amazing because of course I didn't necessarily feel that way. But I think that they just kind of needed to know that. (6/804/V)

The supportive leadership style was manifested by others in their care for families and students (6/804/V; 4/304/V):

> To me, it was working with the individual students and their parents. To help them get through the, I don't mean in a counseling sense, but to help them deal with the aftermath of, help them facilitate the aftermath with classes. Then with their withdrawals. Then helping facilitate with one young woman. Helping her get her victim's assistance money as quickly as possible. So that was what I was most proud of. And interestingly, very few people even knew I did that. (1/304/V)

Engaging with students was another way of demonstrating care:

> We always worked really hard to maintain good relationships with our Student Government Association and other major student leaders on campus, including ISD and Pan-Hellenic and so on. And so we were able to really get them to work very closely with us. I think the other thing is just going out and trying to communicate and interact with as many students as possible. (4/304/V)

Helping others be successful was another dimension of the supportive leadership style:

> One of the problem-solving issues we had to deal with was that law enforcement said they were going to handle the searches. Well, it's 25º below and 40º below wind chill. We go there and find out that law enforcement is doing as good a job as they know how, but they aren't always good at asking for help. So I told our Associate Dean, who used to do a lot of work for the military, I want you to help me as a point person so that together these will be successful searches. (13/305/V)

Being an advocate was a final dimension of the supportive leadership style:

> So I articulated the needs of the folks that could not be heard. Such as the missing student. Articulating for the family the institutional system that they don't know. They didn't go to school, to college, so having to be their advocate was exactly the role that I took. (13/305/V)

The ability to modify one's style was also identified as a leadership best:

> It was always me assigning tasks for people to do something and helping in the best way possible and the kindest way possible but yet still needing to be firm that this is the task you are going to do. And there are some times when we

> work as a democracy and there's sometimes that we don't. And this is one of those times. (12/305/ND)

Treatment of displaced students*.* Communication with students displaced from the institution was another leadership best: "Communication and keeping in touch with the students while they were away. And helping them navigate the institution upon their return" (10/305/V).

Followership*.* Understanding one's role at any given time was described as followership by another participant: "But as a cabinet member I have a different level of responsibility. And as a leader, I need to make sure I'm slotted in where I need to be" (14/305/ND). This kind of followership contributed to a collaborative environment:

> I think probably the sense of collaboration of knowing that I am part of a system. I am not the system. There were times when I was the leader when the President was not there. There were times when I was the follower. (14/305/ND)

Two final sentiments were expressed in relation to followership. The first had to do with the invisibility and selflessness of many leadership acts: "So, in fact, I suppose if you would be talking to some people about who were the leaders on campus that were involved in it, my name may not even come up" (1/304/V). The second had to do with the depth of self knowledge a leader gleans from crisis: "I hope this never happens to other people. It's a hard way to find out about yourself" (11/305/LL).

Table 28 provides a summary the personal successes in crisis leadership reported by the number of participants addressing the theme and the crisis type.

Table 28

Personal Successes in Crisis Leadership by Number of Participants Reporting and Typology Classification

Personal successes in crisis leadership	No. participants addressing theme N = 14	Typology categories addressed by theme		
		Victim	Natural disaster	Legal liability
Providing direction	8	X	X	
Adopting a supportive leadership style	8	X	X	
Effective employment of leadership skills & traits	3		X	X
Effective use of human resources	3	X	X	X
Followership	2	X		
Effective use of symbolic power of the presidency	1	X		
Conscious choice to be visible	1		X	
Ability to remove barriers	1		X	
Getting critical decisions right	1			X
Influencing others	1	X		
Coordination of an important event	1	X		
Performance as a spokesperson	1			X
Treatment of displaced students	1	X		

Summary of Findings

This study revealed several findings related to crisis leadership, which this section will be summarize. This section also provides a review of findings related to the stages of crisis, followed by a summary of leadership challenges and strategies identified by at least 50% of study participants. The section lays out themes gleaned from leaders' reflections on crisis leadership identified by at least 50% of participants, and offers a summary of elements that constitute a foundation for leadership style and behavior during crisis.

Stages of crisis development. The first area of findings concerns stages of crisis development. The life of a crisis moves through stages, with movement from one stage to the next demarked by identifiable transitions. Each stage of a campus crisis has distinct characteristics. The beginning stage is characterized by chaos, confusion, disbelief, uncertainty, and urgency. Ownership of the crisis is in question in the beginning stage, and leading becomes complicated by overwhelming media attention. The middle stage is characterized by acceptance of the crisis, and the focus of leaders shifts to getting organized to take action and concern for the total organization and its individuals. The end stage, which consists of sub-phases including healing and lingering effects, is characterized by meaning making, and a focus on learning from the crisis. Caring, processing, and the inter-twining of long term logistical and psychological adjustments also characterize this stage.

Each transition from one stage of crisis to the next also has distinguishing characteristics. The transition from the beginning to middle stages occurs when campus leaders take control and collectively acknowledge it is time to move forward. The transition from the middle to the end stages is triggered when leadership shifts to focus on restoration, resumption of activities, and integration of the immediate and long term realities. Within the end stage, the transition to healing is triggered by rituals, processing, and changes in public and institutional memory.

Crisis leadership challenges. Study findings also revealed that campus administrators face myriad leadership challenges during crisis. In this study, over 60 specific leadership challenges were reported, which can be captured by eight meta-themes which were used as a framework for this study: (a) leading in spite of a loss of control; (b) coping with deficient, inadequate or non-existent technical and human crisis response systems; (c) assessing and evaluating simultaneously with decision-making; (d) communicating about the crisis; (e) dealing with the complexities of multiple constituency groups; (f) altering operations and relationships; (g) managing transitions within the life of the crisis; and (h) dealing with the long term effects of the crisis. Of the 60 specific leadership challenges identified under the meta-theme framework, 12 were addressed by at least 50% of study participants. Table 29 identifies these leadership challenges, along with the crisis stage or field in which they were reported. In the early stage of the crisis these included obtaining complete and accurate information, handling the media and communications, and mobilizing for action. In the middle stage, 50% or more of the participants identified providing support for those in need and dealing with an altered physical environment as challenges. In the end stage, challenges named were refocusing on the academic mission in the aftermath of a crisis, engaging in self-analysis, and dealing with the implications of changes in institutional and public memory. In decision-making, the challenge discussed by at least 50% of study participants was uncertainty about what to do. Among the challenges identified by a preponderance of study participants associated with specific constituency groups were the media contributing to the crisis being out of control and complications related to the stress staff was experiencing.

Table 29

Leadership Challenges Identified by 50 Percent or More of Study Participants

	Crisis stage			Crisis field	
	Beginning	Middle	End	Decision-making	Constituency groups
Obtaining complete & accurate information	86%				
Handling the media & communications	86%				
Mobilizing for action	50%				
Providing support for those in need		64%			
Dealing with altered physical environment		86%			
Refocusing on academic mission in aftermath of crisis			71%		
Engaging in self-analysis			50%		
Dealing with implications of change in institutional & public memory			93%		
Dealing with criticisms of leadership decisions				93%	
Uncertainty about what to do				64%	
Media contributed to crisis being out of control					64%
Complications related to stress staff was experiencing					71%

Note. % = percent of participants identifying the theme

Additional noteworthy findings related to challenges provide greater insight to those identified in Table 28. Concerning human resources, the challenge of mobilizing appropriate staff was critical. Appropriate staff included those with physical and emotional stamina. Another finding concerned the relationship between the campus and external agencies. The relationship between campus leaders and external agencies both assists in the resolution of crisis challenges, and holds the potential for making leadership more complex. While leaders need the expertise of external agencies to perform tasks university personnel cannot, their presence can cause questions about who owns the crisis. Findings related to the inter-relationship between crisis and the academic life of students were also inherent in this study. As a result of a campus crisis, students may need special support to be academically successful. The scope of the crisis and degree of trauma associated with it determine the nature of academic support needed for students. Academic success and coping with grief and trauma cannot be separated.

This study reveals several findings related to the resolution of a crisis. The first finding was that significant crises never really come to an end. Anniversary dates, ongoing planning for improvement, permanent memorials, legal issues and other reminders can keep a crisis alive for years. A second finding related to resolution was that leading the campus in memorializing was a significant challenge. The nature of memorials and rituals, and most importantly, determining the point to stop memorializing and move on posed significant challenges for leaders. A third finding in this area was that maintaining a proper perspective, not only on what happened but also on their role in the aftermath of the incident and their perception of themselves as victims was essential to maintaining the mental health of the campus. Finally, a significant challenge for leaders addressed the question, at what point do leaders move forward while respecting people’s need to grieve?

Crisis decision-making. Several findings related to crisis decision-making were also gleaned from this study. First, uncertainty in decision-making was due to a lack of leadership focus or direction. Second, structural issues, either organizationally or within the chain of command, created unanticipated challenges in decision-making. Third, dealing with criticisms of leadership decisions became a dilemma as the crisis moved into the aftermath phases. Fourth, during crisis, leaders must simultaneously address myriad logistical issues, while defining processes for decision-making. Fifth, knowing when to defer to others (particularly experts) was a key good leadership decision. Finally, commitment on the part of the president not to hunker down or “circle the wagons” was essential for setting the tone for all decision-making.

Crisis communications. Several additional findings were gleaned in the area of challenges in crisis communications. Determining what to communicate and how to get it out is the first communications challenge, and one that demands to be addressed shortly after the onset of crisis. Second, the most common strategy for dealing with the media was designating a point person. Third, a major challenge for leaders was when the media engaged in questionable practices. Fourth, it is essential to formalize communications with faculty, particularly for crises involving disruption of classes. Fifth, intentionality in communications forced leaders to define the message further (communicate the message, not the mess). Leaders became more intentional in their communications as the crisis unfolded.

Persistent themes. Three themes related to leadership challenges were persistent across the crisis stages and other dimensions of crisis leadership reported in this study. These were (a) concerns for the experiences of staff, (b) internal and external communications, and (c) providing emotional support and compassionate leadership.

Crisis leadership strategies. Campus leaders utilized a range of leadership strategies to address the challenges faced during campus crisis. In this study, no fewer than 63 leadership strategies were reported that were represented by ten meta-themes: (a) garnering necessary resources, (b) making safety a leadership priority, (c) leading planning and policy development, (d) leading intentional communications efforts, (e) clarifying the leadership infrastructure, (f) accepting responsibility for crisis leadership, (g) modifying leadership approaches and styles as needed, (h) framing the crisis for others, (i) leading the healing process, and (j) leading efforts to learn from the crisis. Several strategies were identified by 50 percent or more of the participants in this study. These are depicted in Table 30. In the beginning stage, these were clarifying the leadership infrastructure, activating reliable communications systems, and providing emotional support. In the end stage, they were formalizing the healing process, memorializing, and directing communications at emerging issues. In crisis decision-making, these strategies were defining the decision-making process and structure, engaging experts, and adopting a “do the right thing” orientation toward decisions. In crisis communication, the strategy was to communicate the message, not the mess.

Table 30
Leadership Strategies Identified by 50 Percent or More of Study Participants

	Crisis stage		Crisis field	
	Beginning	End	Decision-making	Communications
Clarify the leadership structure	57%			
Activate reliable communications systems	57%			
Provide emotional support	57%			
Formalize the healing process		64%		
Memorialize		57%		
Direct communications at emerging issues		50%		
Define decision-making process & structure			71%	
Engage experts			57%	
Adopt a “do the right thing” orientation			93%	
Communicate the message, not the mess				71%

Reflections on crisis leadership. Several themes from participants’ reflections on crisis leadership were identified by at least 50 percent of participants. These are depicted in Table 31. Deficiencies in communication systems and messages were sited as a common mistake. Participants identified demonstrating a caring leadership disposition and utilizing targeted communications strategies to stay connected to constituency groups as major successes in crisis leadership. Among the reflections on factors that allowed leaders to be successful, exemplary individual and collective performances, along with teamwork, were identified by at least 50 percent of study participants. Regarding lessons learned, ongoing preparation for future crises met the 50 percent criteria. And finally, at least 50 percent of participants identified two themes in their reflections on personal successes in crisis leadership: providing direction and adopting a supportive leadership style.

Table 31

Reflections On Crisis Leadership Reported by 50 Percent or More of Study Participants

	Reflections category				
	Mistakes	Organiza-tional success	Factors that allowed leader success	Lessons learned	Personal success
Deficiencies in communication systems & messages	50%				
Demonstrating a caring leadership disposition		71%			
Utilizing targeted communications strategies to stay connected to constituency groups		71%			
Exemplary individual & collective performances			79%		
Teamwork			57%		
Need for ongoing preparation for future crises				79%	
Providing direction					57%
Adopting a supportive leadership style					57%

Foundations of crisis leadership*.* Another area of findings concerned the frame from which individuals define themselves as crisis leaders. This study revealed that leadership theories are not the primary foundation from which campus leaders draw. Only one participant identified a leadership theory as a foundation. Cumulative learning, understanding of change, work styles and strengths, personal qualities, and faith in institutional strength were all cited as the foundation for crisis leadership. Personal qualities identified as the foundation for leadership during crisis were confidence, previous experiences with traumatic events, and a sense of personal responsibility.

Areas of leadership focus. Another area of findings was that the nature and focus of leadership changes as the crisis unfolds. A focus on logistical leadership was typical in the early stages of the crisis. Safety and security necessarily drive leadership in the onslaught of the crisis. But several turning points in the life of a campus crisis require shifts in how leaders are thinking and behaving. For example, in order to move from being reactionary toward recovery, leaders must shift from a focus only on logistical concerns to an understanding of the relationship between logistical recovery and psychological recovery. Several participants recognized that they had to make a visible shift in their leadership to accompany the need for formalized healing. Exerting compassionate leadership became essential in the ending stage of the crisis. Findings related to symbolic leadership were also inherent in the study. Leaders were aware of the messages communicated by their physical presence.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter consists of five sections. An overall summary will remind the reader of the purpose of the study and the questions the researcher investigated. The chapter will then develop the findings resulting from the study, along with the conclusions of the researcher and implications for practice and future research.

Study Summary

The purpose of this study was to investigate the leadership challenges and strategies associated with campus crisis and tragedy in higher education. Stages of crisis development were used as the framework within which the challenges and strategies were developed.

Seven questions formed the basis of the study. The first was an investigation of the leadership challenges faced by leaders during campus crisis and tragedy. Three of the questions concerned leadership goals: What are the goals of leadership during campus crisis? Do the goals vary according to the type of crisis? Do the goals vary at different phases of the crisis? Two questions dealt with strategies to address crisis challenges. One focused on strategies utilized; the other, on recommended leadership practices to follow to address institutional crisis. The final question concentrated on aspects of leadership focused on during crisis.

To assist in the examination of these research questions, a typology was utilized that ensured that a cross-section of crisis types was investigated. Crises in which the institution was a victim of acts perpetrated upon it, natural disasters, and crises for which the institution had legal liability were included. National media attention and the potential for actual or potential loss of life were additional criteria used for case selection, as was a ten-year time frame.

The methods used in this study captured the experiences of practitioners and reported their critical thinking and reflections on their crisis experiences. The researcher conducted interviews with campus leaders who played a central role in handling a crisis on their campus in the past ten years. Fourteen interviews were conducted at eight institutions of higher education. Study participants were upper level administrators. Transcripts of the interviews were unitized into data cards, and these were coded and sorted into major categories.

The study began with a description of the far-reaching implications and complexities associated with leading during times of crisis and tragedy. This was supported by a review of literature that included definitions of crisis , along with common characteristics and phases. Ten crisis typologies were reviewed. Several descriptions of the phases of crisis were reviewed and then synthesized into a basic pre-crisis, crisis, post-crisis model. A review of literature in crisis leadership made a distinction between crisis management (determining how a crisis can be treated in a logical and orderly manner) and crisis leadership, which is concerned with a broad range of concerns. Additional literature reviewed in this area identified areas leaders should focus on during crisis, questions they should ask during crisis, and stakeholders to whom they may be responsible. A section of the literature review was dedicated to crisis leadership in higher education. This section provided reflections on lessons learned from the Kent State crisis of 1970, as well as the work of Mills (2004) who provided an in-depth case study analysis of three campus crises with findings reviewed in the context of contemporary leadership theories. This section also included the work of Siegel (1994), who provided a detailed profile of how administrators at various levels of the organization responded to crisis as it was unfolding on their campus. Additional lessons and insights from practitioners were provided by proceedings from a conference sponsored by the National Association of Student Affairs Administrators (NASPA) and by writings from practitioners in the field. Literature providing a foundation for the study included implications for creating an emerging profile of the crisis leader, ethics in leading during crisis, crisis communication, and crisis decision-making.

Summary of Themes Reported

The summary of themes reported in this study will be presented in alignment with the research questions. The themes reported in the major categories in Chapter IV (challenges and strategies inherent in the crisis stages, crisis decision-making, crisis communication, and constituency groups, along with the participants' reflections on leadership during crisis) were synthesized for the purpose of providing a comprehensive summary.

Summary of leadership challenges. The first research question asked, "What are the leadership challenges and dilemmas during a campus crisis?" A synthesis of themes reported yielded eight major groupings of challenges.

Leading in spite of a loss of control. One group of challenges for campus leaders during crisis was leading in spite of a loss of control. These themes were particularly prevalent in the beginning stage of the crisis, and emerged in both logistical and psychological ways. Being reliant on others (such as emergency response personnel) to manage the crisis contributed to a sense of helplessness and forced leaders to address fundamental issues such as who owns a crisis, how crisis leadership and management intertwine, appropriate inclusion of external operators in the university infrastructure, and the timing and means of transitioning responsibility for handling the crisis. Being reliant on others for information not only affected leaders' ability to communicate with the press and stakeholders, but was a reminder that others were more "in the know" than campus leaders. The logistical elements associated with loss of control were tightly coupled with psychological implications. In several cases, the crisis violated the campus not only physically, but psychologically. For example, safety was not only a practical matter, but an emotional one. Coming to terms with the reality that tragedy could permeate the boundaries of a campus was as much a psychological violation as a physical one. A final theme associated with loss of control was personal. Uncertainty about what to do emerged in the themes on decision-making. Having never been through a crisis situation or trained for one, some leaders simply did not know what to do. The sudden onset of crises for which there is no warning eliminated the opportunity to mount calculated, intentional responses.

Coping with technical and human crisis response measures or systems that were deficient, inadequate or non-existent. Phone systems unable to handle the volume of calls, or calling trees that were ineffective because of the time of the crisis were examples of technical systems that failed. Themes addressing challenges with human systems included having the right staff to deal with the situation at hand, people who engendered the team spirit, and organizing the leadership infrastructure. Some challenges in this group resulted from a lack of forethought about the systems that would be essential in a crisis (i.e. technology personnel who could establish web communication, vendors to service campus).

Assessment and evaluation occurring almost simultaneously with leadership decisions and judgments. Leaders reported having to assess the quality with which the institution was handling the crisis at almost the same time that it was unfolding. Questioning the decisions of upper level administrators, assessing how well staff were holding up, analyzing the structure and workings of the leadership teams, and discovering flaws in the crisis response plan all emerged throughout the stages of the crisis. Complicating this challenge area was the constant media coverage. This created an ever present potential for flaws to be revealed and concern for how the institution was being treated in terms of public image. Leading in an environment where everyone was watching—constituency groups, media, the national public—was a constant reminder that decisions were an indication of the quality of thinking of the leader.

Communicating about the crisis. In the beginning stage of the crisis this challenge involved clarifying what happened. As the crisis unfolded, communications challenges included informing and engaging constituency groups and framing the story of the crisis for all. Determining how to handle communications in emotionally charged or dangerous environments were other challenges. Setting the desired “tone” and effectively communicating the intentions of the institution were also challenges. In the later stages of the crisis, the primary challenge in communications involved making meaning of the event for others and engendering a proper perspective.

Dealing with the complexities of multiple constituency groups. Constituency groups internal to the institution included faculty, staff and students. Helping these groups deal with the stress of the crisis was a primary challenge, as was framing the crisis and establishing the orientation campus constituency groups had toward the event. Addressing myriad issues for students who were traumatized and developing policies and processes for students to leave and return to school were challenges inherent in dealing with students. Staffing issues (having the right staff for certain roles, deciding whether or not to use external staff) were additional challenges. External groups included the media, affected families, emergency response personnel, and volunteer groups. The challenges inherent in the necessary relationships with external agencies were coordinating information exchange, dealing with the natural confusion generated by their presence, negotiating an appropriate relationship with them, and determining lines of authority. Containing the media's presence, controlling their behavior and responding to the national attention created by the media were challenges. Addressing the emotions, need for information, and barrage of parent contacts were challenges in dealing with families.

Altering operations and relationships. Interrupting the academic calendar, developing processes by which students could leave and return to school in unconventional ways, and creating temporary policies all constituted alterations to operations. Relationships also had to be altered. Campus leaders who had not had to work cooperatively before were thrust into decision-making teams. Relationships with members of external agencies, whether established before or during the crisis, reached a higher level of interdependence.

Managing transitions. Managing transitions within the life of the crisis and leading the campus in moving forward comprised a fifth grouping of leadership challenges. In the beginning stages this challenge naturally emerged as leaders attempted to shift from being reactionary to intentional problem-solving. In the ending stages, leaders were challenged with decisions regarding how to mourn appropriately, reclaim the sites of traumatic events, resume academic activities, and refocus staff on the educational mission.

Dealing with the long term effects of the crisis. Addressing elements that prolonged the crisis, mitigating legal issues, dealing with the impact on enrollment and retention, conducting long term care-taking for multiple groups, implementing appropriate rituals for anniversary events, restoring the learning environment, and putting the crisis in perspective for the campus and community were all part of the long term life of the crisis.

Summary of leadership goals during crisis. Three research questions for this study addressed leadership goals during campus crisis: What are the goals of leadership during campus crisis? Do the goals vary according to type of crisis? Do the goals vary at different phases of the crisis? An analysis of the findings related to these questions are detailed below.

Goals in the beginning stage of the crisis focused on stabilizing the chaos of the crisis, ensuring safety, gathering information, and mobilizing for action. As the chaos of the crisis subsided and conditions became more stable, campus leaders were able to become more intentional in mounting effective responses. Goals in the middle stage of the crisis focused on recovery. Effectively managing logistical issues, garnering resources, using the power of symbolic leadership appropriately, coping with new developments and emerging issues, identifying and addressing the needs of constituency groups, delivering mental health services to parties in need, and developing policies to facilitate movement through the crisis were all goals in this stage.

Goals in the end stages of the crisis were less about immediacy and more about reflection and refocusing. Goals in this stage included mitigating damages, refocusing on the educational mission, learning from the crisis, engaging in productive self-analysis, reclaiming the campus, preventing the crisis from occurring again and/or improving the institution’s ability to respond effectively, making meaning of the event and properly placing it in institutional memory.

Summary of leadership strategies and recommended practices. The primary focus of this study was to investigate effective and ineffective strategies utilized by leaders during campus crisis and tragedy, and to identify recommended leadership practices. Chapter Four detailed 63 strategies reported across three crisis stages and three fields of crisis leadership. For the purpose of summarizing, the strategies reported in the findings were synthesized and clustered into major groupings. A summary list of this synthesis follows. The summary list is not written in any particular order of importance or implementation.

Garnering necessary resources*.* This leadership strategy encompassed three types of resources: information, human resources, and influence. Information was particularly important in the early stages of the crisis. Initiating methods to rapidly assess what was transpiring, locating leaders where they could receive information from a variety of sources, establishing a command center, engaging experts, expanding contacts to include individuals who had valuable information, and visiting the site of events to gain first hand knowledge of the situation were all specific strategies employed by leaders.

Leaders employed several strategies related to the use of human resources. Assembling the right staff based on needs and tasks, employing temporary assignments and structures, and giving staff recognition and support were among the strategies used. Being intentional about focusing on staff and using them wisely drove strategies related to human resources.

One of the primary sources of influence was the university president. His or her connections with those who could provide financial resources, substantiate decisions, and drive the process were invaluable.

Make safety the leadership priority. Strategies associated with leading safety efforts included specific actions (i.e. coordinating evacuations) along with making it not only a priority, but the driving force for decision-making. One of the more complex issues related to safety was addressing the fear students may be experiencing without instilling even greater fear.

Leading planning and policy development. Recommended planning practices included investing in pre-planning, both for a known impending crisis (such as a hurricane) or in anticipation of the unexpected through crisis response plans. This included giving as much attention to the process by which decisions would be made as to the actual plans. Exercising intentionality in both planning and problem-solving was identified as crucial. Defining a leadership agenda and direction while in the midst of the crisis was foundational to planning. Exercising shared governance was a strategy utilized to enhance successful planning, as were frequent, regular meetings during the crisis. Leading policy development, analysis and enforcement was also part of the planning process. Participants in this study reported several areas for which the need for policy development emerged during crisis. Some campuses needed policies to suspend and then resume academic activities and bureaucracy, including students leaving and returning from school. Some schools faced myriad policy decisions related to reopening the school after a prolonged forced closure. Those dealing with families of slain, missing or traumatized students or staff formulated policies regarding access to the level of administration within the institution. Almost all participants had to develop policies for managing the media. Some faced policy decisions regarding issues related to handling students who were displaced. Leaders also had to create strategies for garnering internal support for policy decisions.

Leading intentional communications efforts*.* Intentionality in communication encompassed three areas: content, methods and commitments. Sorting through the informational and emotional chaos of a crisis to craft institutional messages with clarity was the primary strategy in content development. Or as one participant said, “communicate the message, not the mess.” Method strategies involved multiple means of disseminating information and processing issues with constituency groups. Informational briefings, small discussion and dialogue groups, town halls, and use of a point person were among strategies reported. An additional strategy was recognizing that some messages had to be delivered by a particular leader. In some cases, leaders had to improvise to replace technical communication systems that failed or were destroyed. Successful communication also hinged on leaders making several commitments: to stay connected to internal constituency groups, to be a spokesperson when called upon, to formalize the communication process with faculty. Limiting or expanding access to campus as needed to control the crisis pertained primarily to the media and protecting students from the media.

Clarifying the leadership infrastructure*.* Clarifying the leadership infrastructure involved strategies focused internally and externally. Assembling the right decision-making team, which included broadening or reconfiguring groups of campus leaders was one component addressing the leadership infrastructure. Individuals not typically involved in upper level leadership circles may have become prominent in the leadership structure during crisis. Another was making teamwork among leaders an explicit expectation. This often required leaders to abandon position and status. Establishing a command center not only aided in clarifying the leadership infrastructure, but was essential to the decision-making process.

Strategies associated with clarifying the leadership infrastructure when dealing with external agencies were knowing when to defer to them, being open to being told what do by them, and having a sense of how and when to transition control of the crisis from them to university officials.

Accepting responsibility for crisis leadership. Getting critical leadership moments right, coupled with good timing and solving problems that can trigger resolution for other issues were all part of accepting responsibility for crisis leadership. Accepting responsibility also entailed delivering exemplary performances in one’s respective area.

Modify leadership styles and approaches as necessary. While participants in this study did not identify a particular leadership theory that guided them through the crisis, several indicated the importance of flexibility and willingness to modify one’s style based on the situation. Stepping back and being a follower while others took the lead was part of modifying one’s style, as was the willingness to engage in leadership that was invisible to others.

Several areas or styles of leadership were identified by study participants. Exerting compassionate leadership meant focusing on people, engendering trust, and demonstrating compassion for the trauma others were facing. Specific strategies in this area included devising means by which the privacy and issues of affected families would be respected and demonstrating care for campus leaders dealing with crisis. Allowing staff to go home, granting permission to staff to have needs and be cared for were specific strategies employed to exert compassionate leadership. Being an advocate was yet another means of demonstrating compassionate leadership. This focused on being a voice for others, helping others be successful during the crisis, and responding to individual situations. Advocacy for students took the form of addressing the needs of special populations affected by the crisis, helping students manage interactions with media, protecting students' rights and time needed to make decisions, and maintaining prolonged contact with students.

Recognizing and utilizing the power of symbolic leadership was another means by which leaders modified their style. One of the primary strategies associated with symbolic leadership was placing campus leaders in strategic locations that would communicate particular messages or achieve desired leadership goals. The symbolic power of the presidency was also used to communicate with key constituency groups and to emphasize the importance of essential communication messages.

Using collaborative leadership to build relationships and coalitions was another demonstration of modifying leadership styles. Adopting a collaborative leadership philosophy allowed leaders to develop relationships with key groups. Focusing on community relations, capitalizing on offers of help from colleagues from other institutions, and benefiting from previously established relationships with those who could offer resources, had influence or could lend aid were specific strategies. Collaborative leadership was the lens through which leaders engaged and empowered faculty, student leaders, and families. Involving students in planning rituals and enhancing services for them were strategies to build relationships. Coalition building with external agencies was particularly important. This entailed providing both logistical and philosophical support for external agencies. Relationships with this group were enhanced by structural pieces such as written agreements and the identification of point people to facilitate communication.

Framing the crisis for others. The strategy of framing the crisis for others consisted of invoking a perspective that allowed staff and students to cope effectively, and containing possible overreactions. Framing also drove policy and decision-making. For example, several leaders embraced an “open book” policy regarding scrutiny by the media and others. Adopting a caring leadership disposition resulted from the way the crisis was framed by leaders. Framing also drove the manner in which self-analysis and post-crisis evaluation was performed.

Leading the healing process. This strategy included several actions aimed at formalizing the healing process: engaging affected families, reclaiming the site of traumatic events, and organizing rituals and memorials. Another component of this strategy was mobilizing multifaceted counseling and psychological assistance efforts. These included debriefings for staff, providing differentiated counseling for those in need, and offering seminars on grief. Constantly assessing how people are coping is another component of this strategy.

One of the more challenging aspects of this strategy was leading the campus in moving forward. Leaders recognized both the importance of taking action as a way of promoting healing and the delicacy of doing so.

Leading efforts to learn from the crisis. Post-crisis leadership strategies involved leading thoughtful self-analysis. Setting the tone for learning was key to identifying gaps in performance while avoiding blame. Formalizing means through which learning could occur was the foundation for preventing future crises. Formulating educational campaigns was one specific strategy.

Ineffectiveness. This study also sought to identify ineffective strategies and mistakes in leading through crisis. While several participants reported no criticisms of their handling of the crisis, almost all identified shortcomings in either their personal or institutional performance.

The most common areas of ineffectiveness reported by participants were breakdowns in leadership. Lack of internal cooperation was commonly cited, followed by a lack of a crisis leadership command structure, confusion about who was in charge, and differing priorities among campus leaders.

A second area of ineffectiveness concerned inadequate knowledge and skills. Staff who did not know how to operate the technology needed to manage the crisis, and staff being unaware of the crisis response team and plan were additional shortcomings. Lack of staff understanding of institutional codes and rules also resulted in ineffectiveness. Methods for handling the media was another skill area needing attention.

Communications was a third area of ineffectiveness. Some areas of ineffectiveness were technical, such as telephone systems that were not capable of handling massive numbers of phone calls. Others involved failures in internal communications.

Poor thinking about process was another area of ineffectiveness described by some. One example included poor timing of meetings which resulted in placing students in proximity of the media, which was exactly what the administration was hoping to avoid.

Finally, failure to have a crisis response plan and lack of back up plans for when things went wrong, along with failure to provide enough debriefings for staff, were reported as areas of inadequacy.

Summary of dimensions of leadership focused on during crisis. This study sought to identify areas of leadership focused on during crisis. Ten areas of leadership derived from an analysis of findings of the study will be summarized in the following section. While all of the areas are inherent to leadership during non-crisis times, during crisis each became more complex and critical. Not all leaders in this study dealt with each of the areas. The nature, intensity and local characteristics of the crisis constructed the leadership mosaic for each.

Leadership for logistical issues was a predominant area of concern for those dealing with physical devastation to the campus. While logistics became all-encompassing for leaders in this situation, logistical leadership did rise to greater levels of importance for all. Garnering resources, management of human resources, finances, and tactical planning all featured prominently in leading the campus through crisis.

Crisis decision-making was another aspect of leadership focused on during crisis. Getting organized to make decisions in a chaotic environment, being reliant on others making critical decisions, and factoring in different levels of knowledge, focus and priorities among decision-makers distinguished decision-making during crisis from non-crisis times. Policy development and analysis to facilitate situations not encountered during non-crisis (i.e. opening and closing a school, allowing students to withdraw due to danger) was an inherent component of decision-making.

Symbolic leadership was another focus for campus leaders. Symbolism went beyond public relations. Where campus leaders were physically located at different times of the crisis, language used by leaders when talking about the crisis, the nature of support provided to constituency groups, and the values and intentions inherent in decisions all communicated powerful symbolic messages.

Knowledge of oneself as a crisis leader was another area of focus. Confidence, personal life values, and a lifetime of learning and developing as a leader served as a foundation on which leaders drew during crisis. Some participants reported personal qualities such as stamina, determination, willingness, and organization as important leadership traits.

Almost all leaders in this study reported on their role as the emotional leader of their campus during crisis. Restoring the psychological safety and stability of the campus included mounting effective caretaking systems, defining appropriate mourning ceremonies, creating forums in which emotions could be processed, conceptualizing the manner in which memorializing would occur in both the short and long term, and framing a proper perspective of the crisis for others—these were all elements of emotional leadership.

Influence was another important element of crisis leadership. A leader’s connection to others with the resources and authority needed in the aftermath of crisis, the strength of his or her relationships with on and off campus constituency groups, and appropriate use of the leader’s position were all elements of influence. Engendering cooperation and credibility for leader decisions was part of influence.

Leaders in this study also focused on collaboration and relationships. Engagement with other leaders with influence among particular constituency groups and individuals with expertise was necessary to move through the crisis. Willingness to engage in collective decision-making, forming groups that had not historically worked together, and censoring group members who were territorial or uncooperative were additional dimensions of collaboration and relationships.

Followership was another dimension of leadership emergent from this study. Leaders, even those at the highest levels of administration, regarded followership an essential component of leadership. Recognizing and deferring to others more appropriate to lead an event or process, supporting another leader in his or her efforts, and understanding the need a constituency group may have for a particular leader were all part of followership.

Conclusions

In this section, the researcher will offer several conclusions in response to the research questions posed by this study.

An examination of the challenges reported by participants in this study yields several conclusions. To begin, it is not the type of crisis but the nature and magnitude of devastation that makes crisis leadership complex. The typology utilized to classify cases for this study—natural disasters, the institution as victim, and crises for which the institution had liability—did not provide an adequate framework to analyze leadership goals and strategies during crisis. Study findings suggest that a typology based on the magnitude and severity of devastation may offer a richer reflection of crisis leadership. Crises involving significant devastation to the campus call for logistical leadership not needed for crises lacking this type of disruption. Similarly, crises involving loss of life required leadership approaches and activities not needed in crises absent this kind of devastation. For example, two schools—one dealing with a hurricane, the other with falling debris from the attack on the World Trade Center—had significant physical devastation to their campuses. In spite of the crises types being significantly different—

one a natural disaster, the other the institution as victim—leaders at these schools had to deal with similar concerns (evacuations, safety issues, opening and closing of school). Devastation can also be measured by loss of human life. Schools dealing with a campus shooting, a serial killer, a missing student and a residence hall fire had to address issues such as mourning and memorializing. This is not true for crises in which no victims' lives were lost, such as was the case of the hostage situation in which the perpetrator was killed. These examples indicate that leadership challenges are not necessarily bound by crisis type but magnitude of devastation. While the bulk of typologies reviewed for this study focused only on types of crises, Mitroff and Pearson (1993) provided a typology in which the extent of damage is one axis of a two axis matrix with the extent of damage ranging from normal to mega damage. The nature of crisis also dictates some leadership decisions. For example, several leaders reported struggling with the decision of where one should physically be placed during a crisis. Obviously this decision is different for a campus with significant physical devastation than for one in which there is no danger.

Another conclusion emergent from an examination of crisis leadership challenges is that challenges are evolutionary. The implications of the evolutionary nature of challenges throughout the stages of a crisis are significant. Moving from challenges associated with chaos, confusion, and control in the initial stage of the crisis, to those focused on restoration, emotional dimensions, and long term effects in the ending stages requires leaders to attend to a broad range of leadership domains. The concept of range may also be what distinguishes crisis leadership from crisis management. Unlike crisis management, which is concerned with containment, particularly in the early stage of crisis, leadership is concerned with moving an institution through several stages while tending to the crisis in a holistic fashion.

A third conclusion emergent from this study is that goals are not adequately articulated for individuals “on the edges” of the crisis. When a crisis is limited in scope, as were several in this study, there is the expectation that programs and services will still be delivered in spite of the fact that some leaders are consumed by the crisis. For example, a hostage situation at one school involved only one location, was short in duration, was handled primarily by external agencies, and required the work of only a handful of school administrators. However, the crisis garnered national media attention and was experienced in some way by all institution members. Without an intentional leadership focus on the people and elements not at the center of the crisis but obliquely affected, a portion of crisis leadership is missed. Acknowledgement of how different groups and individuals experience the crisis, informing these groups of the implications of the crisis for their work, making meaning of the crisis for all, and interpreting events related to the crisis (such as rituals and memorializing) for all are relevant to long-term recovery.

A fourth conclusion is that leadership goals vary at different stages of the crisis. Goals in the beginning stage focused primarily on garnering information and gaining control of the crisis. In the middle stage, goals focused on taking action and formulating an appropriate response. In the end stage of crisis, goals focused on making meaning, evaluating effectiveness, and addressing the long-term implications. Inherent in the discussion of goals within the stages of crisis, is the importance of managing transitions between stages. Nowhere was this challenge more apparent than for leaders attempting to transition a campus from mourning to moving on.

An examination of decision-making strategies utilized by leaders during crisis yields several conclusions. Sharing a common orientation toward decision-making reduces conflict and the challenges inherent in crisis decision-making. Sharing a common orientation allowed leaders to make collective decisions quickly and was an important factor in bonding leaders, building confidence in one another, and calming chaotic situations.

An additional conclusion regarding decision-making is that setting the tone for and establishing a foundation on which decisions will be made clarifies the intentions and ethics of leaders. Several participants reported adopting a “do the right thing” orientation. This is supported in crisis communication literature by Albrecht (1996) and by Mills (2004) and Siegel (1994) from the research on crisis leadership in higher education. Another important orientation had to do with post-crisis analysis. In cases in which leaders intentionally avoided placement of blame while simultaneously looking for problems, people were free to point out deficiencies without fear—a far healthier approach than consequences of staff being unwilling to come forward.

Two questions dealt with strategies utilized by campus leaders during crisis and on recommended leadership practices to follow to address institutional crisis.

One area of strategies was embedded in the aspects of leadership focused on during crisis. (Seeger et al., 2003) stated that a directive leadership style is best when time does not allow for consensus building. This approach has long been supported by conventional wisdom. However, participants in this study clearly demonstrated that supportive, symbolic, and collaborative styles are predominate in crisis leadership in higher education. This finding is supported by Siegel (1994) and Mills (2004). Siegel noted the importance of compassion and cross-functional collaboration. In her research on the leadership of university presidents during crisis, Mills concluded that symbolic and instrumental leadership are equally important during crisis, and that symbolic leadership becomes more important after the potential for loss of life has passed. Even Seeger et al. found symbolic leadership to be essential for meaning making. This departure from conventional wisdom could be due to the fact that first responders handle the immediately dangerous situations, not campus leaders. It could also be due to the arenas in which leadership has historically been studied—the military for example. Given this, viewing crisis leadership through competencies (RHR International, 2001), traits and functions (Seeger et al., 2003) models may be a more practical approach to preparing leaders for crisis.

Further examination of the aspects of leadership focused on during crisis revealed yet another conclusion supported by the work of Laye (2002). Policy development and implementation was one of three areas, according to Laye, that leaders should concern themselves with during crisis. In this study, policy development was a powerful means of communicating an ethic of care and bringing structure to chaotic situations. Leaders developed policies to allow students to leave and return to school in unorthodox ways, made unusual financial allowances for affected students, and manipulated the academic calendar to bring order to the college environment and allow for resumption of activities in a timely manner. Policy issues communicated the institution’s regard for victims and the predicaments they were in.

One of the most important conclusions has to do with Mitroff’s (2001) reference to top management psychology. It seems to the researcher that this ought to be the focal point of crisis preparedness. Leaders set the tone, define the decision-making process, model a proper perspective, and make meaning of the crisis for others. It is the researcher’s feeling that not enough emphasis is placed on the role of institutional leadership in the crisis preparation and planning phases.

Implications and Recommendations for Future Research

Several recommendations and areas for further research can be derived from this study.

The first addresses the manner in which crisis leadership has traditionally been examined. Dissection of, and reflection on, past crisis experiences, while valuable, is not all that can be done to assist higher education leaders in preventing failures in crisis leadership. The development of instruments and processes to conduct crisis leadership audits would allow institutions to identify areas of individual and organizational strength and weakness. Results from a leadership risk assessment could illuminate potential vulnerabilities and maintain a state of crisis readiness. While these types of tools exist in the area of crisis management, they are lacking in the field of leadership. Mitroff (2001) warned that crisis systems need to tend to organizational structure and culture as much as technology. Laye (2002) suggested that policy development and decision-making should be part of leader’s awareness of threats and thinking ahead. Instruments designed to assess institutional readiness in these and other leadership domains would be a valuable asset in crisis preparedness.

A second area for further research addresses a fundamental question. What constitutes success in crisis leadership? Is it prevention or at least minimizing the likelihood of a crisis occurring? Seeger et al. (2003) and Turner (1976) stated that organizations must keep crisis plans, rehearsals, and exercises fresh. Is currency in planning leadership success? Is it mounting a successful recovery following a crisis? Is it mounting leadership behaviors consistent with an ethical code as suggested by

Seeger et al. (2003)? What examples are available that exemplify excellence in crisis leadership in higher education, and why are they considered to be so?

A third recommendation for further research asks the question, what are campus leaders to do? How does an institution of higher education implement measures to make a campus immune from crisis without changing the very nature of a college campus? What is a proportional response to crisis? Instituting measures utilized by other entities (metal detectors, techniques that limit access to campus, profiling, etc.) are contradictory to the open nature of the college environment. But what are appropriate means of reducing the likelihood of campus crisis and containing threats and risks while maintaining the desired higher education culture? Does the higher education community recognize that crisis alters the environment and that adaptation to those changes is essential?

A fourth recommendation for further study places the focus not on what campuses did to prevent or respond to crisis, but how they were transformed by the crisis. An investigation of transformation could reveal whether or not campus leadership evolves to include recommendations by researchers in the field, lessons learned by others and self, and if campus culture changes. Mitroff's (2001) admonition that leaders must think about the unthinkable, Mitroff and Pearson's (1993) suggestion that a central point be established where lessons can be stored and disseminated widely, Seeger et al.'s (2003) emphasis on learning and sense-making, and Weick's (1988) framework involving capacity building (the ability to interpret), expectation (a mental frame) and sense-making are all potential areas of focus for research on whether or not campus leadership transforms as a result of experiencing a crisis. Does experiencing a crisis result in renewal? Persistent vigilance? Changes in the preparation of staff or the profile of staff hired? Enhanced effectiveness in crisis prevention and response? Changes in leaders’ openness to the likelihood that crisis will occur? Improved performance as a result of realizing shortcomings? A new leadership knowledge base? Finally, research on transformation may provide insight into whether or not higher education fits Mitroff and Pearson’s (1993) crisis prone organization. Are cases of organizational renewal rare or regular?

Closing Statement

“I wanted to not only tell students, but to show them, that we care about them and their families” (Lords, 2000, ¶ 37). To prove what he said following the deaths of students in a dormitory fire, the university President moved into a room in the partially burned building. This President’s actions are but one demonstration of the kind of thoughtful leadership called for during and following campus crisis. Others in similar situations have followed in his footsteps, organizing ceremonies, rallying the giving spirit, serving as a voice of reason and hope, or establishing core values that serve as an administrative rudder in difficult times. This study captured not only the challenges leaders face during campus crisis and tragedy, but the values and thinking behind their decisions and actions.

Thirty years after the shooting deaths of students by the National Guard during anti-war demonstrations at Kent State University, Steven Sivulich, then a junior administrator assigned to crowd control, admonishes us to go further:

> A crisis management process alone will not prevent campus crisis, student disobedience, or violence . . . Although 30 years have intervened, the lessons learned from the Kent State incident are clear. If we are to prevent such a tragedy from ever happening again, we must now make a committed effort to

> teach this and future generations of college administrators those lessons. (Sivulich, 2000, ¶50).

For every leader who through wisdom, advice or gut instinct rises to guide, inspire and heal during tragedy and crisis, many others flounder. This study sought to capture the wisdom of those who have lived it to provide tools and insights for others.

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